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[Morgan's Raid Through Ripley County]

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Ripley County

District # 5

Morgan's Raid [Indiana?] 1938-39

Morgan's Raid Through Ripley County.

Reference—Mrs. Minnie Wycloff, Batesville, Indiana.

Morgan and his raiders entered Ripley from Jennings County on Sunday, July 13, 1863.. Their first stop was at Rexville in Shelby township, where a general store was looted. From Rexville they marched to Versailles where they were met at the new courthouse by a hurriedly summoned band of the militia and citizens. The raiders seize the guns belonging to the militia and broke them against the corner of the courthouse, which at that time was not completed. The Deputy County Treasurer, B. F. Spencer had buried the county funds for safety from the raiders. The treasurer's office was looted and it is / reported that several thousand dollars was taken by the raiders. Private citizens having funds or valuable jewelry and silverware hid them in a safe place. Many housewives hung their jewelry in the bean vines and other secret hiding places. Horses were hidden as well as possible in advance of the raiders, as they constantly seize fresh horses, leaving worn out nags, occasionally, in their stead. Housewives were ordered to prepare meals for the marauding cavalry and feed was appropriated for their animals, all available supplies were used or carried away. The detachment, to be known forever in American history as Morgan's Raiders, did not march in a compact body but followed a general course in scattered units, the central force of about three thousand men, containing the leaders—John Morgan, and his two lieutenants. Many interesting stories have been told of their behavior while

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in this county. One of these was that Morgan's army stopped at a farm house and were sleeping on the porch. The well at the farm house had been dipped dry for the raiders and their horses. One of them asked a small boy at the farm to dip him a drink of water for which he would give the boy some marbles. The Water was given for which he received a bountiful supply of marbles. Many years later while he was in Louisville, Ky. on business he met the same donor of the marbles and their acquaintance was renewed only in a different manner. Morgan and his army passed through and had burned the bridge over Laughry Creek and Greasy Run. This part of the Morgan's raid is taken from John Robert's clippings of the daily newspaper and is as follows: —“Morgan forced the father of John Roberts to help roll the cars to the center of the bridges, after they had taken him prisoner. He said that colonel Basil Duke gave orders to burn all railroad property and to take what property from the citizens they needed / for the army but not to destroy private property. He said to Mr. Roberts, ‘Old man if you could only see our country, down south, how we have been driven from our homes and our houses burned you might feel yourself lucky to have fallen into more generous hands than those of the Yankees.’

Mr. Roberts replied, that, “I believe you are telling the truth, as I have two boys in the Union army, and if things are damaged as badly in the south as they write home it must be terrible.

The Colonel said, ‘We have not come here to destroy private property but to show you boys that you are on the wrong side. We are here to give you people a chance to help toward a good cause. We are very much in need of good horses. Our horses were good but are worn out with rapid marching.’

Basil Duke wrote a detailed account of the raid from his personal experiences and the official records of the expedition, giving facts, figures, lists of officers and / men and a continuous narrative of the route and incidents of the famous raid. It accomplished nothing of / importance for the South. Morgan had expected the Knights of the Golden Circle in southern Indiana to join him as Confederates and thus increase his force to a

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strength that would aid him in capturing Indianapolis. In this expectation he was entirely disappointed. Put to the test the “Butternuts” or the Copperheads” failed to rally to his support. Instead his men / were scattered, captured, and lost by various mishaps every day of the hurried route of the fleeing raiders through Indiana and Ohio.

From Versailles the raiders moved to [ilan?] and [Flerceville?]. [Straglers?] spread throughout the entire county, looking for horses, food and valuables. One group went to Napoleon via Osgood, from there to New Point in Decatur County. Then back into Ripley County into Batesville and on to [unma?] where they pitched camp for the night.

Batesville citizens of 1863, still remaining in the community, recall the five or six dusty and frayed looking Confederate soldiers who rode into Hunterville on the Newpoint road and ordered dinner at the tavern there. While waiting for the meal to be prepared they observed another group of buildings farther east along the C.C.C. & St. L. Railroad and learning this was a larger town known as Batesville, cancelled their order for dinner and rode on in hope of getting better fare. Perhaps they were not disappointed. There were five tall buildings among lower ones in Batesville at that time. One was the newly built Boehringer Hall, three stories above a basement floor. [Sat?] blue and white pigeons sat in flocks on its roof. The hungry men in tattered gray uniforms shot a number of the birds and feasted a little later at the expense of Mr. Boehringer and Mr. J. Thomas, whose boarding house stood near the ambitious Boehringer Hall apartment, office and boarding house combined. General Lew Wallace was encamped near [unman?], north and west in the locality of [innwtown?]. He had been ordered to Surman, just a railroad station and a few houses at that time, to intercept Morgan's advance toward Indianapolis. He was camped there for several days, arriving in Ripley County in advance of Morgan's raiders. There must have been a few Knights of the Golden Circle who kept their vows of loyalty to the southern [Confederacy?] in spite of failure to enlist in the invading army. Else Gen. Wallace should have been able to have captured the fleeing Southern leader at his brief night camp three miles south of Sunman. Five or six miles separated the camps, but Morgan

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was away across in Dearborn County by New [Alsace?] and Harrison into Ohio before the Union leader learned of his proximity.

The pursuing Union troops under Lieut. Edward Hobson rode hard after the raiders the following day July 13, 1863 but the first Morgan and his equally dashing lieutenants [Basil?] Duke and Dick Morgan had all ready reached the Ohio river beyond Cincinnati.

The raiders threw away smoked hams, looted from a meat curing plant at Dupont, a bird cage or two, belts of cloth carried from the store, a little country-general store at Rexville; tin [ware?], coffee-grinders, all kinds of kitchen utensils, drygoods and small groceries were strewn along the route of the raiders as they "galloped and galloped on their way. Morgan, Morgan, the raider, and Morgan's terrible men " as / characterized (?) in the poem "Kentucky Belle"; The author of this poem overlooked the long ride through Indiana before the raiders "swept into Ohio's cornfields", the deep green shoulder-high July cornfields." Yet the longer part of this famous raid led across Crawford, Clark, Jennings, Jefferson, Ripley and Dearborn Counties in Indiana.

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Pages of incidents of the brief ride of Morgan's men and their brief rest in Ripley County could be told and written from the stories of eye-witnesses and participants among Ripley County citizens. A few Ripley County men were taken along with the raiders as "guides" to the next point desirable to reach toward Cincinnati, as the dash toward Indianapolis collapsed into flight. These men were accused by their neighbors of being members of the "Butternut-Copperhead" organizations, whether justly in any case was never proven. The routed Homeguards and citizens at Versailles and in other counties avoided bloodshed by their inability to oppose the marauders. The leaders of the raid were gallant southern gentlemen at heart and brothers across the river of the people through whose states they led their line of march. Southern Indiana was settled by men from Kentucky and Virginia more largely than from [any?] other source. Back of Kentucky's settlement they came from Pennsylvania, Maryland and the Carolinas into the blue-grass country of Daniel Boone.

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Blood Brothers of one race and one country, they recognized each other when face to face.

At Versailles Col. Morgan Demanded the funds from the safe of the county treasurer. The treasury was in charge of deputy, B. F. Spencer, who had safely buried the county funds hours before Morgan arrived. He opened the safe and gave the rebel leader the cash, \$5000. A number of purses also lay in the safe. "What are those?" inquired the raider.

"They are purses of money placed here by several widowed ladies for safe-keeping," the gallant Spencer, of Kentucky blood, himself answered the Confederate leader.

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"Keep them safe. I never robbed a widow yet", was Morgan's farewell word as he ordered his men to remount and to ride, out of Versailles to the north and east via Pierceville and Old Milan to the halting-place near the Dearborn-Ripley county lines between Clinton and the railroad beyond which lay Gen. Wallace's camp of Union soldiers. They fed from beef taken from Sunman farms and adjoining neighbors. A few hours of galloping, a few hours of rest and sentries on the alert and Morgan had come and gone across Ripley County; across southeastern Indiana, into Ohio, into the past, into history. A day's march only, leaving the years only to piece together the local accounts of his raid as an addition to lieutenant Basil Duke's graphic and authentic record from the raider's own viewpoint. Wm. H. [O'Brien?] has written a pamphlet on Dearborn County's part in this story. The Historical Society has placed along the route [commemorative?] markers. At Rexville, Versailles, on the Milan road at the Hassmer home, just north of Versailles; at Pierceville, Old Milan at Governor Harding Home, and at St. Paul's Church south of Sunman, the Ripley County markers show that "Colonel John Morgan passed here on July 12, 1863", Other markers are needed to tell the story of this incident to the posterity.

Col. John Morgan's famous raid into southern Indiana in July, 1863 was planned as a parallel to Gen. Robert E. Lee's dash into Pennsylvania 7 at the same period. One

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of the dates of world history, as well as civil war history is the Gettysburg battle date, July 1, 2, and 3, of 1863. Lincoln's Gettysburg address, given a few months later at the dedication of the battle field as nation cemetery, has immortalized the major offensive of the Confederate armies in an effort to move the war by these invasions, into northern territory. Morgan's raid is more famous in local historical records than in national ones as it was of little importance and was considered by many [a?] a more skirmish for the glory of its leaders. The six thousand men of Morgan's Cavalry command crossed the Ohio River into Indiana near Mauckport and circumscribed a curve across southeastern Indiana and southwestern Ohio that was more of a route rather than a raid. Morgan was followed by the Union Lieutenant Colonel Edward Hobson with a detachment of infantry, About a twenty-four advance was held by the confederates for most of the route until the main body of the troops was captured, a [ramnant?] only escaping back across the Ohio River. The raiders carried a few pieces of artillery which was never used. They robbed farms, stores and dwellings of food supplies for men and horses, cash and in some cases anything that could be carried away. Bird-cages, clocks, tin-ware, bolts of cloth and such property, entirely useless to the raiders was included in their loot and finally thrown away along the line of march as the raiders were hourly pushed into a hurried disordered riot of escape from the pursuing union soldier. Only a few civilians were fired upon by the raiders.