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Indiana

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Indiana
Midwestern state that made significant contributions to the Union War effort.
Admitted to the Union in 1816, Indiana was carved out of the Old Northwest
Territory, which the U.S. Government had wrested from Native Americans by
force during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Indiana encompasses 36,185
square miles and is bordered by Lake Michigan and the state of Michigan to the
north, Ohio to the east, Kentucky to the south, and Illinois to the west. Indiana’s
long southern border formed by the Ohio River gives the state excellent access by
water to points farther east and ready access to the Mississippi River to the south
and west. On the eve of the Civil War in 1861, Indiana’s population stood at 1.35
million; the state had undergone a significant population boom in the decades
preceding the war.

Indiana residents generally supported the Abraham Lincoln administration’s
efforts to maintain the Union during this conflict, although there was significant
opposition to the war effort and some level of sympathy for the Confederacy,
especially in the southern portion of the state. Republican governor Oliver Hazard
Perry Throck Morton, in office from 1861 to 1867, made concerted efforts to
provide Indiana troops to meet federal requirements, with Indiana soldiers
playing a significant role, most famously those of the Iron Brigade in engagements
such as the Battle of Antietam (September 17, 1862) and the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863). Camp Morton in Indianapolis, the state capital, became a prominent center for Confederate prisoners of war.

The slow progress of the war and the unpopularity of the draft resulted in Democrats gaining control of the Indiana legislature in the 1862 elections. Contentious relations between the legislature and Morton caused him to bypass the legislature and seek war funding directly from the War Department, private banks, and other commercial and political allies. These moves were highly controversial, particularly among his political adversaries.

The only fighting in Indiana occurred when forces led by Confederate brigadier general John Hunt Morgan invaded southern Indiana on July 8, 1863 entering Harrison County and conducting operations at Corydon, Salem, Dupont, and Versailles before moving into Ohio and being captured. Morgan’s invasion helped Morton galvanize statewide support for the war effort, with thousands volunteering to help defeat the invaders.

Lincoln’s national suspension of habeus corpus in 1862 was unpopular in parts of Indiana. Violent opposition to the war occurred in many counties, with most of this originating from the Knights of the Golden Circle, a secret organization whose
goal was to promote Southern interests. This group’s membership was broken up through widespread arrests and convictions of its members, largely upon the orders of Governor Morton.

An important constitutional law issue during this time arose upon the arrest of antiwar Democrat Lamdin Milligan of Huntington, Indiana, who was charged with conspiring against the government and aiding the enemy. Milligan was tried and convicted by a military commission and sentenced to death. He appealed this sentence by petitioning the federal courts, contending that military commissions could not try a civilian. Ultimately the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in his favor in *Ex Parte Milligan* in 1866.

More favorable war news in 1864 and the Democrats’ association with charges of treason because of the activities of the Knights of the Golden Circle resulted in Morton’s reelection that year and the return of a Republican-controlled legislature. The Civil War increased Indiana’s pace of industrialization and transformed Indianapolis into a major urban area. Indiana soldiers suffered more than 7,000 combat fatalities and 18,000 disease-related deaths. Morton’s successful but controversial leadership ultimately propelled him to the U.S.
Senate and Indiana became an important part of the Republican electoral coalition during the rest of the 19th century.

BERT CHAPMAN

See also
Ex Parte Milligan; Habeus Corpus, Writ of, U.S; Iron Brigade of the West; Knights of the Golden Circle; Morgan, John Hunt; Morton, Oliver Hazard Perry Throck

Further Reading