

Civil War feelings ran high in Monroe County

"There was considerable disloyalty manifested publicly throughout the county during the war, of which is better now to write but little. The subject cannot be very well wholly escaped," says *History of Morgan, Monroe and Brown counties, Indiana*.

The author of the military history of Monroe County tried to be fair, but it is apparent that he didn't have a very high opinion of the Southern sympathizers living in this area. In fact, several parts of the county were called "Secessia" because loyalty to the south there was so strong.

The county history continued, "During the winter of 1860-61 as the Southern States seceded, many of the most prominent and intelligent citizens publicly expressed their gratification, and when the news was received that Fort Sumter had been captured, openly rejoiced at the event."

The writer gave the Southern sympathizers credit for being honest when one of them stated in an open meeting that "if he fought at all it would be on the Southern side."

To read the history, you would think the



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

war was being fought here, as well. "As the summer and fall of 1861 passed, savage fights occurred in town and county over political opinion, and even women were thus involved."

A man who made disparaging remarks about the North was clubbed with a stick in town. On another occasion, when a man called the Union soldiers some "hard names," he barely escaped a lynching and left town "in short measure."

On the other hand, there were parts of the county with a majority of Southern sympathizers. The history writer described the scene in those areas: "On the contrary, the opposite element (Southern sympathizers) was bold, audacious and outspoken. The enlistment of men was openly discouraged, and secret treasonable organizations held nightly orgies and

massed and drilled their forces preparatory for what?"

Some of the leaders in the county encouraged loyalty by organizing the National Union Association of Monroe and Brown Counties. These were the planks of the group:

"Forgetting all past political differences and placing the salvation of the Union above all party and other predilections, we are for the maintenance of the Federal Government against all its enemies at home and abroad. We will sustain the Federal Government in all its measures for putting down the rebellion and call for a vigorous prosecution of the war until the glorious Union of our fathers be firmly established all over the country."

When the news of Lee's defeat at Gettysburg and Grant's victory at Vicksburg arrived by wire, there was an enthusiastic celebration. It is described in the county history. "Hundreds of people assembled in Bloomington that night (July 7, 1863) to mingle rejoicings and jubilees.

"An enormous bonfire was lighted on the street, hundreds of guns were brought forth, rockets were sent into the sky, firecrackers

resounded, buildings were illuminated from garret to cellar, and the wild populace shouted themselves hoarse but happy."

The fall of Atlanta to General Sherman prompted another noisy and enthusiastic celebration. On Oct. 8, 1864, the town staged a picnic for soldiers, including some who had been wounded and were home on leave.

According to the county history, "Long delegations in wagons from all parts of the county came in with banners flying and drums beating. Patriotism ran high ... A dinner fit for the gods was spread out on temporized tables in the court yard and eaten by several thousand persons."

Of course the war had its darker side, even on the home front.

The county history writer mentioned that "In the evening, (of Oct. 8, 1864) a deserter named Sherrill was shot and killed at the Orchard House while trying to escape from custody."

Next week: The Civil War and Indiana University.

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