

New Indiana Archival Documents

By HARVEY WISH

During the past seven months, the Federal Archives Survey of Illinois, directed by Dr. Russell H. Anderson, and sponsored jointly by the National Archives and the Works Progress Administration, has been preparing a detailed inventory of historical materials located in the federal depositories of the state.¹ This task has included in many instances the service of rescuing historical documents from certain destruction. Most striking of the Survey's discoveries has been a vast amount of Indiana letters and dispatches—some 5887 items—pertaining to the administrations of Indiana Governors from James Whitcomb to Oliver Perry Morton. The bulk of this material represents Morton's official gubernatorial correspondence.

This material was found interspersed with Federal court records in some twenty burlap scrap-bags on the second floor of the old United States Court House Building at Clark and Adams Streets, Chicago. Here the records had been stored for at least a year. Previously they were kept in a large case under the building's dome and undoubtedly subjected to serious inroads by stamp collectors, souvenir hunters, and more common types of vandals. Despite the effects of time and neglect, the Indiana material is in surprisingly good condition. In only a few instances are the letters or dispatches illegible or mutilated, but it is evident that the collection is far from complete. Several hypotheses have been advanced as to the reason for Indiana material being found in Chicago, but the explanations are not convincing. The presence of certain other documents found together with the Indiana material suggests that the latter was taken to Chicago some time shortly after the World's Fair in 1893. As for the question of authenticity, no elaborate tests of internal or external criticism are required to establish this point even for the most meticulous historian.

The collection, as it will be noted, falls within the years 1840-1866, almost exclusively, although a few documents belong to an earlier period. Such material represents the files of

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seven governors of Indiana in varying proportions. Beyond the subject-matter that is of local value appears much that is of prime national interest. The American historian, for example, needs no introduction to the significant role of Governor Morton in helping to maintain the iron wedge that finally crushed the Confederacy. An attempt to suggest some of the possibilities for new writings is made in the inventory here presented.

I. SPECIAL POLITICAL MATERIAL

This collection of sixty-seven letters contains thirty-seven items dealing with the defeatist movement along the Ohio River for the years 1863-4. Among Morton's chief tasks was that of keeping Indiana with its large southern elements loyal to the Union; next in importance was the problem of restraining the activities of Kentucky secessionists under the inspiration of Governor Beriah Magoffin. An intricate trade in contraband across the border carried on by small bands of southern sympathizers, demanded constant surveillance. Defeatist organizations like the Knights of the Golden Circle constituted a threat to the Union cause.

Most of the letters in this unit contain descriptions of pro-southern activities in the state and are addressed to Governor Morton by citizens of southern Indiana. Excerpts from a letter written by James D. Hosea of Scott County are vividly illustrative:

I was at Auston and I noticed that there was a meeting in that place I found that it was to be in the School house. I then went and got into a dark corner so that I was not noticed. Then tha all com in and seeted themselves 54 in No. tha then elected there cheareman, his Sir name was Sirrup, Editor and a lawyer. He then sd that he would after making of a few remarks proseed to read the rules

Article 1st—We will not go nor assist nor pay any more to soport the government against the south.

Sect 2nd—We will not Soport any woman nor children of any man who has gon, or may go to fight against the People of the South

Sect 3—We will protect aney man who may leve the federal armye from being taken back to the U.S. Service.

The cheareman Mr. Sirrup sd that there order was one million strong

This confidential report contains references to the names of other eye-witnesses. Another letter, written by James Guthrie, Principal of the Union Christian College [Merom, Indiana] gives these details:

Let me assure you that a government Reporter or a company of troops is *absolutely needed there* [Sullivan County] The fiends [pro-southern faction] destroyed Rev. John Phillips' Mill so as to prevent his sawing and then threatened his life and thus drove a useful Christian minister from the county. Four of them by night three weeks since came to the house of a respected old farmer [Mr. Widener], tried to force passage into his house, threatened to kill him and were only deterred from outrages by his boldly confronting them with a gun. You say, Why do we permit it? Because that neighborhood now numbers more than ten devils to one honest man. They are positively organized and armed; they have marked for death about fifteen Union men.

Two loyal citizens of Salem, evidently alarmed by "copperhead" activities, wrote strong letters of protest to Governor Morton. One asked: "Will we be justified by law if we use the rope? May we shoot them or will you have them arrested?"

Similar reports of subversive actions are written from: North Salem, Hendricks County; Medora, Jackson County; Cannelton, Perry County; Marion, Grant County; Greenfield, Hancock County; Terre Haute, Vigo County; Stips Hill, Franklin County; Ossian, Wells County; Jeffersonville, Clark County; Fulton, Fulton County; La Porte, La Porte County; and from Jefferson County. A few letters refer to defeatist activities in Ohio and Illinois. A manuscript copy of a resolution passed by the Union League of Indianapolis on August 23, 1864, declares the existence of a "deep and damnable conspiracy against the National and State Governments" and the intention of the League to aid "in crushing the rebels in our midst."

The assassination of Lincoln gave occasion for rejoicing to many "copperheads" as is clear from a number of letters protesting against this demonstration of joy in southern Indiana. Many feared that the assassin's bullet awaited Governor Morton whose active pro-Union policy exposed him to considerable danger. This feeling became pronounced during the trial of Dr. William Bowles, L. P. Milligan, and Stephen Horsey, accused of a conspiracy against the Union cause. One anonymous letter, written from Franklin, Kentucky, to Morton on May 10, 1865, contains an open threat of assassination:

I understand that there is 3 men to be swung on [in] this month. Sir if Mr. Milligan is one of the victims you shall fall in the same fate that Mr. Lincoln did. Now remark those words. . . . Milligan is of the Anglow Saxton race, he has sworn Allegance to protect the Union before you Ever did; he must not be a victim to the Lover of the God damn African. Remember what I say and get out of the way. . . .

Another citizen (writing from Springfield, Illinois, at this time), declared that while he was a passenger on the Great Western Railroad he had overheard a plot to assassinate Morton in the event that the trio were hanged. He warned the governor to take extreme measures of precaution.

Some of the "copperheads" found the business of kidnaping Negroes a lucrative wartime industry. Mr. N. Field of Jeffersonville took occasion to write several letters protesting against this situation during the spring of 1863:

He [Benjamin Ray] and his father have become regular and professional bloodhounds or Negro catchers. They spend their time prowling about the houses of Negroes and watching the depot. Free Negroes travelling through the state to Ohio as well as contrabands who have deserted from the Rebel armies while in Kentucky on their way to Canada, are arrested by these men and their associates here, taken across the river and lodged in the Louisville jail and after being imprisoned for weeks are sold for want of a claimant.

There are some 10 or 15 men in this city devoted to this nefarious business. They pay no regard whatever to law or to humanity in their daily and nightly kidnappings.

A similar letter contains a newspaper clipping regarding an attempted Negro kidnapping in Jeffersonville. Lists of disloyal individuals are frequently appended to these letters. An anonymous letter from Terre Haute makes several accusations against Daniel W. Voorhees, Congressman from Indiana, and others.

Contraband trade flourished along the border. Several merchants of Anna wrote to Morton on August 1, 1861:

For some time past the Madison Packets have been bringing Bacon and Mess Pork from Cin'ti [Cincinnati] to this place and leaving it on the wharfboat where it remains a day or two when the Louisville boats take it below. And that there is something wrong about it is evident from the fact that it is not shipped direct to its destination. We . . . are determined that Provisions shall not be carried through our Place to Secessiondom.

A letter of Isaac M. Brown of Terre Haute, written on August 26, 1861, gives the details of an elaborate system of smuggling which had developed in that area. Traders loading flatboats with produce ostensibly destined for a loyal town would secretly unload their cargo at Smythland, Kentucky, and from that point transport it over the Louisville and Nashville Road to Memphis, Tennessee. The steamer *St. Francis*

was employed to tow such boats up the Cumberland River to a secret place from which the cargo reached Nashville. Two letters deal with a controversy between Governor Magoffin's Secretary, Thomas B. Monroe, of Frankfort, Kentucky, and Morton's agent, William A. Schlater, regarding a shipment of contraband coffee.

An important subject relating to which there are twenty-seven letters and several pamphlets in the collection is that of the Negro Colonization project for Liberia. The "all absorbing subject" of the time, according to a letter of June 6, 1854, was the attempt of a number of abolitionists to transfer the Negro to that remote African state. Many of the recipients of these philanthropies appear to have been extremely reluctant to leave their homes. This attitude is evident from the following, written to the Reverend J. Mitchell on June 6, 1854:

We have about 75 or 80 Negroes in our County [Harrison] but they are all opped to emigrating to Liberia or in fact anywhere else. Their ideas of that country are very erroneous and they won't be convinced.

An unusually interesting letter from a Negro colonist describes the situation in Liberia, the problems confronting the newcomer, the wars with the natives, and the details of new settlements. Among the related materials are an issue of the *New York Colonization Journal* for January, 1854, a pamphlet of twenty-four pages on "Information about Going to Liberia" (Washington, 1852), a four-page pamphlet entitled, "Where Shall We Go?", and a map (24x36 in.) of the West Coast of Africt, comprising Guinea and the British possessions at Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Liberia which is based on a map by John Arrowsmith of 1843.

II. DISPATCHES

The greater portion of this large unit of dispatches (2,384 items) deals with the efforts of Governor Morton and his agents to equip the troops of Indiana and to direct their daily operations. The most common topics are the problems of feeding, clothing, and recruiting the soldiers from the state; military operations, appointments, finance, hospital affairs. Other tasks of war-time administration also represent a large part of the dispatches. Numerous telegrams reveal the hourly details of such invasions of Indiana soil as those of the Confederate leaders, John Morgan and Kirby Smith. Five telegrams are from Lincoln to Morton regarding certain important mil-

itary operations. The Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, is responsible for a fair number of the telegrams which deal with a variety of war problems. Among the names of other notables whose telegrams appear more than once are those of William H. Seward, Ulysses S. Grant, W. T. Sherman, Lew Wallace, George H. Thomas, Robert Dale Owen, John C. Fremont, Simon Cameron, Robert Anderson, Lorenzo Thomas, Don C. Buell, Richard Yates, F. H. Pierpont, H. W. Halleck, W. S. Rosecrans, Schuyler Colfax, John A. McClernand, Salmon P. Chase, Ambrose E. Burnside, Andrew Johnson, Joseph Hooker, and all of Morton's agents as well as the Governor, himself.

III. MILITARY OPERATIONS

Although the voluminous nature of military records for the Civil War that have been published would tend to lessen the value of such material, even in manuscript form, there are a number of interesting letters and other documents relating to military affairs in this unit (1,164 items) which appear to be unique. Several first-hand accounts of important battles such as that of Bull Run give a more intimate picture of the soldier than is afforded by the usual formal report. Details of local guerrilla operations along the border can be obtained from these documents. James H. McNeeley, writing from Evansville to Morton on June 13, 1864, described the scene on the border:

The general impression here and on the whole border is that serious trouble is brewing in Kentucky. Society there is in a very feverish state and the whole country up and down the Ohio, and along the Green River, is full of guerrillas, singly and in small bands. The majority of persons among the white men who have been drafted have joined the guerrillas. The enlistment of Negroes has enraged the rebels and their sympathizers and made them ready for any measure however desperate, when they may deem it safe to resort to violence and retaliation on Union men amongst them and on this side of the River.

The struggle for Kentucky absorbed much of Morton's attention and his agents kept him informed of political and military developments in that state. During this critical period many requests for military assistance came to Morton from Union officers stationed in Kentucky and in several instances at least (as is evident from the letters) the aid was given.

John Morgan's raid into southern Indiana during the summer of 1862 brought about the statewide organization of

the Legion which was intended to prevent similar invasions. This system gave rise to complaints that the Legion was a failure and inferior to an efficient militia "such as our fathers had."

A citizen of Switzerland County on the border, reported that "suspicious looking strangers from Kentucky" were coming in large numbers through "those neighborhoods most strongly tinctured with disloyalty." He anticipated a concerted effort of "copperheads" to aid another Confederate raid into Indiana.

Besides the topics indicated there are numerous letters dealing with camp problems, military appointments and removals, recruiting, furloughs, the soldier's vote in the election of 1864, etc. A small portion of the material includes the administrations of Governor Joseph A. Wright (12 letters), Governor Ashbel P. Willard (70 letters), Governor Abram A. Hammond (2 letters), and Governor Henry S. Lane (1 letter).

IV. MILITARY HOSPITALS

Next to the task of recruiting and other military problems, more of Governor Morton's energies seem to have been devoted to the care of the Indiana troops. Although the dispatches also deal with this topic, it is probable that the letters (410 in number) will be more useful to the historian. Morton's humane efforts in behalf of his soldiers earned for him his reputation as "the Soldier's Friend" but gave the Indiana men an advantage that occasionally created discontent among the soldiers from other less fortunate states. This fact, suggested by several reports of Morton's agents, seems to be supported by a reply of General Grant (over the signature of a subordinate) to Morton's request for an office at Vicksburg for the benefit of Indiana soldiers. It is dated August 5, 1863, and was sent from Grant's headquarters at Vicksburg:

The privilege herein requested cannot be granted. The troops from Indiana, as those from all other states in the United States service, are cared for under the rules and regulations established by law and proper authority. Nothing looking to the continuance of State Control where no exigency demands it can be countenanced by the Maj.-General commanding; this is particularly to be held as the rule in the Medical Department.

The numerous detailed reports of Morton's agents, particularly those of Isaac W. Montfort, A. Stone, B. P. Tuttle,

R. Bosworth, Frank E. Howe, and W. J. Elliott, are of obvious value as first hand accounts of the social conditions at the front.

V. FINANCES

Indiana's state finances, already seriously weakened before Morton's administration, sank to a low ebb with the onset of war conditions and party strife. After the election of 1862, which resulted in the choice of a Democratic majority in the Assembly hostile to a vigorous war policy, the state government was left without appropriations for ordinary expenses due to the factional struggle. To circumvent the Democrats all of the Morton Republicans withdrew from the Legislature leaving that body without a quorum and thus compelled it to adjourn without further legislation, either favorable or hostile to the Governor. The Governor sought revenue from many sources: private bankers, county treasuries, federal appropriations, and revenue derived from profitable arsenal operations. These activities can be followed in some detail through the letters of this unit (297 items) and by the dispatch material. The numerous letters to Morton's Finance Secretary, W. H. H. Terrill, are informative as to payments for munitions, bounties, soldier's compensation or relief, bank loans, and property damages incurred through Morgan's Raid. Many letters of Robert Dale Owen, son of the famous philanthropist, Robert Owen, and a fiscal agent for Morton, are included.

Accusations of fraud in army contracts were frequent and in many instances well founded. John O'Flanigan of New York City, in a letter to Morton, described the ingenious system of accounting used to cover fraudulent acts. Morton himself was frequently accused of illicit operations, a charge probably without foundation. Charges were made by the *Huntington Democrat* that the governor was profiting financially by transferring Indiana's credit for volunteers in excess of its quota to Massachusetts. A dozen letters and newspaper clippings give both sides of the case.

Two printed financial reports of Secretary Terrill for 1864 and 1867 are included in this unit. A small portion of the letters pertain to the administration of Governors Paris C. Dunning (17 letters), Wright (17 letters), and Willard (31 letters).

VI. PENITENTIARY AFFAIRS

Most of the letters in this unit (687 items) deal with requests for pardons, commutation of sentences, remission of fines, prison finances, and warden's reports. The earlier administrations, particularly those of Wright and Willard are best represented. Occasionally the letters are of special historical value. One letter, for example, contains a copy of an indenture bond for a Negro boy under the system prevailing in the states of the Old Northwest which differed very little from chattel slavery. It is written from Livermore on May 23, 1864, and signed by William C. Stevens:

I have hired this day of Mrs. Ann H. Kincheloe, her black boy Henry until Christmas for the sum of Seventy Dollars to be paid on the 25th of December next. I am to clothe and feed and lodge him comfortably.

A letter, written by a prison official, Joseph E. Wheat, to Governor Morton, dated June 12, 1864, is a proposal to pardon the state's convicts in a wholesale fashion and equip them for war service and thus "fight the devil with fire." Morton, however, refused to consider the suggestion. A federal pardon proclamation of March 8, 1873, for a train robber bears the signatures of President Ulysses S. Grant and Secretary of State Hamilton Fish.

VII. SWAMP LANDS

This material deals with the problems connected with the administration of Indiana's great swamp area and represents the period from 1840 to 1866. During the administration of Governor Joseph Wright, particularly, a concerted movement was initiated to reclaim the wet lands which were of great potential value. An essay contest was held upon the subject of land reclamation. Some of the essays furnish useful materials for a study of prairie agricultural methods of the mid-century. Among these documents (295 items) are lists of various tracts of land, legal descriptions of swamp land, and land title entries. Many official letters are included of Thomas A. Hendricks, Land Commissioner, later Governor of Indiana, and in his last year Vice-President of the United States during the early months of Cleveland's first administration.

VIII. APPOINTMENTS

In this group all of the governors from Dunning to Morton (1848-1867) are represented. Recommendation of candi-

dates for official appointments constitute the bulk of the letters (300 items). Occasionally a controversy over the merits of a candidate brings much of local politics to light. Party services of "deserving" Democrats or Republicans are recounted and recriminations directed against rivals. Possibly a genealogist would find additional material of value here in the identification of local figures which is afforded by this type of correspondence.

IX. PROCLAMATIONS, BROADSIDES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Although much of this unit (74 items) consists of such formal material as Thanksgiving Proclamations issued by various governors, there are several manuscript copies of secession ordinances from Georgia and Louisiana. Georgia's Ordinance of Secession is signed by Secretary A. R. Lamar. The broadsides, such as the one for bounty claims, are interesting, but few.

X. GENERAL MATERIAL

Unclassified items, some of historical utility, are filed in this unit (155 items). Many letters of 1852 deal with the proposed reception in Indianapolis of Louis Kossuth, Magyar patriot. One of the telegrams is from Kossuth himself. A number of letters deal with legislative matters and the Morton project of encouraging white immigrants to Indiana.²

²The writer has attempted to reduce the documents in this collection of Indiana material to a chronological arrangement within each major division. Some units are in monthly sections (e.g. dispatches); others are in semi-annual divisions (e.g. military and military hospital letters). Further sub-division would require a knowledge of the ultimate disposition of the material and the system adopted by the permanent depository. This information was not available at the time of writing. A more detailed inventory of the collection has been prepared for the use of the archivist.