The section on Indiana will certainly be of interest to readers of the Indiana Magazine of History. In his introductory pages to the Hoosier state Middleton observes that “Indiana was unusually hostile to people of color” (p. 160). He gives no explanation of why this might be true other than the general observation made in his introduction that “the enslavement of Africans reinforced the color prejudice of the whites . . . [making] racial discrimination inevitable” (p. xxvii).

Laws in the Indiana Territory originally tried to circumvent Article 6 of the Northwest Ordinance, which prohibited slavery by allowing indenture for life. After statehood, laws were passed discouraging African-American immigration and in 1851 prohibiting it outright. Black laws also denied people of African descent basic citizenship rights such as voting, serving as jurors, serving as militia-men, holding state office, and testifying in court against whites. Miscegenation laws and exclusion from schools attempted to separate the races further and to perpetuate white dominance. Most of these laws remained in effect until the civil rights laws of 1885.

Judging by Middleton’s acknowledgements, most of his research was done in Ohio and North Carolina libraries. Since his book covers only five states, it would seem that checking with each state’s historical library would have been important. From them the author could garner local material not readily available from standard state law collections to increase depth of analysis in his introductory sections and to augment the bibliographic references. Nevertheless, this volume provides a useful and convenient reference for persons interested in the Old Northwest, African-American history, legal history, and the persistence of racism.

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This is a fascinating little book that gives the reader a good look into the life of the ordinary soldier during the Civil War, a statement that can be made about most of the myriad works containing diaries and letters of Civil War soldiers. Since the war there have been literally thousands of such volumes, most with some value that makes them stand on their own. This work is no exception: it makes several contributions that justify its publication.

Henry Matrau was an exceptionally literate man in a literate army. Although only sixteen when he fraudulently joined the army in 1861, he rose through the ranks to finish the war as a captain.
His letters are incisive, informative, and occasionally even humorous. He was in most of the battles in which the Army of the Potomac participated, with the notable exception of Antietam, and wrote about them all. Interestingly, most Civil War letters reveal that the authors knew little about events in which they participated, even fierce and momentous battles. Matrau, however, seems to have a better sense about events than most of his fellow soldiers. His letters also show that a soldier’s existence during war consisted of boring, routine, mundane activities punctuated by moments of horrendous violence.

Matrau’s letters are of additional significance for the Midwest, as his unit—the famed Iron Brigade—was the only western brigade in the Army of the Potomac. The unit suffered massive casualties in most battles from Second Bull Run through Gettysburg, where it was effectively destroyed and lost its western character when it was rebuilt. However, its reputation and contribution to the Union cause was perhaps the greatest of any single unit in the army. And Henry Matrau was in the thick of that action.

The book is well organized, with an introduction to each chapter that gives an overview of events covered by the letters in that chapter. There is a useful cast of characters listed at the end of the book along with a good index. Curiously, however, there is no bibliography. Perhaps the author felt that the endnotes would suffice. There is also only one sketchy map, which erroneously dates George B. McClellan’s Peninsular Campaign as 1863 rather than 1862. More maps would have been helpful.

Still this is a good book that imparts to the reader the thoughts and feelings of the Civil War soldier.

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“Regionalism in all its many manifestations remains one of the most elusive threads in the complex texture of America,” states Ronald Weber at the beginning of this insightful study (p. ix). The rest of the book testifies to the aptness of the metaphor as the author skillfully follows the thread of midwestern literature in its weave through the varied fabric of American culture from the 1870s to around 1930.

These years, of course, make up the period that Hoosiers know as the Golden Age of Indiana Literature, when books by Indiana