

1848-1849 under Colonel August Willich, the well-respected Prussian-born organizer of the regiment. One of the motifs in the letters is the pride taken by the officers and infantrymen in their colonel's leadership qualities and in his paternalistic affection for them. The soldiers also express ethnic pride in their courage and their important contributions to the Union cause. Aware that nativists questioned their patriotism as "foreigners," the German Americans had something to prove, and took defiant satisfaction in proclaiming it in print.

As complement and contrast to the letters in the Reinhart collection, where literate, liberal, and freedom-loving Forty-eighters speak, anyone interested in Indiana Germans should also read *A Lost American Dream: Civil War Letters (1862-63) of Immigrant Theodore Heinrich Brandes in Historical Contexts* (2005). Brandes was a poor, barely literate Catholic day laborer who came from a farm near Münster to Oldenburg, Indiana, where an aunt and uncle lived. He married an Oldenburg woman, and moved with his family to Cincinnati.

Brandes, who had served two years of military service in Germany, became a paid voluntary substitute for a draftee twenty years his junior, in Company D of the 83rd Volunteer Infantry Regiment of Indiana. His letters tell a story of hardship and misery, of having to drink water that he says not even his pigs would drink. He died in the summer of 1863, weeks before he was to be discharged, of diarrhea, lung infection, and swollen feet. His letters reveal no devotion to freedom, great leaders, moral principle, or ethnic pride. In different ways, Antaxerxes and Brandes are both part of, and help to tell, the German American story.

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*These Men Were Heroes Once*  
*The Sixty-Ninth Indiana Volunteer Infantry*

By Carolyn S. Bridge

(West Lafayette, Ind.: Twin Publications, 2005. Pp. xvi, 414. Maps, biographies, rosters, index, CD of regimental poetry and song. \$24.95.)

It is appropriate that Carolyn S. Bridge is listed as compiler rather than editor of this volume on the 69th

Indiana Volunteer Infantry. She provides only five pages of preface and introduction and offers occasional

footnotes and headnotes. The book consists of a wide variety of documents including an 1891 record of the regiment's activities; reminiscences told at reunions and published in the proceedings; poetry read at reunions; letters sent to family and to newspapers; soldier biographies; a bibliography, timeline, and map; company rosters; and a ten-minute compact disk of regimental poetry and song. Soldiers' reminiscences and letters occupy about half of the volume's four hundred pages, but the texts have not benefited from many editorial emendations. Bridge composed the brief biographies of the infantrymen, but they are nowhere summarized into a collective biography that would offer social statistics about the regiment. In short, what this project lacks is editorial and scholarly ambition, beyond the energy required to compile materials and write up facts. Instead, it remains for the reader to put together a comprehensive understanding of the regiment's accomplishments, their larger significance, and their connection to existing scholarship. Indeed, this volume is more a regimental scrapbook than a regimental history. However, it can be a useful and interesting scrapbook.

The first document is Lt. Col. Oran Perry's account of the events of August 1862, describing how a thousand men were mustered into service in the regiment, a "big, unwieldy thing, good-natured, but awkward and dangerous" (p. 3). The first battle, at Richmond, Kentucky, in late

August, came after very little training and was "bloody, useless, disastrous," according to Perry (p. 5). About half of the regiment was taken prisoner. After troops were paroled and the regiment was reorganized, they boarded ship and took the Yazoo River to Chickasaw Bluffs, where they met their second defeat in January 1863, followed by a victory at Arkansas Post. They were engaged in the Battle of Vicksburg that May, and afterwards they laid siege to Jackson, Mississippi. By March 1864, the regiment was at Matagorda Island, Texas, where twenty-three men were drowned. In late April 1864, they took part in the Red River campaign, and for the rest of the year they saw duty at Morganza, Louisiana. The regiment finished its service in Florida and Alabama, where it captured Fort Blakely in April 1865. By the time the 69th was finished with war, 331 of its members had perished, 80 of them killed in combat and 251 dead because of disease, wounds, drowning, and accidents.

The remaining documents in the volume elaborate on those events and on the inactivity that characterized the times in between. These include Pvt. Alonzo Good's memoir of his first thirty days in uniform; Sgt. Charles Simon's account of the battle of Richmond; Perry's vivid, albeit misdated, narrative of "A Dismal Night in Dixie"; Pvt. John Kitselman's story of the boat *Opossum*; Capt. Joseph Jackson's letter telling a mother of her son's death; Lt. Cordon Smith's details

of the tragic drowning at Matagorda; Capt. John Macy's reminiscence of the capture of Fort Blakely; and Perry's touching portrait of Solomon Harter, "The Sergeant of Company F"

The full compilation of soldier data and military material in this volume can be instructive for genealogists, Indiana historians, and specialists on the war in the trans-Mississippi West, but finally one wonders if those audiences could still have been served if this project had been put up as a web site in the first place. Then millions would have access to the words written by the

men of the 69th, from Pvt. T. P. Hollingsworth's remark that it was "no harm to confiscate a hog" belonging to a Southerner (p. 219) to the commander's conclusion that his regiment "marched away too gaily to the war" (p. 215).

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### *Mac's Boys*

#### *Branch McCracken and the Legendary 1953 Hurryin' Hoosiers*

By Jason Hiner

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. Pp. xii, 345. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. Paperbound, \$24.95.)

My guess is that Jason Hiner is too young to have been around for Indiana University's 1952-53 season—*season*, not just the NCAA championship that crowned it. During that year so many Hoosier frustrations were shed, replaced by joyful firsts—IU's first 100-point game, first outright Big Ten championship, first taste of No. 1 national ranking. I am old enough to have made that joyride, not with a reporter's shackles but with the unrestricted glee of a fan. As a senior at Huntington High School, late on a midweek March night with static complicating the in-and-out faintness of the only attainable radio signal, I

suffered through the agonizing final seconds of the NCAA championship game: IU up 69-68, Kansas with the ball, "shot from the corner-r-r at the buzzer-r-r..."

In *Mac's Boys: Branch McCracken and the Legendary 1953 Hurryin' Hoosiers*, Hiner captures the unique quality of IU fans' year—their fatalistic resignation throughout, conditioned by past second places and near-misses; their undying hopes—"wouldn't it be fantastic if"? Both extremes of pessimism and optimism collided for so many Hoosiers while that game-determining shot hung in the air—a shot they couldn't see,