

A Civil War Story from Vevay

Last year, we published an article by Julie LeClerc Knox of Vevay, under the title, "I remember My Grandmother."¹ This was an interesting account of an intelligent and determined widow who successfully operated a tavern in Vevay for many years. A brief account of an episode in which the efficient and kindly little lady, Julie LeClerc (Mrs. Julie Morerod LeClerc), mistress of the LeClerc House, stood her ground under trying circumstances comes from Mrs. Nora Lewis Dupraz of Vevay. Here is the story as told by Mrs. Dupraz to Miss Knox:

During the early part of the Civil War, the little town of Vevay was divided between unionists and southern sympathizers and feeling ran very high. When Jason B. Brown, member of the lower branch of the Indiana Legislature from Dearborn County² came to speak in support of Clement L. Vallandigham,³ the people were stirred to primitive depths, and Brown was not permitted to speak. His supporters decided to present the visitor with a gold-headed cane, at that time considered a gift par excellence as a token of esteem. Without obtaining permission, the admirers of Brown assembled in the parlors of the LeClerc House. The unionist element, "scenting something in the wind", rushed in, and, seizing Brown, who was a small man, threatened to swing him from the nearest lamp post. Mrs. LeClerc, who happened to be on the second floor, heard the commotion and hurried to the top of the stairway, where she stood as she addressed the crowd. She demanded that Brown, a guest at her tavern, be released at once and told the disturbers to disperse peaceably and immediately. Then she emphatically denounced those who, without authority, had chosen her premises for the presentation of the cane. She now descended to the first floor, took her stand in front of Brown and dared any one to touch him. The mob, recalled to their better senses by the words of the courageous, little widow, shamefacedly departed. Brown probably owed his life to the determined stand of his landlady. In order to effect his escape, he had to climb through a back window, and conceal himself in one of the buildings at the rear of the LeClerc House until he could get away from Vevay.

¹ *Indiana Magazine of History* (June, 1938), XXXIV, 175-187.

² From 1889 to 1895, Brown was a member of the national House of Representatives.

³ Vallandigham, a member of the national House of Representatives from Ohio was the most outspoken of the northern opponents of the Civil War.