



This Week in Indiana History

March 9th, 1907:

The Eugenics Law is Signed by Governor Hanly

On March 9th, 1907, Indiana became one of the first places in the world to pass a eugenics law that required the forced sterilization of those deemed unworthy of procreation. As the bill itself stated in its preamble, “whereas, heredity plays a most important part in the transmission of crime, idiocy and imbecility”, the law sought to purify society of those it deemed unworthy.

Although briefly ruled unconstitutional in 1921, it went back into effect in 1927. Sterilizations did not stop until the mid 1970’s. Indiana’s eugenics law was a central part of the eugenics movement in America that would contribute to the rise of the Nazism in Germany and genocides such as the Holocaust.

Linda Sparkman (pictured right) was one of many Hoosiers to have had their human rights taken away and be involuntarily sterilized. She is seen here in 2007 at the Indiana State Library during the official dedication for the Eugenics Marker.

Courtesy of the Indiana Historical Bureau.

