

Collection #
M 1095
OM 0553
BV 4957–BV 4958; BV 4960–BV 4961
CT 2197

**ALAN T. NOLAN
PAPERS, 1854 – 2003**

[Collection Information](#)

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Processed by

Timothy Rainesalo
August 14, 2014

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 19 manuscript boxes; 1 photograph box; 1 slide box; 2 bins 35 mm slides; 1 box acetate negatives (4x5, 5x7, 8x10); 4 bound volumes; 2 oversize manuscript folders; 1 cassette tape; 2 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: 1854 – 2003

PROVENANCE: Gift; Jane R. Nolan, Indianapolis, IN, 46240, 2012

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: *As Sounding Brass* PS3564.O4 A8 1964
Lee considered : General Robert E. Lee and Civil War history E467.1.L4 N66 1991
The Iron Brigade: A Military History E433.5 .I72 N6 1994
Giants in their tall black hats : essays on the Iron Brigade E493.5.I72 G53 1998

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2012.0161

NOTES: The 4x5, 5x7 and 8x10 acetate negatives related to the Civil War, the Iron Brigade, and the 35 mm slides for Nolan's presentation on the Meridian St. Zoning project are held in cold storage.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alan T. Nolan was born in Evansville, Indiana on January 19, 1923 to Val and Jeanette Covert Nolan. When his father was appointed U.S. District Attorney in 1933, the family moved to Indianapolis. He attended Indiana University and Harvard Law School, clerking for Sherman Minton at the United States Court of Appeals after graduation. He returned to Indianapolis in 1948 to practice law for 45 years, specializing in the labor relations practice. He was a partner in the Indianapolis firm of Ice Miller Donadio and Ryan and also served as the chairman of the Disciplinary Committee of the Indiana Supreme Court for seven years. After his first wife, Elizabeth Titsworth died in 1967, Nolan married Jane Ransel DeVoe in 1970.

Following a boyhood trip with his father to Antietam Battlefield National Park, Nolan became a lifelong Civil War historian. His first book, *The Iron Brigade: a Military History*, was published in 1961 to critical acclaim and is still considered one of the definitive studies on the brigade, with *Civil War Times Illustrated* naming it “one of the 100 best books on the Civil War” in 1981. Other distinguished works include: *As Sounding Brass: a contemporary novel* (1964); *Lee Considered: General Robert E. Lee and Civil War History* (1991); and *Giants in their Black Hats: Essays on the Iron Brigade*, edited with Shannon Vipond (1994). Throughout his life, he spoke at numerous historical conferences, universities, colleges and round tables and even the Smithsonian Institute. He frequently contributed to numerous historical magazines, journals and newspapers, including IHS’s *Traces*, in which his last article was published in 2008. In recognition of his contributions, Indiana University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Indiana University in 1993. In 1994, he was given the Nivens-Freeman award by the Chicago Civil War Roundtable.

Nolan was extremely active in the Indianapolis historical and arts communities. In addition to serving as a founder of the Indianapolis Civil War Round Table and the ICLU, he was also a Fellow of the Company of Military Historians and a member of the Catholic Interracial Council. He held a position on the board of the NAACP in 1948 and received the National Council of Christians and Jews Brotherhood Award in 1968. His lifelong interest in history led him to become a Trustee of the Indiana Historical Society, serving on the board and acting as chairman for twelve years during the planning and construction of the current facility. His interests encompassed many community affairs. In the 1960s, he was instrumental in saving the Meridian Street corridor from commercial encroachment. He was a member of The Indianapolis Literary Club. He served on the board of the Indianapolis Art League, and at the time of his death was on the board of the Ensemble Music Society. Two governors named him a Sagamore of the Wabash and, in 2003 he was declared a Living Legend by the Indiana Historical Society.

He died on July 27, 2008.

Sources:

“Alan T. Nolan Obituary” *The Indianapolis Star*, July 28, 2008.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains extensive correspondence, research material, photographs and manuscripts related to Alan T. Nolan's research into Civil War, the Iron Brigade, Robert E. Lee, and Indianapolis history.

Series 1 covers general correspondence, awards and other materials related to Nolan's professional and scholarly life from 1961 to 2003. Although an effort has been made to keep correspondence related to specific conferences grouped in corresponding folders, some may also be found here.

Nolan worked extensively with the Iron Brigade, (also known as The Black Hat Brigade) an Infantry Brigade in the Army of the Potomac comprised of Midwestern regiments, chiefly the 19th Indiana, 2nd, 6th and 7th Wisconsin and the 24th Michigan. Renowned for strong 'iron' discipline and unique 'black' appearance of its uniforms, the brigade served in many of the bloodiest battles of the war—including Antietam, Shiloh and Gettysburg—and suffered more casualties than any other brigade.

Series 2 includes Iron Brigade research, photographs, and essays and has 3 general subsections. Part one covers photographs, manuscripts and printed materials related to Nolan's research, promotion and publications of *The Iron Brigade* (1961). Part two covers primary and secondary research materials relating to specific Civil War regiments and individuals from Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan both during and after the war. Part three covers the many subsequent essays, publication periodicals—including "The Blackhat Newsletter" to which Nolan was a frequent contributor—battlefield tours and lectures Nolan delivered on the brigade throughout his life.

Series 3 contains research materials, correspondence and essays related to Nolan's studies of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Half of this series is devoted to research, corrections, reviews and responses to *Lee Considered* (1991). In both his book and preceding and subsequent essays, Nolan often used Lee as a means to analyze and criticize the enduring myth of the Lost Cause, which glorified Lee to the extreme and persisted in the South after the Confederacy's defeat.

Series 4 covers manuscripts, photographs, essays and other materials related to Nolan's work on more general Civil War topics. Although many—especially his battlefield tour essays—still tend to use either the Iron Brigade or Robert E. Lee as a central focal point, he analyzes both Union and Confederate leadership. Union Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman are also frequent topics.

Series 5 covers Nolan's essays and research on Abraham Lincoln (particularly his visits and actions in Indiana during the Civil War). His essays on Indiana and Indianapolis during the Civil War cover several topics, including the 1864 trial of Ex Parte Milligan and Indiana's Civil War Governor Oliver P. Morton.

Series 6 is composed of Nolan's more miscellaneous, non-war-related essays, lectures and publications, and details his activism in Indianapolis during the 1960s and 70s. This includes publishing information, correspondence and reviews for his contemporary novel *As Sounding Brass* (1962 – 1964), several lectures and newspaper editorials on national politics and religion, eulogies and newspaper articles written by Nolan eulogizing his mentor Supreme Court Justice Sherman Minton and four manuscripts for undated, unpublished novels.

Series 7 covers Nolan's research, correspondence, presentations and legal documentation for the Rezoning of the historic Meridian Street Corridor from 1960 to 1971. In the 1960s, Nolan and other citizens, concerned by the development of the nearby Tarkington Tower, convinced the state to name the Meridian Street corridor a historic district, protecting it from commercial development. Included are correspondence to city officials, petitions drafted and revised by the Zoning Committee, newspaper publicity surrounding the debate and written and visual components of Nolan's presentation to city officials arguing the case for Meridian Street.

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CONTAINER

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Note: Kept in cold storage – ask to see

M 1095 Slide Box 1
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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 1095).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.