

Kentucky's Civil War: Crittenden County named



Historical Marker #1160 in Marion commemorates the namesake of Crittenden County.

John Jordan Crittenden was born in Woodford County in 1787. Called “one of Kentucky’s great statesmen,” he was governor of Kentucky, attorney general under three presidents, and was a United States senator five times. In 1860, when civil war was imminent, Crittenden proposed several resolutions—termed the Crittenden Compromise—to preserve the Union. His efforts failed, and the conflict eventually erupted.

Crittenden worked to keep Kentucky in the Union, but he soon felt the divisions of the Civil War firsthand. One of his sons, Thomas L. Crittenden, became a general in the Union army, while another son, George B. Crittenden, became a general in the Confederacy. The Crittenden house was truly divided, and the family is emblematic of the fratricidal nature of the Civil War, especially in Kentucky.

Crittenden died in Frankfort in 1863 and was buried in Frankfort. He did not live to see the end of the Civil War that had divided his family and the nation.

Photo: Kentucky politician John J. Crittenden tried to avert Civil War but failed. One of his sons was a Union general and another was a Confederate general. Crittenden County is named in his honor. From the collections of the Kentucky Historical Society.