Tending the Soil
Assessing Research Trends for
Indiana’s Civil War Era

Stephen E. Towne

In 1999, the Indiana Historical Society marked the opening of its newly built downtown Indianapolis center with a conference entitled “The State of Indiana History 2000.” Organized by the late Robert M. Taylor, the conference highlighted and reviewed the historiography of Indiana period by period, subject by subject. Dr. Taylor offered the author the privilege of examining the literature on Indiana’s experience in the American Civil War. Entitled “Scorched Earth or Fertile Ground?: Indiana in the Civil War, 1861-1865,” the essay reviewed two main historiographical threads: one focusing on Indiana politics and the other the question of dissent and subversion during the war. More significantly, it also suggested areas of research where scholars of Indiana and the Civil War could profitably explore and write. To date, most historical research relating to Indiana’s participation in the Civil War has focused on the political and social elites such as the powerful figures of Gov. Oliver P. Morton or Sen. Thomas A. Hendricks, respective leaders of the contending Republican and Democratic parties.

Although new assessments of these figures and the rarified world of high political intrigue are needed, the essay suggested that researchers also turn their attention to the non-elites of Indiana to study how the war affected their lives. The soldiers and seamen who volunteered or were drafted to serve in the military forces of the United States to suppress the rebellion merit attention. The men, women, and children who remained at home to work in the fields, shops, and factories deserve study. African American men and women who resided in Indiana and experienced both a refuge from southern slavery and the racial hostility of the white majority should be researched. The essay noted that studies of local Indiana communities—cities, towns, townships, counties—were lacking and suggested that scholars could gain much from studying how different people—Democrats and Republicans, men and women, young and old, farm laborers and townspeople, African Americans and whites, Methodists and Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, war supporters and opponents—lived together and interacted amid the conflicts and controversies engendered by slavery and war. In sum, the essay suggested that much more historical research and writing on Indiana topics were both warranted and required to gain a better understanding of the effects of the Civil War on the people of the state.¹
Recent Scholarship

It is encouraging to see that much research on Indiana and the Civil War has been done in the last decade. Vital and important work on Indiana in the Civil War-era has emerged to help reshape our understanding of the war's effect on the lives of the citizens of the state. Indeed, the research on Indiana's war experience has wide resonance and informs historical understanding of the northern experience more generally. This new scholarship goes far to compel historians to rethink many assumptions and prevailing interpretations of the American experience during that period.

Owing to the heightened popular interest in the American Civil War in the last twenty years, persons have dug into their closets and attics and recovered many collections of otherwise forgotten personal letters, diaries, and other personal writings penned by family members. The publication of editions of soldiers' letters and diaries written during the war is important for understanding the mode of presenting the thoughts, ideas, emotions, and experiences of the combatants. Several volumes of letters and diaries of Indiana volunteer soldiers have appeared in the last decade. The writers served in many of Indiana's volunteer units that marched long distances, fought many battles, and served in every theater of the military conflict to put down the Confederate rebellion. The varied service of the writers is notable. One served along the Mississippi River in Arkansas and Louisiana. Others served in the Union armies that swept southward
through Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and into Georgia. The letter writers were enlisted men and officers who brought their different social experiences and perspectives to the task of fighting a war to restore the national union. Aside from recounting the marching and fighting, these letters and diaries document the everyday experiences of individuals engulfed in extraordinary events, reveal their motivations for service, and show how they managed their disrupted and imperiled lives. The publication of the writings of rank-and-file soldiers, as well as officers, is a valuable method to explore from the bottom up the meaning of war for the combatants. These works supplement biographical studies of the leading political and military figures of the conflict.²

However valuable, published soldiers’ letters and diaries present a one-sided view of the overall experience of war. Compared with these letters, which families appear often to have cherished and preserved, few collections of letters and other writings from the home front survive, making them doubly valuable. (Soldiers, both enlisted men and officers, often discarded letters they received from their families and friends after reading them, choosing not to carry them.) Fortunately, editions of letters of soldiers’ wives, mothers, fathers, and other family members have emerged that present the experiences of non-combatants on the Indiana home front. In them we learn how those who stayed behind managed to continue the regular rounds of planting, cultivating, and harvesting their crops; feeding, clothing, and educating their children; and heating their houses in the absence of many of the men of their communities. The political tensions engendered by the war that existed on the home front emerge in these family letters, especially when soldiers’ wives had to move in with relatives or when poor soldiers’ wives were left destitute by county officials who opposed the war effort. These writings remind us that war engulfs all people and that the casualties of war are suffered everywhere, both on and off the fields of battle.³

Reigning historical interpretations of Indiana politics on the home front, developed in the second half of the last century, portray a high-level battle of political titans engaged in partisan combat. The state’s Republican governor, Oliver P. Morton, matched wits brilliantly, if controversially, with his Democratic opponents in the Indiana General Assembly, the Indiana Supreme Court, other statewide offices, and elsewhere in a fight to maintain control of the state. These Democrats included Hendricks, U.S. senators Jesse D. Bright, Joseph E. McDonald, David Turpie, and U.S. representative Daniel W. Voorhees.

Thomas A. Hendricks (1819-1885), Indiana U.S. senator and leader of the state’s Democratic Party. COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.
The stakes for the contest were high as Morton and other Republicans supported the war to suppress the rebellion amid a concerted effort by Democrats who opposed the war and wished to pull Indiana from it. Because these interpretations focus on political elites, they largely minimize the dangerous character of the political warfare fought at the grass-roots level and narrow the perception of the conflict to the noisy realms of partisanship and propaganda. In the view of historian Kenneth M. Stampp, whose work forms the core of the regnant orthodoxy, Morton was a “political genius” in the pejorative sense: a man who successfully manipulated both his friends and foes to achieve absolute power in the state. This interpretation holds that opposition and dissent followed reasonable, traditional, and normal patterns of partisan political behavior that did not transcend the boundaries of a rough-and-tumble political culture. In the commonly accepted view, Morton manufactured newspaper accounts of Democratic treachery and conspiracy unjustly to paint his partisan opponents as traitors.

Of late, political conflict on the Indiana home front has not been ignored. Morton comes in for commendation for his handling of the Stover fraud incident in 1862, saving the financial reputation of the state. Much of the work in the last decade especially departs from the standard interpretation of Indiana’s wartime politics by highlighting the dangerous nature of life in wartime Indiana owing to widespread politicized violence and disorder stemming from radically different ideological views of American social and political institutions. Politically motivated murders, assaults, riots, and real threats of armed insurrection plagued the state during the war. Partisans of both parties directed violence against the press, but soldiers and Republicans—who also suppressed newspapers—pushed such attacks beyond anything previously known. At least seventy-four incidents of threats and actual violence occurred, with thirty-eight incidents of violence or suppression directed at twenty-eight Democratic newspapers published in the state, representing almost one-third of the total number of Democratic newspapers published in Indiana. Of those violent incidents, three-fourths were committed by soldiers. Republican newspapers also faced violence and threats, also largely (and ironically) at the hands of soldiers, but on a much smaller scale. The most serious episode of official military suppression of Democratic speech during the war was Brig. Gen. Milo S. Hascall’s April 1863 order to threaten action against newspapers and other political speech deemed critical of the Lincoln
administration and the U.S. Army. Ten Democratic newspapers in Indiana felt the impact of this order, while others censored themselves to avoid suppression. Morton resented the interference of military commanders in the affairs of his state and successfully lobbied federal authorities in Washington D.C. to end it.5

The military arrests of opponents of the Lincoln administration's war policies have also been a fertile subject for research. This writer has examined two significant incidents: the arrest of a Democratic Illinois judge by Indiana troops under orders from the War Department in Washington, as well as the military arrest and military commission trial of a Democratic Indiana state senator. Both instances serve as case studies of civil-military conflict, the interaction of state and federal authorities, and show how Morton and his political allies confronted threats from both the Democratic opposition and the U.S. Army's heavy-handed interference in state affairs to control the growing opposition and looming threat to federal authority in Indiana and neighboring states. These works, along with others of the suppression of the press, reveal the dangerous condition of affairs in Indiana and neighboring states and demonstrate that the army played a significant role in politics amid revolutionary reactions to military abuses of civil liberties and Republican policies emanating from Washington. Contrary to the standard interpretation, this was not "politics as usual."6

Another military force participated in the struggles to control Indiana during the war. The Indiana Legion, the reorganized militia that played a significant role in policing the state, has hitherto been overlooked as a wartime actor in state affairs. Legion companies or detachments often patrolled communities in search of deserters and draft dodgers and guarded prisoners-of-war, performing in the place of volunteer troops who typically were far away and in short supply. Legion units also made arrests of dissenters or persons deemed insufficiently loyal to the federal government. Morton and his staff carefully vetted the legion for political reliability, fearing that placing government arms in the hands of "disloyal" persons posed a grave security risk. During 1862 and especially the 1863 Morgan Raid, the legion played a significant part in home defense. The organization of the Indiana Legion records at the Indiana State Archives in the 1990s offers scholars a rich trove of records documenting state government efforts to defend the home front. Lately, scholars have risen to the occasion and studied the legion's service along the Ohio River border, particularly its occasional forays across the river into Kentucky to chase down guerrillas who raided Indiana.7

African Americans who lived in Indiana amid this political tumult have also received much attention from historians in recent years. An important reason for this wealth of research and scholarship is the work of archivist and historian Wilma L. Moore of the Indiana Historical Society, who has collected materials and encouraged historians to study them. She has for many years edited the useful Black History News and Notes, which more recently has been absorbed into
TO THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS
OF THE
"LEGION" AND "MINUTE MEN" OF INDIANA.

Having received information that a rebel force, estimated to be six thousand strong, with six pieces of artillery, had crossed the Ohio river into Harrison county, I issued a call on Thursday last, to the patriotic citizens of the State, to leave their various occupations and turn out for its defence, and if possible capture the insolent invaders. The evidence was abundant that the original purpose of the rebels was to seize, plunder and burn the Capital; but at their approach it was uncertain it was necessary to make preparations to encounter them in every direction. Within forty-eight hours from the time the call was issued, not less than sixty-five thousand men hadrend their services and were on their way to places of rendezvous, while many thousands more were preparing, but were notified to remain at home. Within three days thirty thousand men, fully armed and organized, had taken the field at various points to meet the enemy.

This wonderful uprising will exert a marked effect throughout the country, exhibiting, as it does, in the strongest and most favorable light, the military spirit and patriotism of our people.

At the first landing on our soil the rebel advance was met and fought by the neighboring "Legion" and, although our forces were few in number and were driven back, they gave the rebels a clear foretaste of what they might expect when they penetrated the interior of the State. Within ten hours after they entered our borders their invasion was converted into a rapid and desperate flight. In whatever direction they turned they were confronted by large bodies of armed men. Wherever they approached the river, with the view to crossing, they found large bodies of troops prepared to dispute their passage. In half a dozen cases they were offered battle which they invariably declined. They dodged and ran by night and by day and finally succeeded in making their escape over our eastern border into Ohio.

They are reported to have murdered several of our citizens in cold blood, to have plundered many of their homes, money and goods, and to have burned and otherwise destroyed much valuable property. The injury done to the Rail Roads was slight, and has been almost entirely repaired. They had but little time to do damage beyond the murder and plunder of surprised and defenseless citizens along the line of their flight.

For the zeal with which you responded to my call and left your harvest fields, your workshops and offices, and took up arms to protect your State and punish the invaders, allow me, on behalf of the State, to tender my hearty thanks. Your example will not be lost upon the Nation, and you have taught the rebels a lesson which will not be forgotten.

In the light of these events it is impossible not to perceive the importance of a thorough organization of the Legion. The presence of an organized force ready to take the field at a moments notice is a standing security against invasion and depredation, and I am very anxious that so far as it is possible the temporary organizations of the "Minute Men" may be converted into permanent ones under the law; and that exertions will everywhere be made to recruit the ranks of the Legion and perfect its drill and efficiency.

Given at the Executive Department, Indianapolis, Indiana,
this 15th day of July, 1863.

OLIVER P. MORTON,
Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

Brodaiside, Morgan's Raid, July 15, 1863.
COURTESY INDIANA STATE LIBRARY, INDIANAPOLIS

the Society's publication, *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*. But another important reason for the high quality of the research in the African American experience in Indiana has been scholars' recognition of the community's significant presence in the state. Building on the pioneering work of the late Emma Lou Thornborough, historians have increased knowledge of Indiana's rural African American communities in the nineteenth century. Stephen A. Vincent's important study of two African American rural communities in Indiana shows that a rich social and economic milieu existed. Darrel E. Bigham's research on the black experience in the Ohio River Valley highlights the significant hostility that free blacks faced in Indiana during and after the Civil War. African American residents persisted; however, and developed cohesive communities in the face of racial violence and institutional oppression. Jack S. Blocker Jr.'s research also puts stress on community cohesion and the significance of social organizations
and churches in the migration of African Americans from the South to northern states in the years after the Civil War. This cohesion developed in the face of significant hostility, oppression, and violence meted out by Indiana's white residents. Other scholars have dug deeply in the archives to document the lives of individuals who have played important roles in building community and confronting oppression and injustice.  

The lives of white Indiana wives and children left behind when their fathers, sons, and brothers marched away as soldiers have drawn interested researchers who have offered significant and useful insights. Joan E. Marshall's intriguing study of public and private support for soldiers' families in Tippecanoe County, Indiana, concludes that county officials provided assistance to wives and families with which to buy food and other essentials based on the assumption that the soldiers' service entitled their families to request help. "[T]wo constants throughout the war differentiated publicly funded aid for soldiers' families from ordinary poor relief," she concludes, "the expectation of soldiers that their families would be cared for in return for their service, and the support of a patriotic populace for dependent aid funded by the county government. These constants foreshadowed the attitudes that enabled the expansion of the federal veterans' pensions at the end of the nineteenth century." Thomas E. Rodgers's keen study of western Indiana's wartime women finds that wives of Republican men experienced separation from their husbands to a much higher degree than the wives of Democratic men, many of whom opposed the war and stayed at home. (Regardless of political affiliation, most married men chose not to volunteer for military service in the war. Consequently, most married men remained at home to toil in the fields and workshops as usual.) Rodgers concludes that women did not take up the plow or operate machinery to the degree often assumed. Instead, customary cooperation among extended family groups, neighbors, and friends assisted those farm women without husbands at home by doing their regular chores and duties. Few women took up new roles in the economy to earn extra wages to compensate for those of a missing mate. Women who did were exceptions. On the other hand, some women, mainly from Republican households, temporarily exerted a more prominent role in public affairs in their communities, at least until the men returned from the field of battle.  

All too few scholars have studied local communities in Indiana to understand the far-reaching changes that the war brought, though the scholarship that has emerged has advanced our knowledge considerably. Stephen I. Rockenbach's comparative study of Corydon, in southern Indiana, and Frankfort, Kentucky, in the Ohio River Valley portrays those communities' common conservative effort to continue antebellum stability in their economic and social lives in the border region between the slave South and free North. However, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and other war measures heightened the growing
sectional divide between them, fracturing the common cultural identity that existed in the valley.10

Richard F. Nation's important study, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills*, addresses the social and cultural patterns of the white rural residents of southern Indiana. In it, he examines the lives of farm families in the hill country of southern Indiana, a region encompassing roughly twenty counties that range northward from the Ohio River. Covering the period from 1810 to 1870 and including the Civil War, Nation focuses on the intersection of agriculture, religion, and politics in the lives of these people who migrated from the Mid-Atlantic and Upper South states and draws a picture of their cultural values and how they saw themselves in the world. He finds continuity in the ways these people approached their faith lives, their place in the agricultural economy, and how they participated in the political world around them.

The farm people of the region held to a view of the world centered on their immediate community. This localism manifested itself in church polity, economic behavior, and political ideology. They displayed ambivalence to many developments deemed "progressive" by other Americans in their spiritual and earthly lives. They worked for local congregational autonomy in their churches, fearing the establishment of state churches like those in New England and those denominations' belief in human perfectibility. Instead, they adhered to a strong belief in human depravity that had to be controlled by the local "moral community." They practiced a "safety first" agriculture that ventured little beyond subsistence farming by selling surplus production in the local market to accumulate funds and purchase additional land for children. They distrusted markets and the wider commercial economy, finding long distance trade risky and "immoral." To the disdain of their neighbors and contemporaries enmeshed in commerce and finance, most residents of the region were not "profit maximizers," but instead retained an ideological commitment to economic independence. In politics, they shunned the Whig Party, which championed such innovations as a national bank, tax funds for internal improvements to transport goods, and commercial capitalism. Instead, they voted for Andrew Jackson's Democratic Party, the party that best reflected their localist perspective.

Their cultural outlook also included a deep hatred of African Americans. Nonetheless, Nation argues, hill country people, including those who migrated from slave states, also disliked slavery and aimed to ban it in Indiana. In his chapter on "Localism, Race, and the Civil War," Nation points to the significant participation of the hill country people in the Union cause during the war. They volunteered in large numbers and fought to preserve the national government despite opposing Republicans' efforts to emancipate slaves and, later, abolish slavery entirely, viewing slavery as a local matter to be decided by southern white people for themselves. Nation largely absolves the hill country Democrats
of complicity in the conspiratorial wartime dissenting organizations like the Knights of the Golden Circle and the Sons of Liberty. Those who joined, Nation argues, did so out of fears of military arrest or coercion into military service through the draft by the Republican-controlled federal government; they did not support the rebels. Nation’s notable study aims to be a counterweight to nineteenth-century Whig and Republican dismissals of the localist perspective that have informed historians’ understanding of this significant southern Indiana rural region.¹¹

Finally, growing interest in the relationship between history and memory has produced work pertaining to Indiana and the Civil War. Historians have scrutinized how both war veterans and civilians who remained at home remembered and memorialized the conflict. Indiana’s people initially focused on the political conflicts that engendered the war, and enmity burned brightly in their hearts for decades afterwards. However, in memorializing the war white veterans and civilians gradually began to forget their ideological differences over slavery, abolition, and secession, and bonded in racial unity and reconciliation with their erstwhile southern enemies. For them, the war increasingly became a memory of a time when northern and southern white soldiers demonstrated manhood through common experience of hardship, pain, and suffering.¹²

**Future Directions**

Since 1999, a large body of work has emerged that reshapes our understanding of the experiences of Indiana’s people during the Civil War. Much interest in the military experiences of the soldiers has resulted in many editions of soldiers’ letters and diaries, while other areas of research show fewer results. Nonetheless,
Indiana's interpretive soil remains fertile. The richness of Indiana's experience during the rebellion merits much more study and scholarship to show the full gamut of significant events, developments, changes, and trends that arose in the state. Historians should redouble their efforts in archival research and scrutinize the wide array of rich sources available to them.

Additional study of Indiana's local communities during the Civil War era would undoubtedly yield many useful insights. For example, the influx of soldiers, war-related industry and commerce, foreign immigrants, and men and women to work in factories and workshops in Indianapolis, especially, merits attention. The city was dotted with army camps, and the omnipresence of soldiers created opportunities, wealth, hardships, and turmoil for residents. Students should study camp mutinies, soldier violence in the streets, saloons, brothels, and boarding houses, as well as the cultural life that catered to the soldiery. Similar works could be written for Evansville, New Albany and Jeffersonville, Richmond, La Porte, and other towns where regiments formed and troops assembled. Fort Wayne merits study as a reputed “Copperhead” bastion of anti-war Democratic sentiment and the chief town in a congressional district that voted in large numbers against the Lincoln administration and the war effort. Likewise, Terre Haute was a Republican outpost in a district wrecked by draft resistance, desertion, anti-war violence, and murder. Further examination of both towns and their surrounding regions would help us understand the tensions and politics of those regions.

Township, county, or multi-county regional studies are feasible. Records exist to document events and trends in many corners of Indiana. Joan Marshall's study of Republican-dominated Tippecanoe County's relief efforts for soldiers' wives and families should be replicated for Democratic counties in order to compare experiences. Regional studies like Richard Nation's are possible for the middle or northern counties of Indiana. County courthouses around the state contain a wealth of records that are generally overlooked and ignored. Some county governments have taken steps in recent years to make their records more accessible. Historians must take advantage of these advances. The potential is great for insightful studies of local events during the era. For example, using a combination of records found in the National Archives, the Indiana State Archives, manuscript repositories, libraries, and courthouses, scholars could examine particular riots, shootings, arrests, political rallies, and other events in detail to learn the social and political dynamics of communities where ideological disputes boiled over into violence and death. These records document the lives of men and women, blacks and whites, farmers and shopkeepers, country folk and city or town dwellers. They bought land, paid taxes, sued their neighbors, worshipped in their churches, and gathered in the streets to cheer for their partisan leaders and candidates. Government records and manuscript
collections reveal the lives of women and children, offering opportunity to study their roles in Indiana's wartime society. Similarly, such records offer potential to examine how physically and mentally disabled veterans refashioned their lives after the war and the politics surrounding their support. Historians have only begun to scratch the surface of the rich archival soil available in Indiana. A bit more enterprise on the part of students and senior historians alike would produce a bountiful crop of new studies.

New biographical examinations of Indiana persons are needed. Historians would do well to reexamine some of the leading political figures of the era in light of new trends in the historiography of Civil War politics. Research on leading Democratic politicians such as Jesse D. Bright, Thomas A. Hendricks, David Turpie, and others are overdue. Studies of leading dissenters like Lambdin P. Milligan as well as secret conspirators such as Harrison H. Dodd would advance our knowledge. On the Republican side, historians could profitably study any number of prominent persons beyond the well-studied Oliver P. Morton to incorporate new archival finds into the historiography. Women such as Mrs. E. E. George of Fort Wayne, who worked in hospitals at the front to care for the sick and wounded and who died from exposure to disease, merit attention.  

Studies of institutions that existed during the conflict would inform us of how the war and larger conflicts affected them. Scholars could examine the activities of the Indiana Legion in the central and northern parts of Indiana in order to understand the complicated wartime relationship between the federal and state governments. Records survive of churches and church denominations, as well as schools and universities in the state. Research efforts into the lives of children and their experience of the war along the lines of what James Marten argued nationally in _The Children's Civil War_ (1998) should be replicated for Indiana. Historians would do well to scrutinize the Indiana Military Agency/Indiana Sanitary Commission, the quasi-governmental organization created by Governor Morton to organize the relief effort for Indiana soldiers in the field. Copious documentation of this broad-based effort survives in the Indiana State Archives.

**Digital Resources for Civil War Research**

The digital revolution in archives and libraries is facilitating research efforts and bringing new resources to the attention of historians and other scholars. Archivists and librarians are posting on their websites detailed finding aids and inventories of their Civil War-era holdings and even digitized documents and images. For example, the University of Notre Dame's Rare Books and Special Collections department has embarked on a project to scan and transcribe their collections relative to the war. Ball State University, in conjunction with several institutions in east-central Indiana, has begun to post scanned Civil War materials pertinent to the entire region. Similar projects are underway by Indiana
TENDING THE SOIL

State University with its Wabash Valley Visions and Voices effort, and the Private Academic Library Network of Indiana (PALNI) Digital Collections project. Some of the digitized Civil War-related materials are, in truth, of questionable research quality. However, some of the posted materials offer important opportunities for research. An example is the Wabash College Archives and Special Collections' scans of Henry Campbell's lively diary of his service in the 18th Indiana Light Artillery Battery. The Indiana University-Bloomington Digital Library Program has scanned and posted the Brevier Reports of the Indiana General Assembly, which record the debates heard in both legislative chambers. This record is invaluable for studying Indiana's war politics. Still other projects are the Indiana Memory program through the Indiana State Library, muster roll information on all soldiers who served in Indiana volunteer units in the Indiana State Digital Archives program of the Indiana State Archives, and the digital resources posted to the Indiana Historical Society's website.¹⁵

Perhaps the most important Indiana digital project to aid Civil War research to date has been the digitization of the telegrams and telegraph books of Governor Morton. The original records reside in the Indiana State Archives, and comprise many thousand individual telegraph messages sent from or to Morton's office with correspondents including President Abraham Lincoln, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, generals in the field, and soldiers and civilians scattered throughout the country. As Morton was one of the most influential political figures in the free states during the war, the telegrams he sent and received touch on many of the most important issues of wartime politics and military mobilization and administration. The Morton telegraph books and loose telegrams represent the best surviving collection of telegraphic correspondence of any of the Civil War governors. Posting this unique resource to the web puts an extraordinary amount of archival records at the fingertips of scholars worldwide. Scanned by the IUPUI University Library Program of Digital Scholarship in cooperation with the Indiana State Archives, the project allows researchers access to unique records that until recently were difficult to access.¹⁶

In coming years, scholars may expect more collections of archival records and manuscript collections to be scanned and posted to the Internet. Included among them are full-text searchable Indiana newspapers from the Civil War era and later years, which will constitute invaluable sources for research. Some Indiana newspaper titles are already available full-text via for-profit, fee-based websites. As a by-product of the agreements with the commercial vendors who scan the newspaper titles, some local libraries that provided access to their local newspapers have established web pages affording free full-text searchability.¹⁷ In the near future, many more Civil War-era Indiana newspapers—both big-city and small-town dailies and weeklies—will be posted and made freely available on the web for research. Full-text searchability will allow scholars to find minute tidbits of
information quickly that in the past required exhaustive and painstaking poring over microfilm or original broadsheets. Such access will result in new discoveries and insights that will enhance scholarship and teaching.

The last decade has witnessed a flourishing landscape of scholarship that has yielded important contributions to historians’ knowledge and understanding of Indiana’s experience during the Civil War era. That productivity promises to continue in the next decade, as scholars dig deeper into the archives and employ the new digital resources available to them. Indiana’s Civil War soil, replenished both by nourishing research and new archival tools, is far from depleted.


10 Stephen I. Rackenbush, "War upon our Border": War and Society in Two Ohio Valley Communities, 1861-1865" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2006).


16 See www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/ Telegraph.

17 For the Washington (Indiana) Carnegie Public Library site, see http://washingtonpl.newspaperarchive.com/.

SUMMER 2011 55