

Governor Oliver P. Morton

Civil War Governor

Finding Aid

Created 1995

Updated 2025

Indiana State Archives
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Summary Information

Agency Name: Governor's Office

Collection Name: Governor Oliver P. Morton Papers

Collection Dates: 1860 to 1869

Extent: 3.8 cubic feet

Restrictions: Fragile; Use Microfilm

Accession Number: 1937001

Biographical/Historical Note

The Governor Oliver P. Morton Papers constitute a significant portion of the official documentation in the Indiana State Archives on the tenure of Gov. Morton (1861-1867) and affairs in Indiana during the Civil War. The papers primarily consist of letters and reports sent to Gov. Morton and his staff during the Civil War. Unfortunately, only a relatively small number of manuscripts written by Morton survive. After the war and the completion of Morton's gubernatorial tenure, these records apparently remained in the possession and custody of Morton and his private secretary and brother-in-law, W.R. Holloway. Evidence suggests that Holloway, after Morton's death in 1877, allowed access to the records to biographers (most notably William Dudley Foulke), journalists and other persons interested in the life of the governor. Holloway himself apparently retained the papers with the intention of preparing a biography of Morton.

In all events, Morton's son Oliver T. Morton and grandnephew Edward Morton Holloway (grandson of W.R. Holloway), both employed by the federal courts at Chicago, Illinois, retained possession of the papers. In 1936 a team of researchers working under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) came across the papers while undertaking a records survey of the federal courthouse in Chicago. They discovered the records bound up in burlap bags, stored in the attic of the courthouse and forgotten by all. The records, in complete disarray, were identified as Morton's papers from the period when he was Governor of Indiana. The W.P.A. team transferred the papers to the Indiana State Archives, then part of the Indiana State Library, in 1937. (See Harvey Wish, "New Indiana Archival Documents" *Indiana Magazine of History* 32 (1936), pp. 360-369, and Harvey Wish, ed., "Civil War Letters and Dispatches" *IMH* 33 (1937), pp. 62-74).

Scope and Content Note:

Nearly six thousand records relating to Gov. Morton's gubernatorial tenure were discovered by the W.P.A. in Chicago. Of these, over two thousand were telegraph dispatches sent from and to Gov. Morton and his staff during the Civil War. These telegraph dispatches have been indexed and reorganized in conjunction with the Morton telegraph books and Adjutant General telegraph books, in which the dispatches often were recorded for documentation purposes. Original dispatches were matched to the messages recorded in the telegraph books to compile the database index. This database index is available to be searched by date, author/recipient of the telegram, and subject. The telegraph books have been digitized and are available online:

<https://library.indianapolis.iu.edu/digitalcollections/Telegraph>

The remainder of the Gov. Morton records discovered in Chicago constitute the collections known as the Gov. Morton Papers and the Civil War Miscellany. In the initial organization (circa 1950s), State Archives staff created two separate components of the Papers. These were 1) the Papers (1937001), the majority of the records arranged alphabetically by author's name, and 2) the Civil War Miscellany (1937002), a

subject-oriented group. The Civil War Miscellany also included some related records of the Adjutant General of Indiana. During this initial organization, State Archives Staff organized both collections by the name of their authors. In the process, three item-by-item card files/finding aids were created:

- 1) Alphabetical by name of writer/author;
- 2) Calendar (chronological order) of the manuscripts, and
- 3) Subject file of the manuscripts.

Both 1) and 2) include a brief abstract of the text of the document.

In 1995, archivists re-arranged the Papers (1937001) in a chronological order. Civil War Miscellany (1937002) retains the 1950s organization.

See Civil War Miscellany Finding Aid for a detailed inventory of accession 1937002.

Other Records for Civil War/Morton Research

The Indiana State Archives has large holdings of records relating to Indiana's participation in the American Civil War. Many of the records originally derived from Gov. Morton's office, but were preserved by the Adjutant General of Indiana prior to transfer to the Indiana State Archives. Still others derived from other executive offices (ie., Treasurer of State, Auditor of State). The researcher should consult these separate record groups in the course of research into Indiana's role in the Civil War for a more complete understanding of affairs in Indiana.

Other record groups pertaining to the Civil War include:

- 1) Gov. Morton telegraph books (1937002) (noted above);
- 2) Gov. Morton letterpress books: these constitute a large amount of correspondence of the Governor and his staff; however, many of the letterpress books are in poor condition and illegible;
- 3) Records of the Adjutant General(s) of Indiana: as the the chief military officer of Indiana, the Adjutant General oversaw much of the administrative machinery during the war. These records include muster rolls and extensive correspondence files of all Indiana volunteer regiments and artillery batteries;
- 4) Indiana Legion Papers (Accession 1994035)--the Legion was Indiana's state militia created at the beginning of the rebellion. Legion units organized along Indiana's Ohio River border saw action during the war, mostly related to repelling guerrillas. See finding aid.

While many documents written and signed by Morton are to be found in the Gov. Morton Papers and other record groups in the Indiana State Archives, by no means all of his writings are to be found in them. Evidence, both substantial and inferential, suggests that many records, written both by Morton and others, were removed from the collections over the years. Morton and Holloway themselves probably extracted materials thought to be sensitive or damning. They also may have given manuscripts

away to other persons interested in various subjects (some of these records appeared later in private collections and are now in the hands of private manuscript libraries). Other signs point to the records being rifled through and items removed during their time in Chicago.

It is important to note here that a comparison of the card file calendar to the actual Gov. Morton Papers will reveal several missing records. While present staff has relocated a number of the misplaced records, it is feared that others were stolen and unrecoverable. For this reason, and also for the sake of future preservation of the records, the Gov. Morton Papers have been microfilmed. The microfilm of the papers is available to patrons for research purposes.

Arrangement:

The records of accession 1937001 are arranged in chronological order, month/day/year. Where incomplete information for the date of the record exists, records were arranged as follows:

- when month and year were identified but not the day, the item was placed at the beginning of the month in the proper year;
- when year only was identified, the item was placed at the beginning of the year;
- when month and day were identified but not the year, the item was placed in the undated materials;
- undated materials, including fragments, were filed behind the dated materials at the end of the group.

Box List:

Box 1 AAIS 20159 Barcode B000032190C	Correspondence, 1860 to September 17, 1861
Box 2 AAIS 20160 Barcode B000032192E	Correspondence, September 18, 1861 to March 31, 1862
Box 3 AAIS 20161 Barcode B000032175N	Correspondence, April 1, 1862 to August 10, 1862
Box 4 AAIS 20162 Barcode B000032197J	Correspondence, August 11, 1862 to January 12, 1863
Box 5 AAIS 20163 Barcode B000032195H	Correspondence, January 13, 1863 to October 31, 1863
Box 6 AAIS 20164 Barcode B000032198K	Correspondence, November 1, 1863 to April 30, 1864
Box 7 AAIS 20165 Barcode B000032196I	Correspondence, May 1, 1864 to September 30, 1864

Box 8 AAIS 20166 Barcode B000032199L

Correspondence, October 1, 1864 to May 31, 1865

Box 9 AAIS 20167 Barcode B000032200M

Correspondence, June 1, 1865 to 1869; undated materials

Box 10 AAIS 20168 Barcode B000032194G

Undated fragments; miscellaneous materials

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