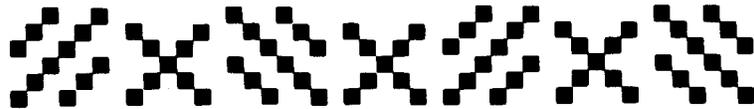


The Ninth Federal Census of Indianapolis: A Case Study in Civic Chauvinism

*Robert G. Barrows**



The Indianapolis *Saturday Evening Mirror* was exultant. The “frantic efforts” of the census enumerators in the Hoosier capital had been met with a “noble response” in the house of Dr. William B. Fletcher. A blessed event had just taken place, and, the paper noted, “two fine girls have been placed to the credit of the Doctor on the census rolls.” On that same day in March, 1871, the Indianapolis *Evening News* urged all heads of families who had not *personally* given the census enumerators the required information to contact the United States marshal to insure that all members of their household had been recorded. Two days later a third Indianapolis paper had nothing but praise for one of the assistant marshals. For two weeks this gentleman had “been engaged in ferreting out those who slept in stores and roomed in [business] blocks”; he had succeeded in locating some 775 persons not previously enumerated.¹

The interest of the Indianapolis press in the progress of the census takers was clearly intense during those spring days in 1871, but this was no ordinary census. The editors evinced their concern because a recount of the Indianapolis population was taking place, a second enumeration that would, it was hoped, supersede the first count taken during the summer of 1870. As one newspaper commented, “by this census we must be judged and take our rank among the cities for the next ten years.”² The events surrounding this second

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¹ Indianapolis *Saturday Evening Mirror*, March 18, 1871; Indianapolis *Evening News*, March 18, 1871; Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, March 20, 1871.

² Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, January 26, 1871.

enumeration of the ninth federal census of Indianapolis provide an interesting case study of urban rivalry and civic chauvinism in late nineteenth century America.

A number of scholars have commented upon the rivalries that existed among American cities during the nineteenth century. Richard Wade, in his study of Ohio River Valley towns during the early years of the century, noted that "one of the most striking characteristics of this period was the development of an urban imperialism which saw rising young giants seek to spread their power and influence over the entire new country."³ A student of antebellum Chicago has commented that while that city's "voice was strident, its self-esteem was by no means unique. . . . Indeed, civic boosterism was the logical ideology of the era's urban imperialism."⁴

One index of a city's development was population growth. An increase in population was not merely an indication of economic vitality; it also suggested to local boosters that the advantages they claimed for their particular locale were becoming readily apparent to others. In antebellum Chicago most promotional literature contained tables detailing the city's rapid population growth.⁵ Release of figures for the ninth census (1870) fueled the rivalry between St. Louis and

³ Richard Wade, *The Urban Frontier* (Chicago, 1964), 322. Several recent works have explored nineteenth century city promotion and inter-urban rivalries. See, for example, Carl Abbott, "Civic Pride in Chicago, 1844-1860," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, LXIII (Winter, 1970), 399-421; Robert D. Parmet, "Competition for the World's Columbian Exposition: The New York Campaign," *ibid.*, LXV (Winter, 1972), 365-81; Francis L. Lederer II, "Competition for the World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago Campaign," *ibid.*, 382-94; Patrick E. McLearn, "John Stephen Wright and Urban and Regional Promotion in the Nineteenth Century," *ibid.*, LXVIII (November, 1975), 407-20; J. Christopher Schnell and Katherine B. Clinton, "The New West: Themes in Nineteenth Century Urban Promotion, 1815-1880," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, XXX (January, 1974), 75-88; Gregg Lee Carter, "Baseball in St. Louis, 1867-1875: An Historical Case Study in Civic Pride," *ibid.*, XXXI (July, 1975), 253-63; and Peter C. Stewart, "Railroads and Urban Rivalries in Antebellum Eastern Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXI (January, 1973), 3-22. Slightly older works include Wyatt W. Belcher, *The Economic Rivalry Between St. Louis and Chicago, 1850-1880* (New York, 1947); Leonard P. Curry, *Rail Routes South: Louisville's Fight for the Southern Market, 1865-1872* (Lexington, Ky., 1969); Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads* (Madison, Wis., 1962); James W. Livingood, *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry, 1780-1860* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1947); and Harry N. Scheiber, "Urban Rivalry and Internal Improvements in the Old Northwest, 1820-1860," *Ohio History*, LXXI (October, 1962), 227-39.

⁴ Abbott, "Civic Pride in Chicago," 421.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 409.

Chicago when it developed that the river city had forged slightly ahead of its competitor on the lake.⁶ Farther west the situation was much the same. "Local boosters in the rival towns along the Missouri River had always found population growth the most satisfying index of progress."⁷

Concern with population figures was so prevalent, in fact, that Francis A. Walker, superintendent of the ninth census, was moved to complain:

In the absence of definite information[,] estimates as to the growth of cities and States soon become wild and extravagant. Cities vie with cities, and States with States, in their boasts of population and of wealth, like individuals bidding against each other at an auction, until the most palpable facts in the case are lost sight of, and the extravagances of competitors become a sufficient reason for even more extravagant estimates. Claims that perhaps were first made in a spirit of banter soon are taken as serious, and in the event people become angry to find that not true which was originally asserted only to irritate a rival.⁸

The residents of Indianapolis were not immune from this type of civic chauvinism. In April, 1870, one of the city's major newspapers opined: "Nothing is more certain than the final blossoming of the whilom Hoosier town into the great central emporium of the West, and the Hub on which will center the trade and traffic between the two great sections." Elsewhere in the same issue the editors prophesied "on substantial grounds, and from plain reasoning, that the population of Indianapolis will double itself in five years from to-day."⁹ This was an overly optimistic projection—the city was not to double its population during the entire coming decade—but it suggests the attitude of many Indianapolis residents as local arrangements were being made for taking the 1870 federal census.

In Washington steps had already been initiated for conducting the ninth decennial census. In early February, 1870, Walker accepted appointment as superintendent of the census and G. D. Harrington was named chief clerk of the Census

⁶ Belcher, *The Economic Rivalry Between St. Louis and Chicago*, 177.

⁷ Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*, 169.

⁸ U.S., *Ninth Census, 1870*. Vol. I, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington, 1872), xx.

⁹ *Indianapolis Daily Journal*, April 19, 1870.

Office.¹⁰ United States marshals were charged with the administration of census operations in their respective districts, and, for the District of Indiana, General Benjamin Spooner was the individual entrusted with this responsibility. On May 7, 1870, Spooner received thirteen boxes of census schedules (the printed forms to be filled out by the enumerators as they made their rounds) from the Washington office, and six days later he assigned five assistant marshals to canvass the city of Indianapolis. Of the five, two appear to have been reasonably well qualified for their positions: Louis Kern was a clerk in the post office and Richard Smock served as a deputy county clerk. It is not known whether the other three enumerators—Calvin Lindley, William M. Blake, and John C. Slawson—also had previous clerical experience.¹¹

Shortly thereafter the *Daily Journal* noted: "General Spooner and his assistants are busily engaged in sending out the blanks and portfolios received from the Department at Washington, to the census-takers. Active operations will commence on the first of June."¹² Operations in Indianapolis did, indeed, begin on June 1. Clearly, however, the enumerators were confronted with a formidable task. Four of the men were responsible for two city wards each—a substantial geographic area. The size of the enumeration districts was reflected in the length of time required for the count to be completed. Lindley, who was assigned the first and second wards, did not complete his canvass until August 24—almost three months after the work had been initiated.¹³

¹⁰ "Journal of Personnel Actions," February, 1870-November, 1872, Records of the Ninth Census, Record Group 29 (National Archives, Washington); File 111, Census Personnel Records of the Appointment Division, Interior Department Archives, Record Group 48 (National Archives).

¹¹ Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, May 10, 13, 1870. Two of the men originally listed by the *Daily Journal* were apparently removed before the enumeration began and their places filled by Lindley and Smock. The names of the marshals who actually conducted the canvass are listed on the census schedules; see U.S., Ninth Census, 1870, population schedules for Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana, National Archives Microfilm Publication No. 593, rolls 338-41. The Indianapolis city directories for 1870, 1871-1872, and 1872-1873 were consulted in an attempt to secure information regarding the enumerators' occupations.

¹² Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, May 24, 1870.

¹³ The time required to conduct the enumeration of a given district may be determined since the individual census schedules were dated as they were filled out. No matter what date the schedules were actually completed, the enumeration was supposed to be conducted as of June 1, 1870. For the questions asked on the population schedules of the ninth

The enumerators, however, were faced with more serious problems than merely the size of their districts. Shortly after the enumeration had begun, the Indianapolis *Daily Journal* commented:

A great deal of difficulty has been experienced by the Assistant Marshals appointed for the purpose of taking the ninth census, owing to the fact that a great part of the population of the different counties are very reticent, and reserve information needed and asked for by the Marshals, under the impression that it will be used for the purpose of making out the tax-list, or for other purposes about which the American citizen is naturally sensitive.¹⁴

A few weeks later the Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel* reported the reply given to Assistant Marshal Slawson when he requested an elderly woman to state her age: "Shure, honey, I don't know how ould I am this minute, at all at all, but I was born about the time of the last big wind in Ireland, and yees can figure that up for yerself, if ye be a schollard."¹⁵ Given the area to be covered by each Indianapolis enumerator and the intransigence (or illiteracy) of some of the citizens, it is little wonder that Spooner felt constrained to publish a letter requesting that "all persons who have been overlooked will at once advise me of the fact, giving street and number of residence, that I may make the correction before the returns go out of my hands."¹⁶

During August, 1870, the newspapers paid little attention to the census taking operations. Early in September, however, they began to report the completed returns as they were submitted for various wards. By the end of the month the final tabulations had been made, and the papers reported that the Hoosier capital had surpassed the forty thousand

census and the instructions given to the assistant marshals, see Carroll D. Wright and William C. Hunt, *The History and Growth of the United States Census* (U.S. Serial Set No. 3856; Washington, 1900), 154-59. A reprint edition of this work was published in 1966 by the Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York, N.Y.

¹⁴ Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, June 16, 1870.

¹⁵ Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, July 22, 1870.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, July 15, 1870. The problems that plagued the Indianapolis census officials, and the resulting inaccuracies, were by no means unique. See, for example, Peter R. Knights, "A Method for Estimating Census Under-Enumeration," *Historical Methods Newsletter*, III (December, 1969), 5-8; Peter R. Knights, "Accuracy of Age Reporting in the Manuscript Federal Censuses of 1850 and 1860," *ibid.*, IV (June, 1971), 79-83; and John B. Sharpless and Ray M. Shortridge, "Biased Under-Enumeration in Census Manuscripts: Methodological Implications," *Journal of Urban History*, I (August, 1975), 409-39.

mark. This figure reflected a substantial rate of growth—an increase of 119 percent since 1860¹⁷—but the results were not received with universal approbation. Some felt that the enumeration had been carelessly done and that the final figure should have been much higher. The reaction of the Indianapolis *Saturday Evening Mirror*, a blend of indignation, sarcasm, and, possibly, exaggeration, merits extensive quotation:

THE SCOURGE OF 1870
AWFUL RAVAGES OF THE U.S. CENSUS
FRAUD! FRAUD! FRAUD!

Gen. Spooner's minions have done their worst, and it will take Indiana fully five years to recover from the effects of their devastations. . . . Cities that went into our fight thirty thousand strong sneak out with half or less than half that number. . . .

Indianapolis bled heavily, but we brought off forty-two thousand of our sixty, which was doing pretty well. And it now appears that if justice had been done in the matter of enumeration, we might have done better. Gen. Spooner means well, but his deputies have been shamefully imposed upon by people who didn't want their neighbors to know how many children they had. Children have been hid away in closets and under the bed at the approach of the census man, and one family of thirteen occupied the cellar of a mansion near the rolling mill two days and nights to escape enumeration. One marshal, too, held singular ideas concerning his duty, and never counted but one twin to a family, no matter how many others there might be. He only counted one John Smith in his district, rejecting the others on the score that he had already got them down. Another adolescent enumerator refused to count sick people unless he knew the doctor in attendance. . . .

Although it is not a very suitable time to begin lying about our population, we will venture to say, in view of these facts, that Indianapolis has suffered overmuch at the hands of Gen. Spooner, and that we have fifty thousand people here, counting twins and John Smiths.¹⁸

Following this outburst, however, there was no further reaction—at least not on the surface. No mention of the census or the Indianapolis population was made in the press from late September, 1870, until January 25, 1871, when the *Evening News* suddenly announced: "The census of this city

¹⁷ The Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, September 26, 1870, listed the population figure as 40,606; the *Daily Sentinel* for the same date gave the figure as 40,696. The discrepancy is probably the result of a typographical error. The larger of the two figures was used in computing the percentage increase over 1860. The 1860 population was 18,611. U.S., *Eighth Census, 1860*. Vol. I, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 121.

¹⁸ Indianapolis *Saturday Evening Mirror*, September 17, 1870.

is to be retaken." The full story of what transpired during this four month interval that led to a reenumeration of the Indianapolis population is unknown and probably unknowable. But some events that apparently played a part in the desire for a recount can be ascertained.

To begin with, the Indianapolis population did experience a spurt during these four months. The sudden surge was not the result of a "baby boom" or the arrival of an unusually large number of in-migrants. Rather, it was accomplished by the simple procedure of annexation. The wheels for this had been set in motion even before the census takers had completed their final tallies. On July 25, 1870, a special committee mandated "to prepare the proper papers in relation to the annexation of certain contiguous territory north and east of the city" reported to the mayor and the Common Council that the requisite legal notices were ready for signature and subsequent publication. Following these prescribed juridical steps it was "proposed to present to the Board of Commissioners of Marion County, a petition praying for said annexation."¹⁹

Such a petition was duly presented to the county commissioners on September 5, 1870. It was a lengthy document, "describing accurately by metes and bounds the contiguous territory desired to be annexed, and setting forth the reasons for such annexation . . ."²⁰ Among the reasons cited by the Common Council in support of their petition was the fact that the "tracts of land sought to be annexed are in the midst of thickly populated districts, or those rapidly becoming so . . ." Besides the advantages that would accrue to the numerous new city residents, the petition noted: "The annexation of the proposed territory . . . will give to the city an increase of revenue and wealth, enhance the value of property and accelerate the progress of useful industry, enterprise and improvement. And not only this; it will stimulate the growth, enlarge the business and advance the prosperity of our beautiful, healthful and flourishing city of Indianapolis."²¹

The county commissioners evidently agreed with the council since on September 19 they "ordered that the prayer

¹⁹ *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Indianapolis, for the Fiscal Year Commencing May 7, 1870, to May 15, 1871* (Indianapolis, 1872), 340.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 544-45.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 562-63.

of the petition be granted, and that the lands described therein be annexed to the city of Indianapolis.”²² Thus, at the very moment that the enumerators were concluding their count of the city’s population, that population experienced a substantial accretion. Moreover, it was to be augmented twice more before the year was over as two additional annexations were accomplished by resolutions of the Common Council.²³ Civic pride must certainly have been wounded a bit with the realization that the census figures by which the “beautiful, healthful and flourishing city of Indianapolis” would be known for the next decade were already outdated.

Annexation of contiguous territory during the fall of 1870 was only one reason why residents of the Hoosier capital believed that the census taken during the summer did not truly reflect the population of Indianapolis. The first enumeration was very carelessly done. The evidence for this conclusion is indirect but, cumulatively, quite convincing. As noted above, one Indianapolis newspaper had expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the manner in which the census had been conducted.²⁴ General Spooner himself had admitted that some persons had been overlooked.²⁵ Further, it is known that the manufacturing returns for the city were inaccurate. The Indianapolis *Daily Journal* complained that there were “no less than *three hundred and fifty* manufacturing [*sic*] establishments which were not mentioned, principally because the information was not easily arrived at.”²⁶ The Census Office evidently concurred in that assessment since a re-enumeration was ordered for the manufacturing schedules.²⁷ Inasmuch as the same enumerators completed the schedules for both manufactures and population, the accuracy of the latter can certainly be questioned. If the enumerators really did overlook 350 manufacturing establishments, how many individuals must also have escaped their attention?

As the new year of 1871 approached, therefore, those residents who took pride in the Hoosier capital and wished

²² *Ibid.*, 543-44.

²³ *Ibid.*, 812-14, 828-29. See also William R. Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis, 1870), 131. Holloway estimated that two thousand persons were added to the city’s population by these various annexations.

²⁴ Indianapolis *Saturday Evening Mirror*, September 17, 1870.

²⁵ Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, July 15, 1870.

²⁶ Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, January 26, 1871.

²⁷ U.S., *Ninth Census, 1870*. Vol. III, *The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States* (Washington, 1872), 374, 378.

to foster and publicize its growth had reason to be distressed. The enumeration of the city's population during the previous summer had apparently been inaccurate. In addition, the number of inhabitants had increased during the intervening months as a result of annexations. The Census Office had just made final payments to the assistant marshals²⁸ and would soon begin a detailed analysis of the population figures preparatory to their eventual publication. Indianapolis, it must have seemed, was destined to be incorrectly listed in the official reports unless measures could be taken quickly.

Precedents existed for a recount. A federal law passed in 1852 provided for reenumerations in cases where "the census of any district or subdivision in the United States shall have been improperly taken . . ."²⁹ Further, reenumerations of the ninth census in New York City and Philadelphia had already been directed under the provisions of an executive order issued by President Ulysses S. Grant.³⁰ Whether the Indianapolis city fathers were aware of these facts is not known. But they did know that the manufacturing returns were to be redone under official sanction, and they apparently concluded that it would be possible to reenumerate the population at the same time—if not officially, then at least under their own purview.

Exactly what happened next is uncertain, but one tantalizing detail does deserve mention. On January 10, 1871, Superintendent of the Census Walker received a telegram from Spooner in Indianapolis. Extant records provide no clue regarding the subject of this message. Spooner must have considered the matter to be of unusual importance, however, since no evidence has been found of previous telegraphic communication between him and the Census Office.³¹ What-

²⁸ Final payments were made to the five Indianapolis enumerators on December 19 and 20, 1870. "Record of Final Payments," 1871-1872, Records of the Ninth Census, Record Group 29.

²⁹ *United States Statutes at Large and Treaties of the United States of America*, X, 25.

³⁰ U.S., *Ninth Census, 1870*, I, xx; "Record of Pay Certificates," 1870, Records of the Ninth Census, Record Group 29.

³¹ "Record of Accounts," 1870-1872, 2 vols., Records of the Ninth Census, Record Group 29. These volumes list financial obligations of the Census Office to individuals and business establishments. Included are monthly statements of amounts owed the Western Union Telegraph Company, the dates and costs of the telegrams, and information regarding from whom telegrams were received and to whom they were sent. The communication from Spooner to Walker is noted in volume I, page 188. There is no record of any telegrams being exchanged between Indianapolis and the Census Office from June, 1870, when the records were begun, and the telegram cited here.

ever the subject of this telegram may have been and however it was received at the Census Office, one salient fact remains: a reenumeration of the Indianapolis population, using official census schedules, began just three weeks later.³²

The Indianapolis newspapers heralded the event. The *Daily Journal* reported that Colonel William Wiles, the United States revenue assessor for the Sixth District of Indiana, had been entrusted with retaking the census. "This work," the paper noted, "is one that every citizen should take an interest in, and we hope that it may be done in a correct manner." The *Daily Sentinel* agreed, calling on the citizens to "be prepared to receive those deputed to do this work, and to render them prompt and full information."³³

A few days later a circular appeared in the Indianapolis newspapers under the heading "The New Census." Distributed by Wiles and directed to the "Citizens of Indianapolis," the circular read in part:

The manufacturing statistics of our city being evidently incomplete and unsatisfactory in many respects to the Census Bureau, orders have been received for the re-enumeration of the same, and at the request of the honorable the, Common Council [*sic*] and many prominent citizens of our city, I have undertaken to superintend the work, *including the re-enumeration of our inhabitants.*³⁴

Wiles proceeded to list the information that he wished manufacturers to have on hand. He also noted: "Many of our citizens are of the opinion that our population is larger than reported, and look for an increase in the re-enumeration. All that I can say upon this subject is, that it will be my purpose to make the work complete in accordance with the law, trusting that the result will prove satisfactory."³⁵

Compared to the first enumeration, the recount was conducted thoroughly and expeditiously. The city was divided into twenty-one enumeration districts (contrasted with five the previous summer), and an assistant marshal was assigned to each. Available evidence suggests that at least two thirds

³² The origin of the census schedules used for the second enumeration is not known. They may have come from the Census Office in Washington. It seems more likely, however, that Spooner had extras in his possession that had not been used during the summer of 1870.

³³ Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, January 26, 1871; Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, January 26, 1871.

³⁴ Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, January 31, 1871. Italics were added by the author.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

of the assistant marshals had previous clerical experience, and this fact may also have helped to facilitate the work.³⁶ The canvass commenced on January 31, and the final district was completed exactly four weeks later. The enumeration of most of the districts was accomplished in fifteen or twenty days—again, a great improvement over the previous summer.

Once again, the Indianapolis press monitored the work of the enumerators and encouraged them in their efforts. Noting that the recount conducted in New York had increased that city's population by only about 2 percent, the *Evening News* remarked: "If Indianapolis does not gain more in proportion it will not be worth while to retake the census."³⁷ The same publication reported a few days later that some were finding fault with the enumerators "because they are not thorough enough in their work. There may be no cause for this," the paper admitted, "but while so much depends upon their accuracy, it is not deemed out of place to call their attention to the fact that dissatisfaction exists."³⁸ The *Saturday Evening Mirror* apparently had no such qualms: "The census takers are indefatigable in the discharge of their duties. We have been harassed by them of late, but it gave us great pleasure to forward their search for information."³⁹

This "search for information" had not been completed for even a day when the papers announced the news: the population of Indianapolis, on reenumeration, was found to be 49,411, an increase of 8,715 (or 21 percent) over the

³⁶ As was done for the first enumeration, population schedules and city directories were consulted to obtain the names of the enumerators and information regarding their occupations. See note 11.

Two anomalies in National Archives Microfilm Publication No. 593 must be noted. The Indianapolis population schedules for both enumerations of the ninth census may be found on rolls 338-41 of this publication. Logically, rolls 338-39 should contain the first enumeration and rolls 340-41 the second canvass. Indeed, this is what the National Archives title pages at the beginning of each roll of film indicate. In reality, however, the reverse is true—rolls 338-39 actually contain the second enumeration, rolls 340-41 the first count. The National Archives indicated an intention to correct their master negative (Rose K. Greenburg, acting chief, Publications Sales Branch, National Archives and Records Service, to the author, February 13, 1972), and a telephone call to the Publications Sales Branch in January, 1977, confirmed that the changes have been made. But all copies of these rolls produced prior to February, 1972, were erroneously labeled. In addition, because of an error when the manuscript schedules were originally bound, pages 81-104 of ward nine's first enumeration are to be found between pages 24 and 25 of the second enumeration of ward one (subdivision 2).

³⁷ Indianapolis *Evening News*, February 7, 1871.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, February 13, 1871.

³⁹ Indianapolis *Saturday Evening Mirror*, February 25, 1871.

previous summer.⁴⁰ This was certainly welcome news, but little time was wasted in pointing out that it could be made even more satisfactory: "Only about four hundred more are required to raise the census of our city to fifty thousand. It is to be hoped, therefore, that all who know themselves or others to have been omitted will make said fact known at the [census] office The rolls can only be kept open for a few days. The interest of the city makes this the duty of every citizen."⁴¹ One week later the deficit had been reduced to fifty persons. Carped the *Evening News*: "What a miserable set of counters we must be if we can't gain fifty in counting fifty thousand."⁴² The other papers joined in the exhortation,⁴³ apparently to good effect; the drive for a more populous Indianapolis quickly went "over the top" and peaked at 50,203.⁴⁴

It must be kept in mind, however, that only the recount of manufacturing establishments had been formally ordered; the reenumeration of population was strictly a local, unofficial enterprise conducted under the auspices of the Common Council. All this hard work would be wasted unless the proper authorities could be convinced of the inaccuracy of the 1870 canvass and the propriety of adjusting those figures. In order to achieve this objective the city fathers approached two individuals who they knew had a personal interest in the reputation of Indianapolis and influence in the Washington bureaucracy—Senator Oliver P. Morton and Representative John Coburn. In addition to being part of the Indiana con-

⁴⁰ Indianapolis *Evening News*, February 28, 1871; Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, March 1, 1871.

⁴¹ Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, March 9, 1871.

⁴² Indianapolis *Evening News*, March 16, 1871.

⁴³ See the initial paragraph of this paper and the citations provided in note 1.

⁴⁴ Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, March 24, 1871; Indianapolis *Evening News*, March 24, 1871; Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, March 25, 1871. Although the ninth census was supposed to be taken as of June 1, 1870, there is evidence to suggest that the second enumeration of Indianapolis included territory that had been annexed to the city during the fall of 1870. In order to examine this possibility, several individuals who lived on Malott Avenue (a street that lay just outside the preannexation city limits and was absorbed in the fall of 1870) were selected from the 1871 Indianapolis city directory. If the second enumeration was, indeed, taken as of June 1, 1870, none of these individuals should have been included since they did not actually reside within the city limits at that time. Several of these persons were, however, found on the schedules of the second enumeration, which suggests that at least some of the annexed territory was canvassed during the February, 1871, recount.

gressional delegation, both men had close, personal ties to the Hoosier capital.⁴⁵

As a result of the Common Council's appeal for their intercession, Morton and Coburn wrote a lengthy letter on March 28, 1871. Although addressed to Columbus Delano, secretary of the Interior Department, the dates on various supplementary papers and endorsements strongly suggest that the letter was transmitted directly to the Census Office for consideration. Morton and Coburn began their appeal by emphasizing their long association with the Hoosier capital and noting that they were "well acquainted with its population[,] resources and general condition." They then stated their case: "we believe that the enumeration of inhabitants made by the officers authorized to take the Ninth Census in that city did not include all the names of persons who were inhabitants on the first of June last, on the contrary that a large number of persons were not reported by such officers and put upon the lists of the Census." After summarizing the actions of the Indianapolis Common Council, which was "so well convinced" of the inaccuracy of the census that they had commissioned a recount by "officers acting under oath with schedules identical in form with those of the United States Census," Morton and Coburn went on to report the divergent figures between the two enumerations for all nine wards of the city. The recount had produced a total of 48,343 persons "while the report of the Census shows 41669 persons making a difference of 6674 persons not counted." A final paragraph buttressed the city's claim:

We further state that the schedules for the Eighth Ward have been examined by three clerks of skill in whom we have confidence as a test of the probability of these reports thus made. That the names included under the letter B in said schedules were examined in said ward and the heads of 21 families covering 86 persons have been found to be in the

⁴⁵ Morton had been elected lieutenant governor of Indiana in 1860 and had become governor the following year. He was elected governor in his own right in 1864 and moved on to the United States Senate in 1867. Coburn was an Indianapolis native, born in the city in 1825. He practiced law in Indianapolis for many years and held a variety of judicial posts. From March 4, 1867, to March 3, 1875, he represented the congressional district that included the Hoosier capital. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971* (Washington, 1971), 758, 1446.

It is purely surmise, but Spooner may have personally transmitted the results of the reenumeration to Morton and Coburn. He was apparently in Washington during late March, 1871. *Indianapolis Daily Journal*, March 31, 1871.

list made out under direction of the City and not in the list made out by the officers of the Census. We believe that the same proportion of omissions would be found under other letters taking into account the fact that names are probably most numerous under the letter B.

Morton and Coburn concluded by requesting that "the proper officers be directed to make another enumeration of the inhabitants" of Indianapolis. Attached to their letter was a list of the twenty-one "B" heads of families in the eighth ward whose names were purported to have been omitted in the first enumeration.⁴⁶

Approval of the congressmen's appeal was not automatic. Superintendent of the Census Walker had little sympathy for those who registered complaints against the work of the enumerators. "In the case of ninety-nine out of a hundred individual complaints of persons or families omitted in the enumeration," he was able to say from the perspective of a year's time, "examination of the returns will prove the census right . . ."⁴⁷ The simple fact that a city desired reenumeration was not sufficient to secure his approval. Only a few weeks before the Indianapolis appeal reached his desk, in fact, he had responded to a similar request by the city council of Wilmington, Delaware. Walker's recommendation to the secretary of the Interior Department was curt: "I have reason to believe that the U.S. Census of Wilmington is substantially thorough and complete, and I think all the better of it for not agreeing with the city census."⁴⁸ Approval of the Indianapolis petition, therefore, was not a foregone conclusion.

Fortunately, the Hoosier capital's appeal was well substantiated. Walker immediately turned the list of twenty-one "B" omissions in the eighth ward over to the chief of the Fourth Population Division requesting verification that the names were, indeed, missing from the 1870 schedules. That gentleman responded the next day (March 29): "Of the [twenty-one] names mentioned in said paper only the follow-

⁴⁶ Oliver P. Morton and John Coburn to Columbus Delano, March 28, 1871, File No. 186, Incoming Correspondence Pertaining to Census Affairs, Patents and Miscellaneous Division, Interior Department Archives, Record Group 48.

⁴⁷ U.S., *Ninth Census, 1870*, I, xx.

⁴⁸ Walker's recommendation is quoted in Columbus Delano to William Bright, January 4, 1871, General Outgoing Correspondence, vol. VI, pp. 16-17, Patents and Miscellaneous Division, Interior Department Archives, Record Group 48.

ing [four] are found, which, while differing to some degree, are supposed to mean the same parties.”⁴⁹ In other words, *at least* seventeen of the twenty-one omissions claimed by the Indianapolis Common Council were not, in fact, included on the schedules of the first enumeration. This apparently convinced Walker. His March 29 endorsement on the Morton-Coburn letter reads: “Respectfully forwarded. It appears to me that a good case for Reenumeration is made out.”⁵⁰

The next step was up to the officials of the Interior Department, and they acted with dispatch. The following day (March 30) W. F. Otto, the acting secretary, addressed a letter to the superintendent of the census directing that a reenumeration be conducted.⁵¹ The good news probably traveled quickly; that same day the chief clerk of the Census Office sent a telegram to Spooner in Indianapolis, presumably announcing the favorable decision.⁵²

One final detail remains to be considered. The letter directing an official reenumeration was dated March 30, 1871. But the manuscript schedules that made their way to the Census Office—and eventually to the National Archives—include those completed in February under the Common Council’s auspices. No enumeration was conducted following the formal authorization on March 30. An examination of the last sheet of returns for each of the enumeration districts provides a solution to this puzzle. Two statements are to be found immediately below the last name recorded. The first is a “certification statement” and consists of a formal declaration by each assistant marshal that the foregoing pages “constitute a full and true copy of the census returns” for the district to which he was assigned. This statement was dated either on or within a few days of the completion of the enumeration (*i.e.*, February, 1871).⁵³ This is followed by a

⁴⁹ I. M. Grassie [?] to Francis A. Walker, March 29, 1871, attached to the Morton-Coburn letter cited in note 46.

⁵⁰ Endorsement attached to the Morton-Coburn letter cited in note 46.

⁵¹ W. F. Otto to Superintendent of the Census, March 30, 1871, General Outgoing Correspondence, vol. VI, p. 141, Patents and Miscellaneous Division, Interior Department Archives, Record Group 48.

⁵² “Record of Accounts,” 1870-1872, vol. I, p. 239, Records of the Ninth Census, Record Group 29.

⁵³ U.S., Ninth Census, 1870, population schedules for Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana, National Archives Microfilm Publication No. 593, rolls 338-41. The “certification statement” was not dated for four of the twenty-one enumeration districts.

“verification statement” that reads: “Having carefully verified the above and foregoing census returns, I certify that the same is in all things correct and true.” With only two exceptions, these verification statements were dated April 12, 1871.⁵⁴

When word arrived from Washington that a reenumeration had been authorized, the assistant marshals—or someone acting for them—apparently made (or pretended to make) spot checks of the returns. They then attested that the enumeration made in February still constituted a “correct and true” picture of the city’s population.⁵⁵ Some refinements obviously were made; the 50,203 persons reported by the Indianapolis newspapers in mid-March and the 48,343 claimed in the Morton-Coburn letter were eventually reduced to the 48,244 recorded in the published volumes of the ninth census.⁵⁶ What remains clear, however, is that a census recount originally commissioned by the city fathers in February, 1871 (apparently including some territory annexed during the fall of 1870), and subsequently “verified” in April, 1871, became accepted as the official enumeration of the Indianapolis population at the ninth census—taken, in theory, as of June 1, 1870.

As suggested at the outset of this paper, civic chauvinism and urban rivalry were strong forces in nineteenth century America. The events surrounding the ninth federal census of Indianapolis take on more than a simple antiquarian significance when considered within this broader context. The concern evidenced by the Indianapolis press when the original returns were not as large as anticipated; the bold action taken by the Common Council to remedy the situation; the apparent decision to canvass areas during the reenumeration that technically should have been excluded; and the strong representations made by the city’s delegates in Congress—all these things suggest the intensity of emotion that could be generated when a city’s reputation was at stake.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* One “verification statement” was not dated, and another was dated April 5, 1871.

⁵⁵ The original signatures on some of the “certification statements” were lined out and replaced by the signature of the same individual who signed the “verification statement.” This suggests that the verification may sometimes have been done by individuals other than the original enumerators—or may not actually have been done at all.

⁵⁶ U.S., *Ninth Census, 1870*, I, 127.