

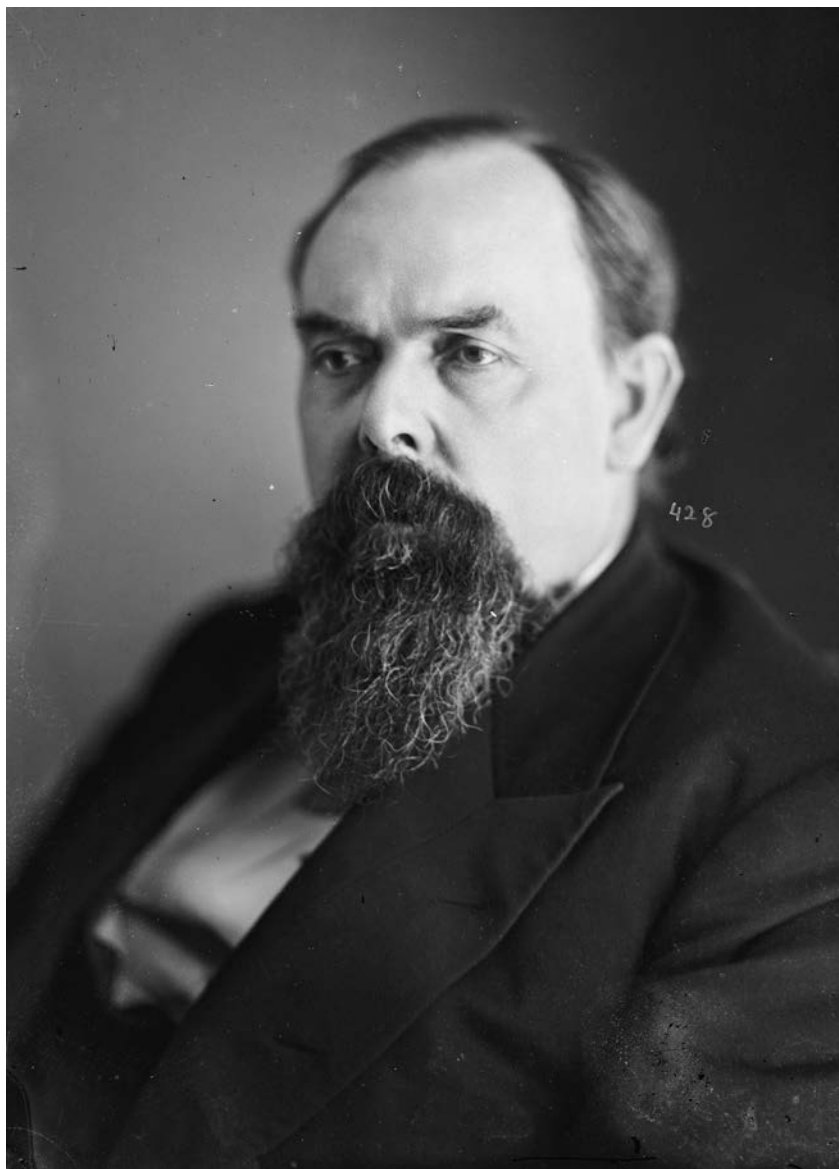
# Oliver P. Morton and the Politics of Historical Memory

A. JAMES FULLER

Oliver P. Morton died on November 1, 1877, but his memory lived on. In the months after his death, state and national political leaders offered eulogies, remembering Indiana's Civil War governor and Reconstruction senator in ways that allowed them to express their different views of the recent past. While the eulogists shared memories about Morton as a defender of the Union and the Soldiers' Friend, they disagreed on important matters, including the late leader's use of power, the issues of race and slavery, and the meaning of the Civil War. Indeed, Morton's memory remained a political matter for several decades, as orators remembered him at Grand Army of the Republic gatherings and at ceremonies dedicating statues of the Hoosier politician. The act of recalling the man who had helped to lead his state and nation through the war and its aftermath often led to contested memories, as speakers and writers selected what to remember and what to forget about the Civil War era. Remembering Morton became a platform for the politics of the present as well as a means of promoting different historical memories. Despite, or perhaps because of, this fact, Morton's legacy remained strong for fifty years after his death. Although by the early twenty-first century

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Senator Oliver P. Morton, c. 1870. Morton served as governor of Indiana from 1861 to 1867, when he was elected to the U.S. Senate. He served there until his death in 1877.

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many remembered him only as the Great War Governor, forgetting his significance during Reconstruction, Morton's memory still retained potent political power as Americans continued to use the past to construct meaning in their own time.<sup>1</sup>

Oliver P. Morton, the man who became a symbol of the Civil War and Reconstruction, was born near Centerville, Indiana, in Wayne County, in 1823, and he later became the first native son to win the governor's chair. After brief stints as an apprentice in the apothecary and hatter's trades, Morton studied at Miami University in Ohio before entering the legal profession in Centerville. He served a short time as a judge but soon became a corporate lawyer, handling a number of cases for railroad companies. Interested in politics from an early age, Morton identified with the Democratic Party until his opposition to slavery forced him out of the party in the wake of the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act. He joined the new Republican

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<sup>1</sup>Remembering Morton necessarily involved Civil War memory. The literature on the subject continues to grow and become more complex. Paul H. Buck's early study is too often neglected. See Buck, *The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900* (Boston, 1937). Later twentieth-century studies include Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York, 1987); on historical memory, Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, 1991); Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992); Carol Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1997); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J., 1997); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2000).

The most influential book on Civil War memory in the last fifteen years is the flawed but insightful work of David W. Blight, who extended Buck's interpretation by arguing that the foundation of reunion and twentieth-century American nationalism rested on the reconciliation of the North and the South on terms that preserved racism and white supremacy. He posited three distinct Civil War memories: the Emancipationist, the Lost Cause, and the Reconciliationist, with the last informing reunion on racist grounds. See David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001). See also Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1993); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2010). Useful correctives to and expansions of Blight, especially in distinguishing a fourth memory, the Unionist view, are found in William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004); John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence, Kan., 2005); Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2008); Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember: Antislavery Autobiographies and the Unfinished Work of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2008); Caroline E. Janney, *Burying The Dead But Not The Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations & the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2008); and Barbara A. Gannon, *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2011). Janney provides a full correction of the Blight interpretation in *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2013).

Party and helped to establish it in Indiana, serving as an important leader of the coalition of former Democrats, former Whigs, and various others that emerged around a shared opposition to the extension of slavery and the Democratic Party. In 1856, the new party chose him to run for governor. He lost the race, but the campaign made him a rising star in politics, even as his legal career also flourished. In 1860, the Republicans devised a scheme in which Henry S. Lane would be the candidate for governor while Morton ran for lieutenant governor. If the Republicans won a majority in the legislature, the scheme called for Lane to resign and be elected to the U.S. Senate by the legislature, allowing Morton to become governor. The plan worked: Lane resigned after two days in office and Morton took the governor's chair on January 16, 1861.<sup>2</sup>

Morton remained a dedicated advocate of the war during the conflict's darkest days. His support for the Union cause and for President Abraham Lincoln became the stuff of legend, even as his constant badgering of the president exasperated Lincoln and other national leaders. Morton hated slavery and saw it as a central cause of the conflict. When Democrats won a majority of seats in the state legislature in the 1862 elections and set out to curb his power in their 1863 session, Morton let the session end without an appropriations bill passing. Instead of calling a special session to fund the government—allowing the Democrats an opportunity to thwart his plans—the governor turned to “one-man rule.”<sup>3</sup>

For the next twenty-one months, Morton ignored the state constitution and ran the state himself. He borrowed money from county governments controlled by loyal Republicans and from New York bankers. The War Department sent funds and Morton illegally took money from the state arsenal. The governor kept the money in a safe in his office and disbursed it through an assistant titled the chief of the “Bureau of Finance.” Morton labeled all who complained as “traitors,” and worked closely with military officials to investigate the so-called Copperheads and their secret organizations in the state. The investigations led to arrests and the Indianapolis Treason Trials of 1864. Thus the governor dealt with those who opposed him and the Union war effort. From March 1863 to January 1865, Morton ran the state as a virtual dictator. Throughout the war, he

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<sup>2</sup>The best study of Morton's life remains *William Dudley Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, Ind., 1899). The material here comes from my own synthesis of various sources compiled during research for my forthcoming biography of Morton; I refer the reader to Foulke for a more complete account.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 1, esp. chap. 12.

centralized power in the governor's office and helped extend the power of the national government as well.<sup>4</sup>

Morton emerged from the war as a staunch nationalist and the most powerful figure in Indiana politics. He tried to build a political machine in the Hoosier state and worked diligently to support his friends and to punish his enemies. Principle often took a backseat to ambition, personality, and opportunism. Morton used his power to win election to the U.S. Senate in 1866, and he became a formidable figure on the national level, leading the Stalwart faction of the Republican Party in its support of President Ulysses S. Grant. He also led the Republicans in "waving the bloody shirt," constantly reminding voters of the war and blaming the Democrats for the rebellion. For Morton, Reconstruction constituted a continuation of the war, and he persisted in trying to punish the rebels and Copperheads. As a leading Radical Republican senator, Morton boldly proclaimed the rights of former slaves, and he figured prominently in most of the major legislative actions of the Reconstruction era, including the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Best known for his stand on Reconstruction, especially his 1868 speech that promoted the radical position, and for his role as Senate manager of the Fifteenth Amendment, Morton also influenced economic and foreign policy and supported rights for women. He was widely considered a likely candidate for president in 1876, but paralyzing strokes which had left him unable to walk raised doubts about his candidacy. He instead served on the committee that settled the controversial election of 1876. Indeed, one of Morton's last acts before dying in November 1877 was helping to put Rutherford B. Hayes into office. This, then, was the man who became a potent symbol of a contested past.<sup>5</sup>

The first eulogies for Morton included memorial speeches given in the U.S. Senate on January 17 and 18, 1878. Delivered in the immediate aftermath of the contested presidential election and the end of Reconstruction, the speeches came at a time when many Americans were ready to forget the bitterness of sectionalism and the Civil War, as well as the economic conflicts that divided labor and management, and to look forward to a brighter future in a unified nation poised to enjoy the wealth and power of the new industrial age and continued westward expansion. Forgetting the past, however, meant setting aside or glossing over differences, often

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, esp. chaps. 29 and 30. In Indiana, the Democrats soon recovered and won many of the elections that Morton hoped his own party would carry. See James H. Madison, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana* (Bloomington, Ind., 2014), 166.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., vol. 2.



a difficult task. For many, it meant abandoning the fight for racial equality and redefining nationalism in ways that embraced both North and South instead of Union triumph. In a sense, then, Morton's death represented the passing of an era.

The senators' memorials, like others that came after them, reflected the memories of those who had known Morton, but they also expressed the speakers' own political views and historical memories. Indiana's junior senator, Joseph E. McDonald, rose first to commemorate his late colleague. The Democrat had unsuccessfully challenged Morton for the governor's chair in 1864; he defeated Daniel D. Pratt in the 1874 Senate race and took office in 1875. This former political foe set the tone for generations of remembrance as he praised his Republican colleague's energy and ability. Although McDonald, a War Democrat who had supported the Union, had criticized Morton's leadership as governor, especially his centralization of power, he quickly passed over such differences in his memorial. Rather, he focused on Morton's relentless support for the Union, arguing that "the energy with which he supported and upheld the power of the Federal Government in its efforts to suppress the rebellion won for him the name and title of the 'war governor,' and gave him a permanent place in the front rank of the public men of the country." This was not simply a matter of being kind to the dead. McDonald still remembered the governor as "naturally combative and aggressive, intensely in earnest in his undertakings, and intolerant in regard to those who differed with him" and remarked that Morton had too often made sound patriots his enemies because of perceived disloyalty. As an opponent of Radical Reconstruction, he gently chided Morton for being a "champion of the reconstruction policy" rather than "restoration" and criticized the late leader for his partisanship in helping to elect a Republican to the presidency in 1876. The Democrat concluded that "Oliver P. Morton was a great man," but argued that Americans would always differ in their views of his actions as a political leader. The senator sidestepped controversial issues while also referring to Morton's faults and vaguely criticizing his political positions. Couching his eulogy in such language allowed him to share his late rival's positive attributes and staunch Unionism while distancing himself from anything that might stir opposition to his own political future.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Joseph E. McDonald, "Address of Mr. McDonald, of Indiana" in *Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Oliver P. Morton, (A Senator from Indiana) Delivered in the Senate and House of Representatives, January 17 and 18, 1878* (Washington, D.C., 1878), 8-13.

Vermont Senator George F. Edmunds continued the theme of remembering Morton as an energetic Unionist, but he also recalled the Hoosier's support for emancipation and equality. A fellow Republican who had supported Radical Reconstruction, Edmunds argued that Morton's partisanship had served sacred principles. As governor, the Hoosier leader had "brought a fervent love of that real liberty and equality of rights among men that can exist only under the security of provisions of fundamental law, and can only be practically defended and promoted by the enactment of statutes, and their fearless and vigilant enforcement by judiciary and executive power." The governor had believed in freedom and Union, both defended by the power of the state and national governments and by the Republican Party. Edmunds remembered that Senator Morton had continued his support of his fundamental nationalist ideology by fighting for the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, as well as for the laws that Republicans had passed to enforce those constitutional changes. He recalled that Morton "firmly believed that there had been a great and beneficent change, a lawful revolution in the form of the Government in the direction of equal rights, as the fair fruit of a revolution that had been attempted in the interest of slavery and secession." For Edmunds and the majority of politicians who spoke over the course of the two days set aside for the memorials, Morton stood for freedom, equality, and the Union, and his career had been a triumph over rebellion and slavery.<sup>7</sup>

Following several other speakers, former Union general Ambrose Burnside of Rhode Island expanded on the memory of Morton, recalling that the governor's "great care and love for the soldiers of his State, not only while they were in the field but after their return to their homes, won for him their great respect and affection." Indeed, "The Soldiers' Friend" became a standard piece of Morton's memory. Burnside also complicated historical memory by discussing Morton's opposition to the general's arrest of a number of Northern civilians for treason after they made speeches criticizing Morton, Lincoln, and other Republicans for their wartime conduct. While others would remember Morton for attacking those who opposed the war, Burnside recalled that the governor had fought for the dissenters and had demanded the release of a state senator who "was one

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<sup>7</sup>George F. Edmunds, "Address of Mr. Edmunds, of Vermont," in *Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Oliver P. Morton*, 13-18. I draw this conception for Morton's ideology from Michael S. Green, *Freedom, Union, and Power: Lincoln and his Party during the Civil War* (New York, 2004) and have added the aspect of party as suggested in Leslie Hamilton Schultz, "Oliver P. Morton and Reconstruction, 1867-1877" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1935).

of his most bitter political opponents.” Such a memory fit well in the days following the end of Reconstruction, as politicians rushed to set aside past bitterness in the name of reconciling differences and healing old wounds.<sup>8</sup>

But some of Morton’s Senate colleagues were not ready to let the past go. When Reconstruction ended in Alabama, the Democrats returned to power in the state legislature and elected John Tyler Morgan to the U.S. Senate in 1877. Morgan was a spokesman for the Lost Cause who had championed the end of Reconstruction in the South. A life-long Democrat, he had fought for the Confederacy, rising to the rank of general, and he remained a staunch defender of slavery and states’ rights. Morgan may have been a leader of the Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction; he supported legal lynching and promoted racial segregation and white supremacy for the remainder of his long senatorial career. The southern Democrat noted that Indiana had “suffered a bereavement in the death of an honored son” and extended Alabama’s condolences, complete with “emblems of peace” and feelings of sympathy and friendship. But Morgan quickly moved on to his main point, arguing that Morton “did not live to see the States all reassembled in this Chamber,” discrediting with a sentence the Republican governments that had controlled the Southern states during Reconstruction and for which the Indiana senator had fought long and hard. Morgan remembered that Morton had resisted the return of the Democrats in the South “under his views of the Constitution,” and recalled that “states stood arrayed against him.”<sup>9</sup>

The Senate’s new voice of the Lost Cause couched his remarks in the language of reconciliation: Morton had “believed that he was compelled to lay his hand on the sword of military power. He grasped it firmly. He wielded it without pause or questioning, but with perfect loyalty to his country. In this he only did his duty; for the country of his soul’s allegiance required it of him.” Speaking of the politician as a soldier reflected the style of reconciliation and the Lost Cause, both of which extolled the courage and virtue of those who fought for that in which they believed. But while the Alabama leader could forgive Morton for his actions in the war, he could not forget that the Indiana statesman had been a Radical Republican during Reconstruction: “When others thought that the sword had served its full purpose and should be sheathed . . . he held to it with a firmer grasp.” Remembering how Morton had waved the Bloody Shirt

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<sup>8</sup>Ambrose Burnside, “Address of Mr. Burnside, of Rhode Island,” in *Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Oliver P. Morton*, 22-26.

<sup>9</sup>John Tyler Morgan, “Address of Mr. Morgan, of Alabama,” in *Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Oliver P. Morton*, 26-31.

throughout the postwar period, the unreconstructed southerner noted that “in this the South was opposed to him, and its wail of anguish was bitter against him. While he held the sword suspended the South had no shield for its uncovered bosom.”<sup>10</sup>

Even as Morgan remembered Morton as the enemy of the South, he excused his criticisms of the late statesman, saying that he was sure that Morton would have asked for no less, would have made “no plea for lenient consideration. His opinions are too bold and too broadly and confidently stated to be drifted off into neutral ground.” The Alabamian predicted that Morton’s views, though flawed, would “always be respected.” He argued, implausibly, that the differences between Morton and the South were those of opinion: “The hostility was not in the intent or the purpose.” Rather, the differences between North and South were “based on misconceptions of fact, the correction of which other evil influences rendered for the time impossible.” Morton’s war to save the Union and his support of Radical Reconstruction became a misunderstanding that, in a different context, might have been avoided. Thus one defiant supporter of the Lost Cause couched his eulogy in the language of reconciliation.<sup>11</sup>

Several other Republicans continued Edmunds’s arguments, adding remarks about race and slavery. Then the senator from Mississippi, Blanche Bruce, stood and delivered a eulogy that focused on Morton’s fight for emancipation and equality. An African American Republican elected in 1875, Bruce represented those memories of the Civil War that proponents of the Lost Cause preferred to forget. Born a slave in Virginia, he had gained his freedom when his master—also his father—manumitted him and sent him off as an apprentice to learn a trade. He worked as a printer and, when the Union Army rejected him as a volunteer because of his race, he attended Oberlin College. After a stint as a steamboat pilot, he opened a school for blacks in Missouri. When the war ended, Bruce moved to Mississippi, where he bought land and entered politics during Reconstruction. The second black man elected to the U.S. Senate, he continued in office until 1880, when he lost to a white Southern Democrat. In his memorial address, Bruce predicted that in the future, Morton’s views would be as “revered as are now those of the fathers of the Republic.” Speaking as an African American leader, Bruce argued that “no public man of his day, with the possible exception of Abraham Lincoln and Charles Sumner, was

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

better known to the colored people of the South than Oliver P. Morton, and none more respected and revered.”<sup>12</sup>

Bruce recalled that Morton had initially been reluctant to give the vote to the freedmen but had changed his mind. The senator argued that Morton should be judged on his later actions—especially his leadership in the fight for the Fifteenth Amendment—rather than his momentary hesitation. Morton’s work in the Senate, he claimed, had rested on two fundamental issues: first, that the “emancipation of more than four millions of former bondsmen was an accomplished fact”; and second, that the “political relations of eleven great communities were ruptured and imperatively demanded restoration.” Those two issues of emancipation and reconstruction of the Southern states, according to Bruce, were related and revolutionary. Emancipation “involved reorganization of both the social and industrial elements of the South,” and Morton had believed that a “just, harmonious, peaceful” process “demanded the enfranchisement of the negro.” The freedman needed the right to vote because true freedom “could only be sufficiently attained when he was clothed with the power of self-protection by becoming a personal and actual participant in the creation and administration of government.” The progress of black southerners during the 1870s attested to the potential power of egalitarianism, but policies promoting equality were already beginning to fade as Southern Redeemers took political control. For Morton, reconstruction of the South could only be fully achieved when black Americans were “equally protected” by the law and enjoyed citizenship and the right to vote. The Indiana senator, Bruce stated, “looked not only to the elevation of a race but the reconstruction of a great country.” That his vision for the future was now fading did not diminish the importance of what Morton had helped to accomplish.<sup>13</sup>

Senator Bruce concluded that while all Americans owed Morton a debt of gratitude, African Americans especially loved and respected him and his loyalty to their cause. Coming after the end of Reconstruction, as more Americans turned their backs on racial equality, Bruce’s speech stood as a bold contrast to Morgan’s memories of the Lost Cause, and he offered a far more radical recollection of Morton than the one that focused on the Unionist war governor and friend of the soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Branch K. Bruce, “Address of Mr. Bruce, of Mississippi,” in *Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Oliver P. Morton*, 51-57.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

In the House of Representatives, none of the majority Democrats chose to participate in the memorial, and the speakers were all northern Republicans. Such partisanship marked the lower chamber of Congress and reflected the ways in which many Democrats chose to forget the past. Republican Congressman John Hanna from Greencastle, Indiana, remembered that “the preservation of the Union in the interest of liberty and humanity was with [Morton] a conviction of duty so intense that no earthly power ever presented obstacles which he deemed insurmountable.” Hanna argued that Morton had helped to extinguish “a heresy which has cost so much blood and treasure—that we are simply a confederation of States, bound only by a rope of sand.” The Greencastle politician also evoked the issue of emancipation, remarking that Morton “was equally devoted to securing beyond all question for the weak and humble the inalienable rights of man.” Congressman Thomas E. Browne from Winchester, Indiana, recalled that “to the cause of the Union” Morton “consecrated every energy and impulse” and said that for Morton “the war was a contest in which slavery was measuring swords with free representative government, and he believed the victory of the insurgents would be the doom of the Republic.” Other speakers sidestepped the issues of Union and slavery by focusing on Morton’s personal qualities. August A. Hardenburgh of New Jersey waxed on in flowery language about Morton’s public spirit, and future president James A. Garfield of Ohio spoke of the late leader’s organizational skills and force of will. All could agree that Morton had been a significant leader blessed with great abilities.<sup>15</sup>

Even in these early memorials, Americans contested the memory of Morton. Everyone remembered his energy, his organizational skills, his leadership abilities, and his commitment to the Union. Almost everyone recalled his dedication to his party, his tireless support of the soldiers, and his love of freedom. Some eulogists talked about his legal career and the power of his intellect. Almost all of them remembered the force of his oratory, his habit of stating clearly, even bluntly, what he meant. They lamented the decline of his health and praised him for continuing to work after strokes left him paralyzed. Even his enemies remembered that he could be a warm and loyal friend, although many also noted that he could be ruthless to those who crossed him. But beyond the consistent

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<sup>15</sup>The only non-northerner to speak in the House of Representatives hailed from West Virginia. For the memorials in the House, see *Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Oliver P. Morton*, 61-125. For Hanna, see pp. 62-67; Brown, pp. 70-84; Hardenburgh, pp. 84-94; and Garfield, pp. 101-105.

themes which united the memorials, eulogists presented different views of Morton that reflected their particular memories of the Civil War. Thus, African Americans remembered him differently than did unreconstructed ex-Confederates; northern Democrats focused on personal matters rather than sharing the Unionist recollections of Republicans.<sup>16</sup>

Across the ensuing years, anniversaries and memorial dedications returned the nation's attention to the Civil War and Reconstruction and provided opportunities for remembering Morton's career and historical legacy. On November 1, 1891, the fourteenth anniversary of Morton's death, Republican lawyer and politician William P. Fishback delivered an address to the Grand Army of the Republic encampment in Indianapolis. He argued that Morton was the greatest statesman that Indiana had ever produced and recalled that long before other leaders, including Lincoln, recognized the reality of secession, "Morton proclaimed that there should be no compromise with rebels." Fishback picked up on a theme that often reappeared on such occasions, as speakers hinted at sinister conspiracies designed to undermine the Union victory while rallying the GAR members for political support. He asserted that there were dark forces at work in politics—a matter of consequence in his own career as a civil service reformer and education supporter. Then looking back at the scene of Morton's career during the war, he noted "in the background other forms, dark, ambiguous, and sinister, the shadows of those who were deaf to the calls of patriotism, who sulked in the hour of battle or caballed and conspired to cripple and defeat the Union army." Recalling Morton's struggles against the Copperheads, Fishback also reminded the gathered veterans that Morton—in contrast to his enemies—had been the Soldiers' Friend, purchasing overcoats for Hoosier troops, creating the Indiana Sanitary Commission to keep the men supplied, and making efforts to treat the wounded at the front and bring them home to Indiana hospitals for care. In return, he recalled, the soldiers supported Morton politically, both as governor and as senator, making it a reciprocal relationship between the politician and his constituency. Of Morton's Senate service, Fishback remembered his role in "the reconstruction legislation and the constitutional amendments" and in leading the Radical Republican effort to help African Americans in the South. The Republican speaker also remembered that

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<sup>16</sup>My interpretation of the memories of Morton and the Civil War differs somewhat from that of James H. Madison, who argued for a view of Indiana's Civil War memory similar to that of David Blight, see Madison, "Civil War Memories and 'Partnership Forgittin' 1865-1913," *Indiana Magazine of History* 99 (September 2003), 198-230.



Morton as Civil War-era governor, with a military parade shown in the background of this c. 1862 print. After his death, Morton was often remembered as the Soldiers' Friend and as a staunch defender of the Union.

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in January 1868 Morton had delivered a powerful speech on Reconstruction that “was an assault upon the policy of President Johnson, who was organizing governments in the seceded States upon the basis of white population alone.” Morton had defended “the congressional plan which was to go upon the basis of loyalty to the Nation, regardless of color.” Fishback closed his address with the senator’s “dying words, that he was ‘worn out’—worn out in the service of his State and Nation.”

In his 1891 speech, Fishback remembered the aspects of Morton’s career—his efforts to clean up politics and his work in starting the Indiana law school—that spoke to the attorney’s own interests in reforming society. But Fishback also used Morton’s memory to remind his audience of Union veterans of the cause for which they had fought, recalling the past in ways that rallied his listeners to continue their support for reform and for the Republican Party. Morton had worked to earn the soldiers’ support during his lifetime and, for many years after his death, his memory remained a potent means of mustering veterans to vote for Republicans.<sup>17</sup>

Different views of Morton that hinged on shifting historical memory once again came into play in 1900. The Federal government had allowed each state to place two statues in the Capitol’s Statuary Hall, and Indiana had chosen the state’s first to memorialize Morton, passing a law commissioning the monument in 1897. Although the Democrats had quickly returned to power in Indiana following the Civil War, the Republicans generally dominated national politics, and this turn helped to set the stage for the 1900 memorials to Morton. As the century closed, the United States had finished its western expansion even as the population rose, fueled by immigration and internal growth. The growth of industrial capitalism created immense national wealth and power, but battles between labor and management brought violence and upheaval. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court had established racial segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Many in the North saw the case as legal confirmation of the power of white supremacy and the final abandonment of African Americans freed by the Civil War. A new generation of Americans who had not known slavery in their lifetimes embraced the doctrine of “separate but equal,” and a majority of white Americans embraced segregation in the North as well as the South. The populist movement that had animated politics waned in the late 1890s,

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<sup>17</sup>W. P. Fishback, *Address Delivered on the Fourteenth Anniversary of the Death of Oliver P. Morton, to the Members of the Grand Army of the Republic, at Indianapolis, November 1st, 1891* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1891). For more on Fishback, see Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1968), 13, 21, 417.

especially after the Spanish-American War in 1898, and nationalism reigned supreme in the wake of military victory. The United States seemed poised for greatness, and on April 14, 1900, as Indiana's senators joined colleagues in celebrating the acceptance of the Morton statue, their speeches expressed the nationalism inherent in their own time and connected that to the Civil War era and Morton's own career.<sup>18</sup>

U.S. Senator Charles W. Fairbanks of Indianapolis began his address with memories of emancipation, noting that Morton came from Wayne County, Indiana, where the people "have been intensely patriotic and liberty loving. The institution of human slavery was repugnant to them, and they were strongly antislavery prior to the civil war. The 'underground railroad' had many stations in that part of the State, where countless colored refugees found succor and asylum in their search for liberty."<sup>19</sup> After recounting Morton's early career, Fairbanks quoted at length from the governor's words in defense of the Union. Morton had recognized the dangerous nature of secession long before others did, realizing "that a grave emergency was at hand and that the future of the Republic would tremble in the balance." Fairbanks argued: "When others wavered he was firm, and when others doubted he was certain. Compromise was impossible, for right and wrong opposed each other. Freedom and slavery were engaged for the mastery; there could be no compromise." Fairbanks, an important advisor to President William McKinley during the Spanish-American War, had crafted a historical analysis that fit well with his own nationalist views of war and American power.<sup>20</sup>

The soon-to-be vice-president remembered that Morton had supported Lincoln and that he "was, indeed, the soldiers' friend" both during and after the war, and did not forget that "provision was to be made for the widow and the orphan by a grateful Republic." After outlining Morton's work as war governor, Fairbanks turned to his career in the Senate, remembering that the nation had to be rebuilt without abandoning the cause of African American freedom, as "a race must be secured in the rights of citizenship." Fairbanks himself had interceded on behalf of black soldiers

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<sup>18</sup>*Proceedings in Congress upon the Acceptance of the Statue of Oliver P. Morton, presented by the State of Indiana* (Washington, D.C., 1900).

<sup>19</sup>Here Fairbanks's words about blacks searching for liberty contradict Blight, who argues that the emphasis of memories of the Underground Railroad was always on the white abolitionists and not the agency of runaway slaves; see Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 231.

<sup>20</sup>Charles W. Fairbanks, "Address of Mr. Fairbanks," in *Proceedings in Congress upon the Acceptance of the Statue of Oliver P. Morton*, 7-20.



Marble statue of Morton by Charles H. Niehaus, 1900. The state of Indiana chose to memorialize Morton in the Statuary Hall of the U.S. Congress.

Architect of the Capitol website, <http://www.aoc.gov>

during the war with Spain and, despite his conservative philosophy, he held fast to ideas of racial equality. Fairbanks argued that Senator Morton “possessed convictions, and convictions possessed him” and that he had proved himself “an aggressive and zealous advocate of the policy of reconstruction.” Fairbanks recounted an important Reconstruction speech that Morton had delivered and noted the nationalism that pervaded it, quoting Morton’s own words: “The States are but subordinate parts of one great nation. The Nation is over all, even as God is over the universe.” Fairbanks also remembered that “it was largely due to his championship that the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the Constitution were adopted” and again quoted Morton, recalling how the senator had rejected “the appeal of prejudice of race against race; the endeavor to excite the strong against the weak; the effort to deprive the weak of their right of protection against the strong.” Remembering Morton’s fight for racial equality mattered in the years following *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Fairbanks’s memories of Morton challenged prevailing attitudes about white supremacy, but couched in terms easily understood to an audience living in the early stages of the Progressive Era, when reformers hoped to curb the excesses of capitalism and battle sin in the name of extending the American Dream. Helping the weak, the poor, the downtrodden meant much to voters at the turn of the century—and Fairbanks knew that his own party often led the way in calling for reform and government action. Remembering Morton as both the Civil War governor and Reconstruction senator, Fairbanks portrayed him in heroic terms that encompassed his support for the Union, the soldiers, the veterans, war widows and orphans, and African Americans.<sup>21</sup>

Indiana’s junior senator, Albert J. Beveridge, rose to remember Morton in even more overtly nationalist terms. Elected the previous year, Beveridge—a long-time rival of Fairbanks—was a progressive reformer and spokesman for imperialism, who held to a nationalist ideology that combined religious zeal with intellectual rigor. Still in the early days of the first of his two Senate terms, he began his speech by invoking the Almighty, saying that “great men are the instruments of God.” Morton, he declared, had been divinely inspired to save the Union and to provide for the soldiers and their families. Indeed, Beveridge thought that the governor did it all “in a holy cause. A single passionate belief inspired his life—a single irresistible resolution. A Nation in reality the American people ought to be, and a Nation in reality he would give his powers to make us.” In this

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid. For more on Fairbanks, see Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, esp. 54, 65, 129-30.

view, Morton's "statesmanship was Nationality" and thus he joined others like Lincoln, those "seers of statesmanship" who "behold in a consolidated nationality the sovereignty of the people, the prosperity of the people, the happiness and safety of the people." Beveridge discussed the governor's wartime career at length before returning to his main theme: "Morton's whole career was based upon profound belief in the common people," in "the living vital, human faith of one who in himself is of the people. That is why he was a Nationalist." Speaking to a Progressive-Era audience just after the Spanish-American War, the Republican reformer merged Morton's nationalism with his own.<sup>22</sup>

Beveridge celebrated the fact that Morton had been a partisan politician, arguing that "America needs to-day more partisanship like that." Morton's dedication to party showed that he "understood that principles were greater than personalities, and that a party standing for a principle is greater than any man standing for a personality." Because he believed "in the sovereignty of an idea" and wanted to realize his ideas, Morton led his party to save the Union and used his power as a party leader to destroy slavery. Beveridge argued that, thanks to Morton, "slavery is gone forever, and on the seat of independence, dignity, and power, free labor sits enthroned. . . . Thought is free, speech is free; liberty at last is dwelling among the sons of men." The future historian placed Morton among "the heroes of the people" who "led the people's cause to victory, and enshrined the people's rights in the people's imperishable Nation." Champion of the people, defender of the Union, supporter of freedom, partisan of principle, hero of the nation, Morton stood tall in a memory that clearly displayed the continuing vitality of a nationalist memory of the Civil War era amid calls for an American empire in the new age of Progressive reform.<sup>23</sup>

Speakers from the House of Representatives also presented their historical memories of Morton and, once again, remembering Morton proved a complicated matter. Indiana's George W. Steele recounted how Morton had attacked "the hateful doctrine" of states' rights. Fellow Hoosier Abraham L. Brick remembered that for Morton the "Union was more sacred than even human blood, than his own life." Another Indiana Republican, Jesse Overstreet, argued that the War of the Rebellion had brought Morton his opportunity for greatness and remembered "his courageous

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<sup>22</sup>Albert J. Beveridge, "Address of Mr. Beveridge," in *Proceedings in Congress upon the Acceptance of the Statue of Oliver P. Morton*, 35-45.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*; for more on Beveridge, see Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 70-72, 95. Beveridge later became a historian and won the Pulitzer Prize for his study of the life of John Marshall.

stand for the Union” and dedication to the soldiers. Many of the speakers discussed how Morton had rooted out traitors in Indiana, thwarting the efforts of the Copperheads, and nearly all praised his efforts as the Soldiers’ Friend. Emancipation remained an important memory, as Ohio’s Charles H. Grosvenor talked about how Morton “entered upon a war against the proslavery tendencies of the Democratic party” and New York’s De Alva S. Alexander analyzed Morton’s close association with Charles Sumner and their collaborative “efforts to secure the passage and ratification of the fifteenth amendment.” Edgar D. Crumpacker of Indiana continued the focus on emancipation when he recalled that slavery had been the cause of the Civil War: “Slavery became aggressive and demanded new territory” but Morton, “a man of powerful convictions . . . dedicated to the cause of human liberty,” resisted that aggression. James E. Watson used the occasion to argue that slavery had “ruled this entire nation with absolute sway.” He described how Southern slavery had “sought to tear the Stars and Stripes into shreds and from the tattered fragments to construct the Stars and Bars. She sought to crush the Union, and from its ruins to erect a new nation, whose foundation should be the stooping and lacerated backs of 4,000,000 human beings.”<sup>24</sup>

While Republican congressmen harkened back to Morton’s fight against slavery, the Democrats remembered him from a very different perspective. Indiana’s Robert W. Miers admitted that Morton had been a great man who worked tirelessly despite his health problems and who remained strong in his convictions. But Miers also recalled that “his life was one of constant criticism and censure; he made strong friends and bitter enemies.” “We regret that the conditions of his time made him violent in some of his methods,” the Hoosier Democrat continued, arguing that Morton had still been a great man whose “services to his State and his nation will live forever in history, while the enmities which he engendered have already been buried.” Another Indiana Democrat, Francis M. Griffith, remembered that Morton was the subject of much criticism and that he was greatly feared by many, especially his political enemies. But “old prejudices are forgotten,” Griffith said, offering reconciliation: “The sound of hasty words has died away. We can view Oliver P. Morton as he really was, and Democrats can unite with Republicans to-day in doing homage to that iron will and great intellect which assisted to restore order out of

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<sup>24</sup>For the April 14, 1900, speeches in the House of Representatives, see *Proceedings in Congress upon the Acceptance of the Statue of Oliver P. Morton*, 47-141. Quotes from the speeches are from pp. 52, 83, 71, 66, 87, 100-101, and 119-20.

chaos in Indiana and assisted in guiding the ship of state safely through the most stormy waters it ever encountered.”<sup>25</sup>

Seven years later, Hoosiers officially bestowed on Morton the title, “The Great War Governor.” The GAR had proposed that the state erect a monument to Morton in front of the east entrance of the Indiana state capitol. Indiana lawmakers dutifully responded to the veterans with a bill that provided for the statue, stating, in Unionist terms, that “no man in civil life, save Abraham Lincoln, did more for the Union during the Civil War than Oliver P. Morton, the great War Governor of Indiana,” and appropriating \$35,000 dollars to fund it. On July 23, 1907, the statue was dedicated, complete with a parade, a full band, and a crowd of thousands singing “America.” The monument’s bronze tablet boldly stated the sentiments of nationalism and continued the now-familiar Progressive-Era themes regarding the memory of Morton and the Civil War: “Oliver Perry Morton . . . In all ways and at all times the friend of the Union soldier, the friend of the country, the upholder of Abraham Lincoln, the defender of the flag and the Union of the States. Patriot, statesman, lover of liberty, heroic in heart, inflexible in purpose, and ever to be known as THE GREAT WAR GOVERNOR.”<sup>26</sup>

The dedication speeches began with Warren R. King, a GAR leader and president of the monument commission, who remembered fallen comrades and living brothers-in-arms who carried the scars of battle. King suggested that the monument to Morton was also a symbol of something much larger: it would not only commemorate the war governor but would “also perpetuate the fact that the citizens of Indiana who lived at the time of its building did not lack in three of the greatest virtues, love, memory, and gratitude.”<sup>27</sup>

Governor J. Frank Hanly followed with flowery oratory, accepting the statue on behalf of the state. He, too, argued that Morton’s monument was a symbol of something greater. The statue would “tell the story of a people’s crucial trial,” a matter of importance at a time when Hanly was pushing for progressive reforms in Indiana. He listed Morton’s many accomplishments, especially in preparing Hoosier soldiers for war. Speak-

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 62, 73-74.

<sup>26</sup>Henry C. Adams, comp., *State of Indiana Dedication Ceremonies of Morton Statue and Monument and Report of Commission, 1907* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1908), 3-4, 12-14.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 15-19. King also lamented that “there is no adequate history of the work and sacrifices of the women of Indiana during the war,” although he expressed hope that the monument portrayed at least some of what the women had done.

ing to his Progressive-Era audience, Hanly argued that the Morton story was one “of love and pity and tender care for the sick and wounded, the widowed and the fatherless; of a state betrayed and yet preserved; of days of toil and nights of waking; of high resolve, of solemn consecration; of carnage and of sacrifice; of wounds and death and prison walls.” Yet the monument would also remind those who saw it “of a land redeemed . . . of a government saved from dishonor and dismemberment; of the establishment of national solidarity, of peace achieved, of a union reconstructed; of slavery abolished by constitutional enactment.” Thus, Hanly brought together Union and emancipation in a nationalist vision of the Civil War. Morton had become a symbol of the nation “in its unity, and in its indivisibility.” His statue stood to remind future generations that the nationalist Civil War leader had “freely admitted that it would cost much to save the Union (how much none knew better than he), but insisted that it would cost everything to lose it.”<sup>28</sup>

Governor Hanly held forth for a long time more, detailing Morton’s many contributions and excusing him for those times when he had acted “outside the constitution and beyond the law,” because he did so “always for public good.” In an era of progressive reform, one’s good intentions mattered, even when redefining the law. Hanly’s own progressive agenda achieved little, as the conservative Democrats in the state legislature thwarted most of his efforts. A supporter of prohibition before, during, and after his term as governor, he did not live to see the unintended consequences of that policy. But as he spoke that day in 1907, the governor eager to reform Indiana in light of his own moral principles told his audience that, before Morton, “the state had not known his equal, nor shall we know his like again, till in the unfolding purpose of the Infinite another crisis great as that in which he lived bursts upon the land, and his great soul reincarnated returns to earth to lead again his countrymen through its gloom and sacrifice.”<sup>29</sup>

When the governor finally completed his flowery speech, the vice-president of the United States, Indiana’s own Charles W. Fairbanks, responded to calls from the audience and spoke extemporaneously. Although scheduled to make a speech to the GAR gathering that night, Fairbanks took the opportunity to affirm that Morton was a symbol for Indiana and for the nation: “We have met, it is said, to do honor to the memory of

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 19-23.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 23-29. For Hanly’s career, see Raymond H. Scheele, “J. Frank Hanly,” in *The Governors of Indiana*, eds. Linda C. Gugin and James E. St. Clair (Indianapolis, Ind., 2006), 224-31.

Oliver P. Morton. That is in a sense true, but in a larger sense we have met to do honor to the people of our state. For we honor ourselves when we honor those who have done arduous service in the cause of liberty.” He argued that Morton stood as a symbol of “republican institutions,” and he extolled the virtues of liberty and republican government. The afternoon ceremonies closed with a group from the Daughters of the American Revolution laying a wreath on the pedestal of the monument and the president of the Woman’s Relief Corps putting a folded silk flag beside it. That evening, Vice President Fairbanks continued the celebration in his brief remarks to the veterans, remembering that Morton had worked to save the Union and adding that, as senator, “he did much to secure the adoption of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the Constitution of the United States.” Speaking before an audience dominated by Union veterans and their families, Fairbanks again brought together the memories of emancipation and the Union in a nationalist ideology that made Oliver P. Morton a symbol of the state and the nation, of freedom and equality, of American power and American victory.<sup>30</sup>

Almost twenty years later, on Wednesday, June 16, 1926, a large party of visitors made their way to the Indiana Circle at the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi to dedicate Indiana’s battlefield monument. Although most state monuments on such battlefields depicted a famous general or combat hero or tried to memorialize the common soldier who had fought there, the Hoosier state had chosen to erect a statue of Oliver P. Morton. In the late afternoon sun, the quiet ceremony began with the unveiling of “Morton in Bronze.” A member of the Indiana Commission charged with the task of constructing the memorial read a long poem dedicated “To the Statue of Morton”: “We’ll now nail this motto high up overhead, One country, one Morton, one flag.” The poem and the speeches that followed it dripped in nationalism, but this was not the same memory that previous generations had extolled. Instead, participants in the ceremony now remembered the Civil War through a lens of reconciliation. The poet proclaimed: “Then let us all rejoice to say, All our efforts were not vain, While some wore blue, and others gray, Thank God, we now are friends again.” Slavery and emancipation received scant attention; the fight for the Union was no longer triumphant but was seen as equal to the Southern cause. For the sake of reconciliation, the language of friendship encompassed treating both sides as noble and patriotic Americans,

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<sup>30</sup>Adams, *State of Indiana Dedication Ceremonies*, 29-34.

recognizing the bravery of the individual soldiers, and not remembering the causes of the conflict.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, things had changed. Morton still stood as a symbol of nationalism and the Civil War, and those who had opposed him during his lifetime still reconstituted their memories of him in ways that conveniently forgot past political battles over issues like race, slavery, and the power of the national government. Morton had not changed, but the historical context of his memorialization had. By the mid-1920s, the expansion of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and world war had transformed Indiana. With modernity came tensions, as people looked for answers to bewildering new questions about economic change, immigration, the migration of African Americans from the South to northern states, the role of government in Progressive reforms, and social and cultural shifts. By the 1920s, segregation had taken hold in many northern areas as well as in the South. White supremacy, long an accepted view, was now codified under Jim Crow. It was not surprising that in such a context historical memory of the Civil War also began to change, as many chose to forget slavery and emancipation. Emancipationist memories—still held by African Americans and some whites—began to diminish as more Union veterans passed away and as new generations constructed new cultural memories and interpretations of the past.<sup>32</sup>

Like other Americans, Hoosiers responded to this transformative period in a variety of ways. Defense of tradition and community came in many forms. Many returned to religion, as some Christians embraced progressive reform while others chose a non-political path or pursued a more fundamentalist faith. Another response was the growth in popularity of “patriotic” organizations. The American Legion and various fraternal orders attracted individuals worried about the loss of community and wanting ways to band together to deal with change. In that era of “joining,” many white Hoosiers turned to the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan in Indiana wrapped itself in the American flag and held high the Christian cross. This state branch of the second Klan that rose in the early twentieth century often emphasized anti-immigrant sentiments, a popular stance in Indiana, where many feared losing their jobs to ethnic minorities. To be sure, the hatred of blacks that dominated the Klan in the South also animated the

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<sup>31</sup>Oran Perry, comp., *Morton in Bronze: Indiana Circle, Vicksburg Battlefield* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1926), 36, 39-46.

<sup>32</sup>For a brief account of Indiana in the 1910s and 1920s, see James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), esp. 145-232; also see Madison, *Hoosiers*, esp. 213-53.

Indiana Klan, as racism fueled lynching and the creation of Sundown Towns in the Hoosier state. The arrival in the state of many African Americans during the Great Migration exacerbated racial tensions. By 1925, at least a quarter of white male Hoosiers belonged to the Ku Klux Klan, and the organization held political influence. Many Hoosier politicians joined the hooded order, mostly at the local level, but their ranks included some state legislators as well. In the 1924 gubernatorial election, Republican Edward L. Jackson openly accepted Klan support. Jackson won the election by almost one hundred thousand votes and carried ninety of the state's ninety-two counties. It looked as if the Klan now had a governor with whom the organization could work to bring about the reforms they hoped would mitigate the strain of rapid change.<sup>33</sup>

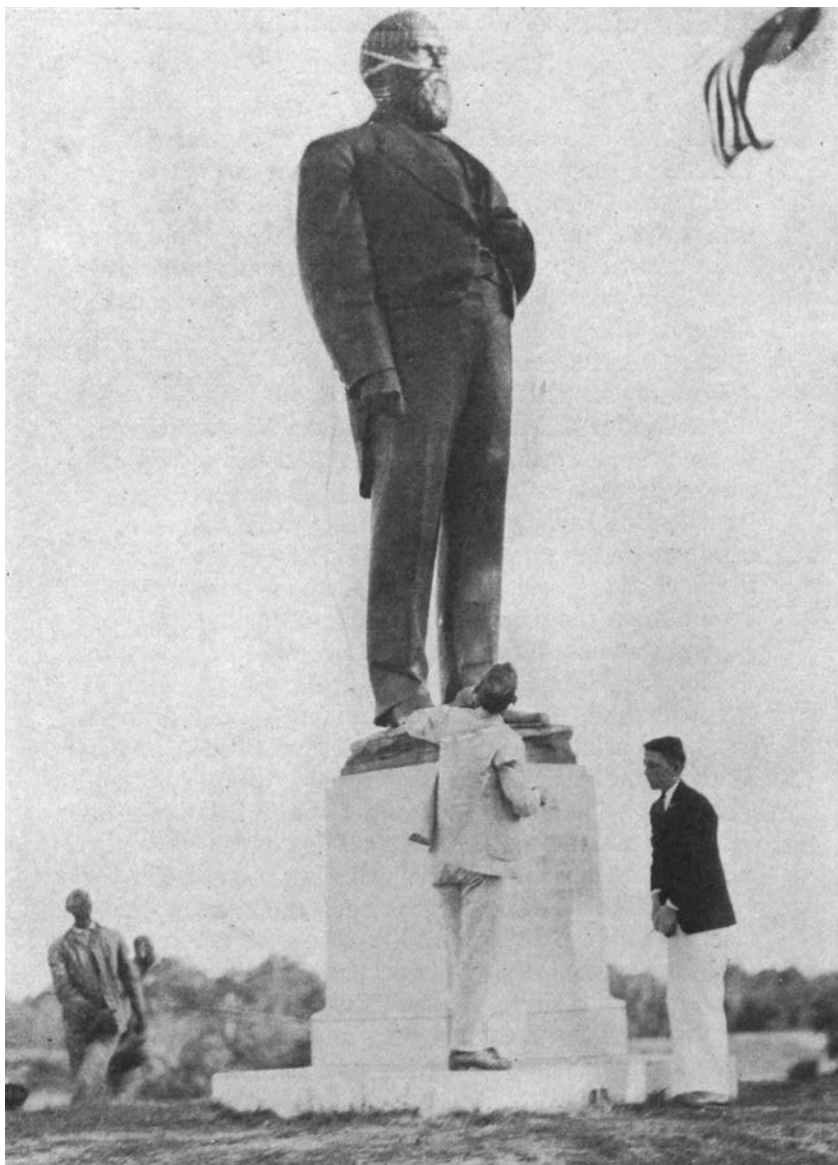
It was in this context that the 1926 dedication of the Morton statue at the Vicksburg Battlefield took place. This monument came at the behest of the Vicksburg National Military Park Commission, headed by William T. Rigby, a Union veteran from Iowa who had fought in the Vicksburg campaign as well as other major battles. The federal government had established the park in 1899, and Rigby received his appointment as the resident commissioner. The commission designed the park for the convenience of tourists, including a plan for each state to have a circle with various monuments including a large statue dedicated to that state. When the commission invited Indiana to erect its statue on the Indiana Circle, the state legislature appropriated \$15,000 for the project and appointed a group to take up "where the Commission of 1908 left off." Harkening back to the Morton statue at the State Capitol spoke volumes, both in the content and sentiments behind the state memorial at Vicksburg. First, Indiana chose to replicate its earlier memorial by building a statue of Oliver P. Morton, still the symbol of the Civil War. Second, the 1926 statue would resemble the 1907 sculpture in that Morton would symbolize nationalism. But those similarities belied real differences between 1907 and 1926.<sup>34</sup>

The 1926 commission report, published as *Morton in Bronze*, revealed both the similarities and the differences between the efforts behind the two

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<sup>33</sup>For more on the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, see Madison, *Hoosiers*, 242-53; and M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan* (West Lafayette, Ind., 1991). For more on Governor Ed Jackson, see Jason S. Lantzer, "Edward L. Jackson," in *The Governors of Indiana*, ed. Gugin and St. Clair, 274-79.

<sup>34</sup>Perry, *Morton in Bronze*, 7-17, 31-36. For a study of the creation of battlefield parks and their memorials that includes Vicksburg and takes Blight's perspective of Civil War memory, see Timothy B. Smith, *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation: The Decade of the 1890s and the Establishment of America's First Five Military Parks* (Knoxville, Tenn., 2008).



Bronze statue of Morton by George T. Brewster, 1926, Vicksburg National Memorial Park. The statue was unveiled by Winfield T. Durbin Jr. (standing far right in the photograph), grandson of the president of the memorial commission.

*Morton in Bronze: Indiana Circle, Vicksburg Battlefield (1926)*

statues and showed the different ways in which Hoosiers constructed their memories of the Civil War. The biggest difference involved race. While the 1907 dedication mentioned slavery, emancipation, and the Reconstruction amendments, the 1926 ceremonies did not. Slavery came into the later report only in extracts taken from an article by Morton biographer William Dudley Foulke. Contained in an early section of the booklet-length report, the Foulke extracts provided “A Sketch of the ‘Great War Governor.’” The few lines about slavery stated that Morton had broken with the Democratic Party over the institution and had joined the Republicans in opposing it. Foulke’s two-volume biography had detailed the ways in which Morton’s views on slavery changed and how he became staunchly opposed to the institution; the 1926 extracts were few and carefully chosen. The booklet quoted Foulke on the late 1850s: “During the next four years the pro-slavery element won the supremacy but the Dred Scott decision and the Lecompton Constitution aroused the anti-slavery sentiment of the North and added to the strength of the Republican party.” Not another word about slavery appeared in the speeches at the dedication or in the sixty-four page report, except for a passing anecdotal reference in a veteran’s account of a battle to slave quarters located near a mansion. And those few lines given to slavery as a motivation for the conflict made the abolitionists as much a cause of the war as the defenders of slavery. Clearly, Hoosiers excised slavery and emancipation from their history when they dedicated their Vicksburg monument.<sup>35</sup>

Americans still held to a vibrant nationalist vision, but it, too, had changed. The 1907 dedication had emphasized the cause of the Union, celebrating the North’s victory with only passing nods to later reconciliation. In 1926, the celebrants inverted the two, as the nationalist perspective now rested on a foundation of reconciliation, with the Union victory pushed to the background. While no speaker at Vicksburg managed to rival the flowery oration of Governor Hanly in 1907, the nationalist poem read by Captain Francis M. Van Pelt, a member of the commission and a Union veteran, almost reached such levels. “To the Statue of Morton” ran on for more than three pages in the published report. In his opening stanzas, the poet evoked the Union cause, drawing attention to how the image of Morton brought memories of the great conflict. The poem remembered that time, “When waves of secession caused well nigh to dip Our old union vessel; he stood by the ship, with red, white and blue at the mast.”

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<sup>35</sup>Perry, *Morton in Bronze*, 18-29.

Then, a few lines later, he trumpeted: "We'll now nail this motto high up overhead, One country, one Morton, one flag." This nationalism conjured up images of reconciliation with the South, not a record of Union victory: "Flag that takes us way back yonder 'Neath historic apple tree, Where one chieftain makes surrender, And while shaking hands with Lee, Grant said, 'Thank God comes the ending Of this bitter, cruel war, Now let's put our time in mending, healing up the bloody scar.'" Appomattox now became a hastening toward reunion and a nation reconciled.<sup>36</sup>

In 1907, Governor Hanly had charged the South with "despotism," "error," and "dishonor," while remembering Morton as a tower of "magnificent manhood" who "crushed and overwhelmed" his foes in defense of moral right.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, in 1926, the poet said very little about Morton himself, rushing on from Appomattox to reconcile the North and South in the Spanish-American War of 1898: "When the cry from Cuba came, Blue and gray interwoven Under one flag just the same." Then came the Boxer Rebellion in China: "Later on when Major Conger, Standing for the Christian world In command at siege of Peking The first flag he saw unfurled That was coming to his rescue There in China, could it be? 'Twas the same one he marched under From Atlanta to the sea." From there, the poem went to the Great War, when a reconciled America answered the divine call: "Christians held their breath and wondered What the great U.S. would do, While the Kaiser's cannon thundered With all barriers broken through. God then seemed to touch the button. If not, how else could it be? Moulding into one great army, Champions of both Grant and Lee." The poet also paid homage to the mythological view that Americans fought only for freedom: "Yes, they knew the starry banner Says tis right that makes the might, We ne'er fight for land or lucre, But humanity and right." Closing his song of nationalist reconciliation, the writer cried, "Then let us all rejoice to say All efforts were not vain, While some wore blue, and others gray, Thank God, we now are friends again. Then let each stand, with hat in hand, From valley up to mountain crag, Rejoicing that in all this land, We've just one country and one flag."<sup>38</sup>

A short speech by Governor Ed Jackson followed the long poem. The Indiana governor quoted Morton's speech of November 22, 1860. As secession loomed, Morton had said: "I would rather come out of a struggle

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 41-44.

<sup>37</sup>Adams, *Dedication Ceremonies of Morton Statue*, 19-29.

<sup>38</sup>Perry, *Morton in Bronze*, 41-44.

defeated in arms and conceding independence to successful revolution than to purchase present peace by the concession of principles that must inevitably explode this nation into small and dishonored fragments.” Jackson nodded to the Unionist cause but used lines from Morton that ill-reflected his usual sharp attacks on the South. Then, the Klan-supported politician offered a ridiculously inaccurate reconciliationist view of the war, asserting that both the North and South fought for the Union: “This Union was preserved by heroes, both from the north and south, who fought on this battlefield. Each made a great sacrifice for what he believed to be right and by their joint sacrifices they cemented the Union forever.”<sup>39</sup>

The remaining speeches at the dedication, as well as the letters from veterans reprinted in the published report, continued in the spirit of reconciliation, redefining nationalism to mean reunion instead of victory. The memory of the Union cause remained but was diminished and constructed in new ways, now made subservient to reconciliation. The celebrants excised emancipation from the narrative. One might argue that such language stemmed from the fact that Indiana was putting up a monument in Mississippi, where it would be impolite to push Northern victory and emancipation. Perhaps Hoosiers shaped their memories to meet the time and place where they were remembering. But the context indicates that this was not just a display of northern manners. Appropriating the same nationalist symbol of their state and the Civil War, Hoosiers had constructed new memories of Oliver Morton, quite different than those they had held two decades earlier.

By the time Americans reached the centennial of the Civil War in the early 1960s, their memories of Morton had changed again. In 1961, the Indiana Civil War Centennial Commission published *Indiana and the Civil War*, a collection of essays written by scholars for a popular audience. In his brief introduction, commission chairman Carl A. Zenor couched the state’s official memories of the Civil War in the terms of reconciliation, making much of “the bonds of unity.” The collected essays reflected the context of the period: the Cold War and constant worries about Communism and the threat of nuclear war, as well as the rising civil rights movement. Many pages were dedicated to Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, and to Hoosier support for the martyred president. One essay delved into Indiana’s divided reactions to the Emancipation Proclamation, analyzing the complexity of the issue in ways that reflected current racial politics.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 46.

But little was said about Morton's opposition to slavery and his senatorial support for racial equality, despite the fact that many saw the civil rights movement as a second Reconstruction that aimed to achieve the goals not reached in the post-Civil War era. Instead, Hoosiers' official memories of Morton in the mid-twentieth century focused on his gubernatorial record.

Butler University historian Emma Lou Thornbrough contributed a piece on "Morton's One-Man Government" that asked if he was a dictator or a patriot. Reflecting the critical scholarship of the preceding decades, Thornbrough took Morton to task for his political opportunism, his centralization of power, and his skirting the bounds of the Constitution and the law. Despite her body of groundbreaking work on African American history, in this essay she accepted the prevailing historical analysis that Morton had used the Copperhead threat for political advantage. In the aftermath of the McCarthy hearings and the Red Scare of the 1950s, the theory that Morton and the Republicans had exaggerated the Copperheads and used the Treason Trials of 1864 to win the election seemed obvious and appropriate. Far from preventing a fifth column rising in the rear, Morton had used his power to promote his own and his party's interests and created a constitutional crisis in doing so. Thus Thornbrough—more balanced in her analysis of Morton in her book on the Civil War era in Indiana—accepted the consensus of historians who saw the governor as a dictator. She concluded by contrasting him with Lincoln, saying that while the president's "reputation has grown with the years, the luster of Morton's reputation has dimmed." Thornbrough thought that Morton lacked the qualities that made Lincoln great, "magnanimity and forbearance and political genius without narrow partisanship."<sup>40</sup>

Americans remembered Oliver Morton in different ways at different times, and their memories of him usually reflected their own context and their own concerns. Because his complex and complicated career spanned the defining events of the Civil War and Reconstruction, one could choose

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<sup>40</sup>Carl A. Zenor, ed., *Indiana and the Civil War* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1961); Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1965). Critical interpretations of Morton included Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics during the Civil War* (1949; Bloomington, Ind., 1978); and William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York, 1948). Hesseltine portrayed Morton as a talented leader whose paranoia got the best of him. The prevailing interpretation that Morton exaggerated the Copperheads and carried out the Treason Trials for political advantage was put forward in Frank L. Klement, *Copperheads in the Middle West* (Chicago, 1960). Stephen E. Towne's forthcoming *Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War: Exposing Confederate Conspiracies in America's Heartland* (Athens, Ohio, 2014) promises to fully dismantle the Klement thesis, but to date the best challenge is Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York, 2006).

to emphasize different aspects of his life that allowed his memory to be appropriated for current political purposes. But that same complexity also allowed others to contest recollections of Morton and offer their own views, often in political opposition to a previously constructed memory. The eulogists who memorialized their late colleague in 1878 set the stage for Morton's historical memory, as they agreed on aspects of his character, praised his abilities and tremendous energy, applauded his efforts on behalf of the soldiers, and hailed him as a hero of the Union. But they differed as they remembered his legacy, disagreeing about his use or abuse of power and arguing over whether he should be seen as a patriot or a tyrant. They created a pattern for the memories of future generations, as they criticized or extolled his partisanship, expressed horror or approval of his attacks on the Copperheads, and either remembered or forgot his fight against slavery and for racial equality. Morton became a positive symbol of the Union and of emancipation, but stood as a negative emblem for the Lost Cause and for those who promoted reconciliation. All agreed that he was a nationalist, but they also claimed that ideology and worked to redefine his thought to fit their own political needs. Over time, Morton's memory shifted and dimmed, as those who remembered him in life passed away and succeeding generations looked for consensus in their historical accounts of him. By the 1890s, Morton represented the Union cause for Republican voters and was hailed at gatherings of the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1900, some Hoosiers speaking at the U.S. Capitol chose to make Morton a symbol of Northern victory and emancipation, while others couched their recollections in terms of reconciliation. Audience mattered, as speakers pitched their memories to fit the venue. Consensus was more likely in Indiana and reigned at Republican gatherings, while conflict came in national settings as Democrats appropriated history for different purposes than their GOP rivals. In 1907, Union and emancipation again dominated remembrances of Morton at the dedication of his statue in front of the Indiana State Capitol. But by 1926, reconciliation had swept away recollections of emancipation, and speakers downplayed Unionism as they dedicated the Morton statue at Vicksburg. When the United States reached the centennial of the Civil War, memories of Morton had shifted again as his senatorial career was forgotten and historians reached a consensus that he had been a dictator during his time as Civil War governor. On each occasion, Americans evoked Morton to speak to contemporary audiences about current issues, employing the past for political purposes. History was for the living.

And historical memory lived on. During the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War, a group of about one hundred people gathered

in Centerville, Indiana, on August 4, 2013, to celebrate the 190th anniversary of Oliver P. Morton's birth and to dedicate two markers along the town's main street. One of the signs commemorated the National Road and the other marked the site of the home of George Julian, a long-time opponent of slavery and Republican political rival of Morton. Speakers talked about Julian's fight against the peculiar institution and remembered the importance of the National Road as a thoroughfare uniting the nation before moving down the road to the Morton House, then in the early stages of restoration. That Centerville no longer flourished and that the historical markers were erected in hopes of promoting cultural tourism in a small town threatened by the effects of globalization and a post-industrial economy helped to set the context. Organized by the owner of the Morton House—Ball State University professor and town historian Ronald Morris—the day came to a close with speeches, a tour of the house, and a display and sale of paintings of the building by a local artist. Throughout the day, Morton was remembered as a staunch nationalist, an opponent of slavery, and the Soldiers' Friend. Although one speaker did mention his differences with Julian, the event largely conflated the two Republicans, remembering them as fighters for freedom, equality, and justice. Focused on Morton's early life, the ceremonies did not delve deeply into his political career but emphasized the roots of his nationalist ideology and his opposition to slavery. The appearance of a Lincoln impersonator—who declared that the president had to appear at a celebration of one of his strongest supporters—completed the image of Morton as an antislavery Unionist. Once again, historical memory had changed, as emancipation and Union returned to the center of the story. Brief mention was made of Morton's actions against the Copperheads, but they were now interpreted as legitimate and sincere response to a real conspiracy, no matter how significant or insignificant a threat it might have been. One speaker admitted that Morton might have gone too far, and made reference to government spying on civilians under the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The same speaker also mentioned Morton's work as a senator, especially his efforts on behalf of the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution, and praised his work on behalf of African Americans. In the context of the early twenty-first century, Morton's memory had shifted once more, reflecting the time's broader acceptance of racial equality and the widely held view that the Civil War was primarily about slavery. In the era of the War on Terror, conspiracies against the government did not seem so far-fetched, and an audience familiar with increased government action in the name of security accepted, with some concern, that a leader

might use surveillance and spying to root out enemies hidden within the society itself. As Americans marked the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, with an African American as president, a continuing war against terrorism, and the still-cherished ideal of equality existing within a surveillance state which diminished personal liberty, Oliver P. Morton again became a symbol in the politics of historical memory.<sup>41</sup>



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<sup>41</sup>Ronald Louise, "Looking Back and Forward," *Richmond Palladium-Item*, August 5, 2013. A descendant of Morton attended the ceremonies, and the author was one of the invited speakers. I spoke at the event outside the Morton House and emphasized Morton's nationalism, included his actions against the Copperheads, and mentioned his Senate career, while joining others in remembering his opposition to slavery and efforts on behalf of the soldiers.