

Indiana Food Administration Papers

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Indiana's historical sources for the Civil War period have been richly augmented by the discovery of some long lost records found during the recent Survey of Federal Archives.¹ As these documents make possible a new approach to the role played by Indiana in the Civil War, so too, the now available records of the Food Administration can be used as the basis of new studies of the part taken by the state in the World War. These papers have been stored in various places in Washington since the close of the war, and have been largely inaccessible to researchers. Since the transfer of these papers to the National Archives, it is now possible for historians and other accredited researchers to avail themselves of this rich World War source collection. It is the purpose of this paper to describe so much of the records as pertain to Indiana.

The United States Food Administration was established by Congress to meet the difficulties which the war brought upon food production and distribution. President Woodrow Wilson selected as Federal Food Administrator Herbert Hoover, who, under the broad powers granted by Congress, organized and administered control over food in the United States.² In a country so extensive as the United States it was found necessary to decentralize this task by the appointment of a Federal Food Administrator in each state.³ Indiana was particularly fortunate in having a man trained by education and experience to direct this work. Dr. H. E. Barnard, at the time of his appointment as Federal Food Administrator for Indiana, was State Food and Drug Commissioner and State Commissioner of Weights and Measures—offices he had held in Indiana for a number of years. Prior to this, Dr.

¹ Harvey Wish, "New Indiana Archival Documents," *Indiana Magazine of History* (September, 1936), XXXII, 360-369.

² Unfortunately no general history of the United States Food Administration has yet been written. The value of the papers was early realized, for on December 27, 1917, Everett S. Brown presented before the Eighth Annual Conference of Archivists in Philadelphia a paper entitled "Archives of the Food Administration as Historical Sources." This address appears in the *American Historical Association Annual Report*, 1917, 124-135. A further elaboration of the papers as they appeared before the transfer to The National Archives is given in Waldo G. Leland and Newton D. Mereness, *Introduction to the American Official Sources for the Economic and Social History of the World War* (New Haven, 1926). General accounts of food control in various foreign countries during the World War will be found in the monumental *Economic and Social History of the World War* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), edited by James T. Shotwell.

³ Alaska, District of Columbia, Hawaii and Porto Rico also had Federal Food Administrators.

Barnard had been the chemist for the New Hampshire Board of Health and a Food and Drug Inspector Chemist of the United States Department of Agriculture. As Federal Food Administrator he appointed a staff of skilled volunteers⁴ to assist him in directing the food program in every county, city, town, and village in Indiana. The records accumulated from their activities during the years 1917-1919 constitute the Food Administration papers for the state of Indiana.

Before describing these papers, it may be well to suggest that there exists among the records of the Washington office much other material of importance for a study of Indiana during the World War. Especially interesting are the papers of the States Administration Division.⁵ This division interpreted the rules and regulations of other divisions for the various states, and was the general representative of the states in Washington. In the files of Home Conservation Divisions⁶, the Education Division⁷, and the School and College Division⁸, there is a wealth of information pertaining to publicity and propaganda as it was directed from the Washington office to the states. Then, too, the License Division⁹ has a complete list of all licensees in Indiana together with many reports made by them. Only the divisions of the Washington office offering the most obvious possibilities have been mentioned, but an examination of the remaining divisions will amply reward the investigator interested in Indiana's part in the great war.

The importance of saving the documents of the World War was realized by historians even while the war was still raging. Many states had special commissions for the preservation of such material. Professor John W. Oliver, Director of the War History Records of the Indiana Historical Commission, made every effort toward the preservation and compilation of World War records, and an appropriation of \$20,000 was obtained to prepare a war history of the state.¹⁰ Efforts

⁴ Most of the workers were volunteers or "dollar a year men." A few clerks and stenographers were paid. In September, 1918, the Indiana organization had 867 workers of whom 73 were paid employees. See The National Archives, FA 6H-A9 for a partial list of the Indiana personnel.

⁵ The National Archives, FA 6H.

⁶ The National Archives, FA 5H.

⁷ The National Archives, FA 12H.

⁸ The National Archives, FA 34H.

⁹ The National Archives, FA 37H.

¹⁰ "American Historical Activities During the World War," American Historical Association *Annual Report*, 1919, I, 137-295. The section on Indiana is by John W. Oliver. The Indiana Historical Commission published the bulletin, *Suggestions for*

were made by the commission to acquire the papers of the Food Administration in Indiana but they were sent to Washington as were those of the other states.¹¹ The Indiana records were shipped to Washington during March, 1919,¹² and comprise some eighty-five out of the approximate total of 22,000 linear feet of the records of the United States Food Administration.¹³ Since the settlement of outstanding claims was practically the only use to which the documents were put, they were left in the original containers and boxes in which they were shipped.¹⁴

Now that these records of the stirring war days are being made more easily available, the careful student is able to reconstruct the life of the people of Indiana during 1917-1918. The papers, offering the best approach to a study of Indiana during war-time, will be found in the extensive general correspondence file.¹⁵ Here are letters from citizens in all walks of life. Some of the correspondence is highly illiterate and flavored with downright expressions of the soil; other letters are concise, clear, and literary. Most of them offer some suggestion of the influence and effect of the war on the people of Indiana; and in this lies the value and importance of the records. The social historian can generalize and interpret much more correctly after studying such a mass of correspondence than if he relies on newspapers and other printed accounts.

The exchange of letters and telegrams between Dr. H. E. Barnard and the County Food Administrators¹⁶ reveals the manner in which food control spread to the counties, and shows in detail how the work penetrated into every Indiana

Collecting and Preserving Material for Indiana War History, War History Bulletin, No. 1 (Indianapolis, 1919). A survey of the work of preserving World War material is made by F. F. Holbrook, "The Collection of State War Records," *American Historical Review* (1919), XXV, 72-78. Several volumes on Indiana's part during the World War resulted from the activities of the Indiana Historical Commission. Among them may be mentioned, George Streiby Cottman, *Jefferson County in the World War* (Madison, 1920), and Walter Sidney Greenough, *The War Purse of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1922).

¹¹ The National Archives, FA 6H-A9.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *The Second Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States*, (Washington, 1936), 13.

¹⁴ The National Archives, FA 6H-A9, gives some of the requests for information from the Indiana papers.

Professor Ivan L. Pollock examined the records sent from the state of Iowa for his book, *The Food Administration in Iowa*, in the *Iowa Chronicles of the World War*, 2 vols., edited by Benjamin F. Shambaugh (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, 1928).

¹⁵ The National Archives, FA 115A-A1 and FA 115A-A2.

¹⁶ The work was further decentralized by the appointment of County Food Administrators in each county.

home.¹⁷ The extensive records kept by Stanley Wyckoff as Food Administrator for Marion County offer a splendid source for the study of Indianapolis and its environs during wartime.¹⁸ The more specialized files deal with activities of the merchant representatives,¹⁹ conservation and regulation of ice,²⁰ and the work of the retail price reporters.²¹ The valuable correspondence file pertaining to the hearings held for violations of various rules contains some of the most interesting and important letters relative to food control in Indiana.²² As has been indicated, broad powers were granted by Congress under the Food Control Act of August 10, 1917. To make this act effective an Enforcement Division was organized in the Washington office.²³ The work of enforcement in each state was handled by the Federal Food Administration or his assistants with the advice and assistance of the Washington office as needed. Violators of the Food Administration rules—and the number was surprisingly small—were at first admonished either by the Federal Food Administrator or the County Administrator. Hearings were given the alleged violators, and, when found guilty, the offenders were punished by administrative action. The penalties for continued infractions generally were: contributions to a war charity, suspension of business, or complete revocation of the offender's license. Through these quasi-judicial hearings were settled practically all the cases without recourse to the regularly constituted courts of law, for as will be shown, the enforcement of the rules was largely left to the court of public opinion.

One group of infractions had to do with the insufficient use of wheat substitutes. The war created an overwhelming demand for wheat. Since a great portion of the French and Belgian crops had been destroyed, and since the hazard of submarine warfare and a lack of ships made importation from New Zealand and Australia impossible, the Allies had to depend largely upon America for the grain. To supply this

¹⁷ The National Archives, FA 115A-A3 and FA 115A-A4.

¹⁸ The National Archives, FA 115A-A6.

¹⁹ Merchant Representatives were organized by Meyer Heller, primarily to disseminate publicity *via* the merchants. The correspondence may be consulted in The National Archives, FA 115A-A5.

²⁰ The National Archives, FA 115A-A9. It will be noted that during the time of war not even the smallest item of human endeavor is unaffected.

²¹ The National Archives, FA 115A-A11. An effort was made to thwart profiteering by a check on retail prices.

²² The National Archives, FA 115A-A8.

²³ See The National Archives, FA 44H, for the files of the Enforcement Division.

need a strict program of conservation was necessary in the United States. Indiana coöperated to the fullest extent with this program, both in increasing production and in saving the precious wheat. This grain was the most easily shipped; hence substitutes such as corn, oats, and rice were used on a 50-50 basis with wheat flour. Bakers were rigorously held to this rule, and those who refused to obey or attempted evasion were at once admonished or punished according to the facts brought out in the hearings.²⁴ From the papers one can not only obtain a picture of how the Food Administration was regarded, but one can also see an interesting example of the work of a quasi-judicial establishment in enforcing its rules.

A fertile field for the economic and statistical investigator will be found in the records of the baking division. The material largely consists of reports made by the bakers. These reports give facts and figures as to the amount of flour and other ingredients used; the kind and amount of goods baked; and other data that are of considerable interest to the intensive investigator.²⁵

A threatend sugar famine made necessary a system of control which really amounted to rationing. Sugar certificates good for stated amounts of the commodity were issued to manufacturers, public eating places, bakers, and retailers on the basis of statements made by them as to their requirements.²⁶ In the records pertaining to these transactions the investigator will find a wealth of economic and statistical information. For example, it is possible to ascertain the amount of sugar used in any town or county in Indiana for certain quarters of the years 1917-18. Perhaps such research may seem trifling, but it must be remembered that only on such minute investigations can any sort of a sane generalization be made.

In all the work of the Food Administration the task was accomplished by the coöperative efforts of all citizens who came to believe the slogan, "Food Will Win the War." Mention has been made of the fact that no great amount of enforcement was necessary because the court of public opinion

²⁴ The National Archives, FA 115B-A2. This file gives the correspondence pertaining to the control and enforcement of the rules affecting bakers.

²⁵ The National Archives, FA 115B. In this group are classified papers of the Baking Division.

²⁶ Consult The National Archives, FA 115C, for the papers of the Sugar Division of the Food Administration of Indiana.

decided against the opponents of the Food Administration. The people were carefully mobilized and educated through a widespread campaign of publicity and propaganda emanating from the Washington office.²⁷ An education or publicity director was appointed in each of the states; and Indiana was fortunate in having Don Herold to assume charge of this work. His career as author and artist had already begun, and since the close of the war he has firmly established himself as a leading American humorist and playwright. Seemingly his stock of new ideas to advance the popularity of the Food Administration was inexhaustible. A student of the power of publicity and propaganda during wartime will find much in the records of the Indiana Food Administration.²⁸

Practically every known source of publicity was exploited. Street-car card campaigns, motion pictures, billboard campaigns, newspapers, pamphlets, rallies, and speeches were employed to spread the message of conservation. Pledge cards were distributed by the tens of thousands and stickers by the tens of millions—these stickers being sold by Indiana to the administrations of other states. The organization of Food Clubs provided an outlet for the message of conservation in every community. The careful explanation of the aims of the Food Administration brought constant response from the American people. The Indiana papers indicate that the people willingly followed the “meatless” and “wheatless” days, and strove valiantly to win the war through the saving of food.

This brief summary of the records of the Food Administration now deposited in the National Archives indicates that a rich field is offered for study and research. It is impossible to write a complete account of Indiana's part in the World War without taking cognizance of the work of the Food Administration, for, with the mobilization of entire populations for war, all citizens were aware—and the farming sections doubly so—that the battlefield of war was as far away as the wheat or the corn field.

²⁷ No account has yet been written of the wartime publicity and propaganda of the Food Administration. A very complete body of documents may be consulted in The National Archives, FA 12H.

²⁸ The main portion of correspondence on publicity matters will be found in the general correspondence file of the Food Administration of Indiana, The National Archives, FA 115A-A1 and FA 115A-A2. Material will be found on publicity matters in many of the other files of Indiana.