

Wandering Indiana

Did you know that Indiana has a considerable amount of history in the way that places are named within our state? On my vacation this past month wandering to the East Coast and the Northeast Coast, we discovered some interesting historical facts tied to Indiana and some of the names we tend to take for granted.

While in Richmond, Virginia we visited the National Battlefield Park. Of course Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee's names came up fairly often in the literature we read and the historical markers we saw; that made me wonder if Grant County (Marion) was named for the famous general and president. Guess what, nope. Grant County was formed in 1831 by migrants from Kentucky and Virginia. It was named for Captains Samuel and Moses Grant of Kentucky, who were killed fighting Indians north of the Ohio River. Struck out there.



How about George Washington Birthplace National Monument in Virginia along the Potomac River? Bingo, named for you know who. The first and most famous president of course. Is the City of Washington named for the president? My research appears to say no, but could not find any real good evidence.

Does anyone know that Knox County is named for Henry Knox? While visiting the Springfield, Massachusetts Armory National Historic Site, Henry Knox was secretary of war and to resolve the arms shortage in the late 1700's, Knox recommended to Congress that the federal government increase the purchase of imported weapons, ban the export of domestically produced weapons and establish facilities for the domestic production and stockpiling of weapons of which one location was the Springfield Armory. This tact was significantly responsible for the fledging country being able to defend itself.

Thaddeus Kosciuszko was the Polish patriot who helped the American beat the British along the Hudson River during revolutionary war. We discovered Thad at Saratoga, NY National Historical Park. Have you ever been to Warsaw and Kosciusko County. Yep that County is so named although Indianaized apparently. While at Saratoga we also heard about Benedict Arnold. Wonder why there aren't any places in Indiana named after him?

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site in NY has Indiana ties as well. Van Buren Elementary School in Plainfield is so named after the story where the president was thrown out of his carriage because the National Road (US 40) was very bumpy and not maintained well. Rumor mill has it that the local citizens might have set up that debacle.

Alexander Hamilton's name showed up in many places and of course has become a household name because of the Broadway play. Paterson, NJ National Historic Park was America's first planned city and Hamilton had the vision by building canals and harnessing the Passaic River and the Great Falls. Yes, Hamilton County is his namesake.



I'm sure there are many other places in Indiana having historical ties that we encountered along our adventure. Try doing a little research and see what you can figure out. It's fun taking the time to see how we are all connected to history and travel.

Keep wandering and pass along those places to visit.

~ Jeff Banning