

The Gray Eagle

A biography of Maj. Gen Robert H. Milroy

4th Grade Lesson Plan to be used with the

Robert H. Milroy

Online Historical Records Collection
Jasper County Library Rensselaer Indiana

<http://digi.jasperco.lib.in.us>

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For Rensselaer Public Library*

Brief Description: This lesson seeks to provide 4th grade students with insight into the Civil War from an Indiana perspective and an understanding of a historical figure from Indiana. The plan may be used alone or with the Our Indiana History classroom educational set.

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Indiana Curriculum Alignment:

Social Studies

4.1.8 Summarize the participation of Indiana citizens in the Civil War

4.1.15 Using primary source and secondary source materials, generate questions, seek answers, and write brief comments about an event in Indiana history.

Teacher's Guide

Teacher's Lesson Goal / Objectives

The learner will get to know one of the noted Union leaders of the Civil War through his own words and thoughts. The learner will also become aware of using first-hand records and online library resources.

Technology Resources Needed: This lesson does not require the use of any technology, but may be used with technology in the following ways:

- Allow students to go online to the Jasper County Public Library website <http://www.jasperco.lib.in.us/> and download their own lesson plan and print it.
- Encourage students to explore, in a lab or individual setting, the Robert H. Milroy historical records collection at <http://digi.jasperco.lib.in.us/>.

Pre-activities

Use the vocabulary in the lesson plan to build background awareness before starting the lesson plan.

Activities

Instruct your students to read the lesson plan and to answer the questions following the reading selection.

Answers to How Well Did You Read

- 1 c 45
- 2 d horse
- 3 b lawyer
- 4 d All of the above
- 5 a It was morally wrong
- 6 c Winchester

Additional Activities

Students may be instructed to write a brief essay on one of the following topics:

- a. How might Gen. Milroy's views on slavery have been shaped by the views and experiences of his father and grandfather?
- b. What three words would you choose to describe Gen. Milroy? Use specific examples from the reading selection to explain your choices.

Vocabulary

attorney - noun: A person who practices law. A lawyer.

volunteer - noun: A person who agrees to do something without pay or reward, usually because it makes society better.

rebellion - noun: A conflict in which one group tries to take control from another group in authority.

secede - verb: To leave a group or partnership.

militia - noun: Civilians trained as soldiers but not part of the regular army.

guerilla - noun: A member of an irregular armed force that fights a stronger force by damaging their equipment and using tactics to make them want to stop fighting.

philanthropist - noun: Someone who gives money to projects and charities to make society better.

Additional Activities

Students may choose to write a brief essay on one of the following topics:

- a. How might Gen. Milroy's views on slavery have been shaped by the views and experiences of his father and grandfather?
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On Your Own

To learn more about the Civil War through the eyes of someone who lived through it, the personal letters and papers of Gen. Milroy's Civil War years can be found online at <http://digi.jasperco.lib.in.us/>.

The Gray Eagle

Indiana and the Civil War

Robert H. Milroy Collection
Jasper County Public Library
Rensselaer, Indiana

Robert H. Milroy, an attorney in Rensselaer, Ind., was one of the first people to call for volunteers to serve the Union in what would later be called this country's Civil War.

On Feb 7, 1861, three days after southern states first joined together to form the Confederate States of America, Milroy printed a letter in local papers urging Hoosier men to sign up, "to assist in crushing out this rebellion."

Like many people in the country, Milroy believed states did not have the right to secede, or leave the Union. But Milroy also strongly believed slavery was wrong.

Because his own forces were ready in advance, when war officially broke out in April, 1861, Milroy and his militia were among the first troops sent into the fight.

Soon after, Milroy was posted as commander of volunteer troops in Virginia, where he helped lead early Union victories against Stonewall Jackson, and took part in the Second Battle of Bull Run.

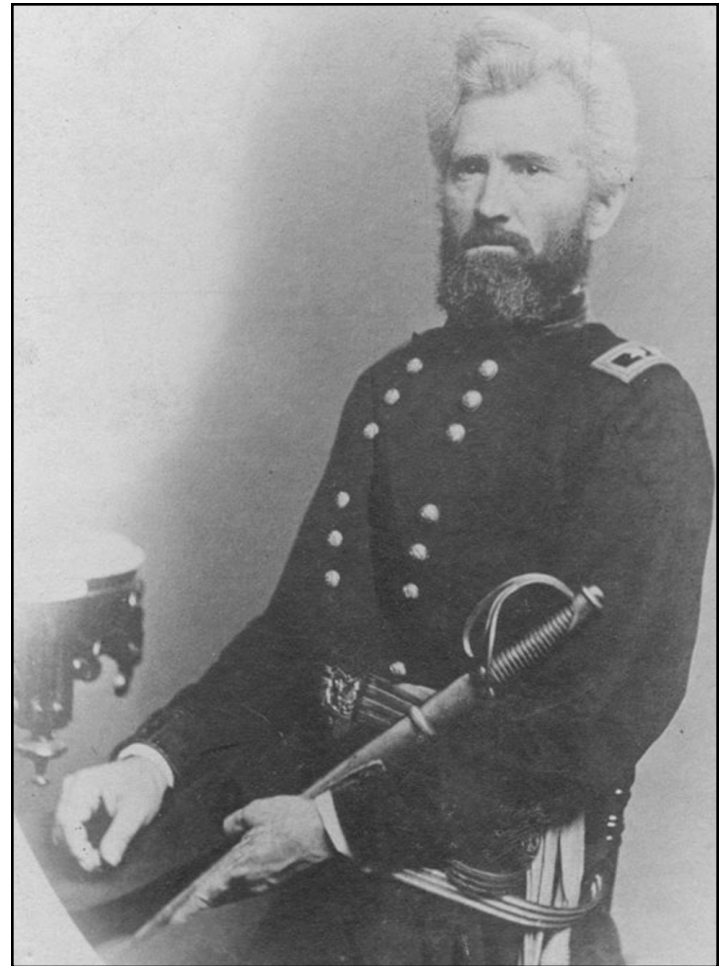
Officers in the Civil War came from many countries to help the Union and were of many ages.

Milroy's troops called their 45-year-old leader "The Gray Eagle" because of his eye-catching good looks, a gray-haired gent atop a gray-dappled horse.

The horse, named Jasper, was a gift from the people of Jasper County and went with Milroy until it was almost killed in battle.

In 1862, Milroy sent the horse home to stay with his wife, Mary, who nursed it back to health. Jasper joined him again on the battlefield later in the war.

In early 1863, after Milroy's troops took command of the town of Winchester in



Maj. General Robert H. Milroy

northern Virginia, the Virginia Legislature offered a reward of \$100,000 for Milroy's head.

The Rebel forces thought he was very dangerous because he had defeated the guerilla mountain rangers of Cheat Mountain in West Virginia.

Milroy's wife sent him a letter asking him to be careful.

"Remember that wife and little ones at home prize your head higher than the Va. Legislature therefore guard it well."

One day when Milroy was stationed at Cheat Mountain, a young slave came to the

Union camp, Camp Summit. His owner, a Rebel soldier, had sent him to fetch supplies. Instead, he had made a break for freedom.

Milroy gave the young man, Ben, a last name: Summit, and sent him to Rensselaer so Mary could teach him to read and write.

Ben earned \$2 a day splitting wood and working odd jobs for people, a good wage in those days. Eventually he joined the Union Army and became an officer.

Though many people were opposed to slavery, Milroy's beliefs were stronger than most in his day, and his men were very loyal to him because he worked to do something about what he believed in.

Milroy often wrote of his views:

"Some (confederate citizens) have tried to excite my pity by showing their hands a little hardened or perhaps blistered by labor which they had never before done in their lives till "old Abe's," proclamation and the Yankees had run off all their Negroes and they were compelled to work or starve. This appeal always made me laugh and I said to them that that is just what the old "Rail Splitter" was after."

Milroy grew up with his belief that slavery was morally wrong.

His father, Samuel, had moved the family from Kentucky to the Indiana territory in 1814 because he could no longer put up with the practice of slavery at his neighbors' farms.

The Milroy family's fight for individual freedoms had deeper roots as well.

Robert's grandfather, John McElroy, had been a titled land owner in Scotland, the Earl of Annendale.

In an attempt to gain freedom from English colonial rule, McElroy led his men against English soldiers in the Battle of Culloden, but lost. To escape capture, he changed his name to Milroy and fled with his family to the United States.

Robert was born in the Indiana Territory on June 11, 1816, about seven

months before Indiana became a state. He was the fourth of 10 children. He grew up learning to farm and mill at the family's homes in Salem and later Delphi.

Even as a young boy, his oldest wish was to be a soldier and serve his country on the battlefield.

Against the wishes of his father, who had also been a General in the U.S. Army, Robert wanted to go to military school.

When Robert was 25, Samuel told him to go east to Virginia and collect \$200 from the estate of Samuel's father.

Robert was instructed to use the money to travel the world and learn about it through experience. He instead followed his childhood dream and enrolled in the Norwich Military University at Norwich, Va.

Milroy graduated after two and a half years and applied to be an officer with the U.S. Army, but no officer positions were available. He returned to Indiana and began studying law.

During the Civil War, Milroy rose to the position of Major General within two years and had a promising military future.

His life and career changed, however, after his defeat at the Second Battle of Winchester, June 13-15, 1863.

Milroy believed his command of 6,900 could hold the town of Winchester from a rumored Rebel invasion. What he did not know was 19,000 Confederate troops were approaching, hidden from view of the town by the Blue Ridge Mountains.

A telegraph ordering him to leave was sent, but rebel troops had cut the lines and the message never reached him.

After three days of fighting and suffering losses of nearly 7 to 1, Milroy pulled his troops out and made a break for Union territory in Pennsylvania.

In all, 1,800 of Milroy's men were killed or captured. Another 2,000 sick and injured Union soldiers were left behind in field hospi-

tals within the city.

Milroy asked for a Court of Inquiry to determine the cause for the defeat, and though he was cleared of all blame, the battle forever haunted him.

He spent the remainder of the war in Tennessee, where he started working to set up government and local help for starving families -- former slaves and the wives and children of Union soldiers -- many of whom were living in tents outside the larger towns and cities there.

After serving in the Civil War, Milroy returned to the law and eventually moved to the Washington Territory, where he served as an agent for the federal Bureau of Indian

Affairs for 10 years. He died March 24, 1890 in Olympia, Wash.

Over the years, the old Milroy home in Rensselaer fell into ruin. It was torn down in 1902. Philanthropist Mrs. Alfred Thompson organized donations toward turning the site into a park in Milroy's memory.

A statue was sculpted by Rensselaer native Mary Washburn and unveiled by his descendants on July 4, 1910 at an Independence Day assembly of around 10,000 people. It was one of the largest crowds Rensselaer had ever seen.

Also memorialized on the statue is Milroy's friend and fellow officer, Ben Summit.

How Well Did You Read?

1. Robert H. Milroy became a commander in the Civil War at what age?

- a. 25
- b. 35
- c. 45
- d. 55

2. The people of Jasper County gave Milroy a (an)

- a. eagle.
- b. gorilla.
- c. farm.
- d. horse.

3. In addition to studying military science, Milroy chose what profession?

- a. doctor
- b. lawyer
- c. banker
- d. salesman

4. Why did Milroy's grandfather come to America?

- a. to escape British colonial rule
- b. because he had fought the British and lost
- c. because he would have been captured if he stayed
- d. all of the above

5. How did Milroy and his father feel about slavery?

- a. It was morally wrong.
- b. They didn't think much about it.
- c. It was needed.
- d. People should make their own choices.

6. Milroy's defeat came at the Battle of

- a. Culloden.
- b. Murfreesboro.
- c. Winchester.
- d. Fort Sumpter.