

Brown County Journal

February 15, 2013

Events:

Brown County Historical
Society meeting
March 4

Brown County Genealogical
Society meeting
March 12

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Rhonda Dunn

The Effects of the Civil War on Brown County

Brown County residents' convictions on the Civil War was as varied as most people are today. There was the Democratic party and the Republican party. Debates went on day by day between those that thought the Union was to be upheld and protected and those that felt allegiance to the south from their early roots there. In deed, many early settlers to Brown County had deep ties to the southern states from which they came from. Not much is written on the effects of the Civil War on Brown Countians, but bits and pieces can be pieced together from old newspapers and other miscellaneous documents.

From Weston A. Goodspeed's "County of Brown, Indiana" 1884 a short introduction to Brown County's militia organizations was written. "Scarcely any attempt was made during the long years of peace from the formation of Brown County [in 1836] until the war with Mexico, and afterward until the Rebellion of 1861-65, to maintain the organization of the county militia. During the forties a nominal organization was kept up for short periods, and several of the citizens were permitted to assume the honors of military commissions, but prior to the war with Mexico, there was scarcely a man in the county who could have boasted of having smelled gunpowder, much less having participated in an actual war campaign. There were a few survivors of the War of 1812, who, at celebrations of the Fourth of July, were placed on the stand, eulogized and cheered."

The Political Climate at Home

"The political campaign of 1860 had been warm in Brown County. Every township had its company or companies of Wide-Awakes [Republicans], and scarcely a night had passed without public speaking and noisy and enthusiastic demonstration. The clubs of Democracy had uniformed themselves with hickory suits, erected

poles and flung the names of Douglas and Johnson or Breckinridge and Lane to the breeze.” The citizens seeing that it appeared that the Lincoln administration was doing little to calm the waters between the North and Successionists in the South caused a great gloom to cover the country. After the news came of the surrender of Fort Sumter in April of 1861 a great excitement arose in Brown County. A public meeting was called to be held at the Courthouse to take action regarding the state of the country. Some spoke in favor of maintaining and support the Union. Others spoke for the South to let them choose their own fate as a State. Overall the general sentiment of the meeting, as shown by a series of seven resolutions that were created and adopted, was for the enlistment of volunteers to sustain the administration in all constitutional acts to preserve the Union and enforce the laws. A company was soon afterward formed from volunteers and prepared to go to war.



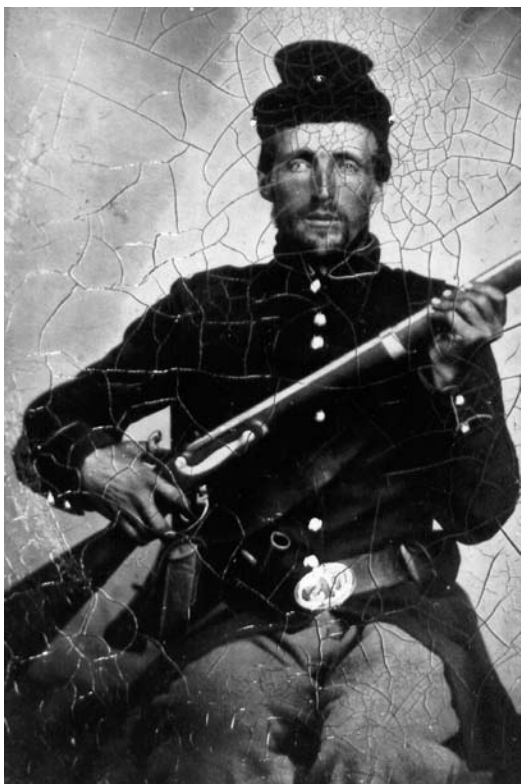
Civil War veterans (L to R) ca. 1924: Benjamin Siebert age 81, Ambrose Bartley age 80, William A. Devers age 81, Henry W. King age 82, and Jerry Wilson age 78.

As the war waged on sentiment at home saw its ups and downs. There were those that still protested loudly against the war and there were those that had grown tired of the fighting and of hearing of the loss of their loved ones that had gone south to fight. One of the early newspapers during time was the Nashville Union who had been started by Jesse Brandon in 1861 which was of a Democratic leaning. At the top of the newspaper it states The Nashville Union, J. Brandon, Editor - Our Platform, The Union, The Constitution. This paper was well patronized during the fiery years of the war. One amusing story of Aug. 7, 1862 relates the inner struggles during this time.

The Stars and Stripes Burned.

“Mr. James Ward, of this county, had the old flag Stars and Stripes floating over his Steam Mill, and had a man employed by the name of Applegate as engineer, who is a rank abolitionist, refused to work under the flag and was discharged by Mr. Ward. In a few days after his discharge this same Applegate returned and went to work as engineer. The man attending the mill had gone to dinner. Applegate climbed up the building, cut the flag down, went back and put it in the furnace. A boy discovered these proceedings, ran to the house, and informed the miller of the trick.” Unfortunately the newspaper being in bad shape the rest of this story is missing so we are left in the dark as to what happened after this incident.





John Wirey



Benjamin R. Kelley

In this county in 1863 like all other counties of the State, disloyal organizations were formed. There was not a county in the State that did not have bitter disloyalty displayed within its limits during 1863. By this time many citizens had grown tired of the war, but Brown County carried this one step further than any of the others. Another meeting was called in January of 1863 and from this Brown County citizens came up with another set of Resolutions which were published in the Nashville Union. "Our interests and inclinations will demand of us a withdrawal from the political association in a common government with the New England states and we demand an immediate armistice preparatory to a compromise of existing difficulties." Brown County citizens felt that the present war had been forced upon them by wicked and fanatical politicians on both sides - the North and South. It was during this year that the "Brown County War" occurred. This account from Goodspeed's book follows.

The Brown County War

Brown County also had its share of Confederate sympathizers, maybe not the term sympathizer as it is used strictly, but these citizens has grown tired of the war and also wanted it stopped by any means possible. A secret organization, The Knights of the Golden Circle, had a hand in the events that happened in Brown County during this time. They would recruit such citizens that wanted an end to the war in peace meetings. There was a group of these citizens, the KGC, in Brown County at this time. Several names had been bandied about, good upstanding citizens, one of which was Lewis Prosser.

"A war meeting was held in the northern part of the county, and Lewis Prosser and a companion [Snyder], who had been hunting squirrels in the woods, attended with their guns on their shoulders. There was present a detachment of soldiers that had been sent to the county from Indianapolis to arrest one or more deserters who were said to have secured a hiding place in Brown County. Prosser, who was a prominent man, and against whom the charge of disloyalty had been made, was invited to speak, but refused, as he had made no preparation, and did not care to speak then anyway. He was

rather outspoken against the war, and soon had a small crowd around him. A soldier present named Daniels, who, is said, had been drinking, hearing some remark from Prosser he did not fancy, stepped up to him, and with the statement that he had no right to be carrying a gun there, twisted the weapon from his hands. Prosser instantly drew a revolver and shot the soldier dead, and turned to leave the ground, but as he did so was shot by one of the other bystanders in the leg and brought to the ground. Two or three other shots were fired, but no damage was done. Prosser afterward died from the effects of his wound."

A letter from a witness General Noble was informed of the incidents at the above encounter. Prosser was named as a desperado and a violent member of the KGC. James S. Hester was also named in the letter as being present at the event. In response to the trouble another letter from James S. Hester to Governor Oliver Morton was sent asking the Governor to let the local authorities handle the problem. Brown Countians didn't want military law to begin interfering with local governments. These letters are from the book, 'Indiana's War: The Civil War in Documents. Lewis Prosser was an upstanding citizen of Brown County. He was a State Representative of the 41st General Assembly of Indiana in 1861. Also he had served nine years as Auditor of Brown County before the war. The effects of the war on Brown Countians had turned this situation into a negative outcome.

Loyalty to the Union

Of course it is impossible to give the exact number of men furnished by the county to crush the rebellion. So many had volunteered in neighboring counties when a call for recruits was called. These type of short notices were published in the Nashville Union in 1862.



An Old Settlers' Meeting in 1891 - comprised of many Civil War veterans

"There will be a call for recruits in a few weeks to fill the Regiment, persons wishing to enlist cannot make a better choice than the well experienced 22nd Indiana now in camp on the frontier on the advance line from Memphis, Tennessee, East to Jacinto, Mississippi. We have plenty of grub; our rations consist of fresh beef, bacon, flour, hard bread, coffee, sugar, rice, beans and potatoes. Our tents are of good material. If rain descends and winds blow, our cotton house stands and is comfortable - sufficient room inside for eight

men, their guns and gun equipments. So everything is ready for the recruit to come to the marriage supper of the Soldier in Company C, 22nd Indiana Volunteers.”

The County government in response to a petition from citizens saw fit to help out families of those who had enlisted in the army of the United States. Closer to the end of the war the County also set aside money to secure more volunteers to clear the county of the last quota of the draft. In some instances when a man could not serve a term in the military he could ask someone else to go in his place such as a friend or a family member. At many of the drafts that were called during the war Brown county almost always came up with enough volunteers to avoid their citizens being included in a draft.

From a short article in the local newspaper, The Democrat, of 1906 some of Brown County's veterans were still honored in later years. “Illustrious Men of Owl Creek: Owl Creek was so named from the many owls that once infested the lonely regions. The owls have disappeared; the round log school house has long since crumbled into dust. The hewed log school house is now used as a stable. Is it any wonder then it has so long borne the name of classical Owl Creek for in its lovely valley has lived and loved some illustrious men whose works shall follow them . . . We cannot close this article without mentioning some of the brave Owl Creek boys who offered their lives a sacrifice on the alter of their country in the dark hours of the great Civil War. Let us mention them: John Matheney, Col of the 82nd Regiment Ind. Vol; George and Samuel Coffland, James M. Yoder, George Bowden, Benjamin Kelley, Manvill Tomlinson, Caleb & Daniel Ferguson, William and Sail Barnes. Some of the boys returned to happy homes and some were left in lonely graves in that distant southern sunny land.”

Other veterans organizations sprang up after the war such as the GAR, Grand Army of the Republic that would help veterans. Also, the Old Settlers meetings were first organized and maintained by old Civil War veterans. All in all by the time of the end of the war Brown County had furnished almost 1000 men - enough to fill an entire regiment. Comparing that total to the total number of voters in the county at that time each man had been counted as often as he enlisted. “Just ponder on that showing

when you are led to
accuse Brown County of
disloyalty.” (Weston A.
Goodspeed)



**A couple of our
boys that never
made it home from
Andersonville Prison.**

