

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

The John Hunt Morgan Trail in Indian Hill

Recently, the Public Works Department installed two signs on Kugler Mill Road commemorating part of the path that General Morgan took through Ohio during the Civil War's Great Raid of 1863. That trail spans 561 miles in Ohio and documents "one of the most remarkable expeditions in military history." (Simmons)

John Hunt Morgan, also known as the *Thunderbolt of the Confederacy* was a Southern aristocrat. He grew up on a farm outside Lexington, Kentucky, and attended Transylvania College for two years, but was suspended for dueling with a fraternity brother. He enlisted in the 1st Kentucky Cavalry during the Mexican-American War (1846-48). He distinguished himself at the Battle of Buena Vista and was promoted to second lieutenant. After the war, Morgan returned to Kentucky where he became a lucrative hemp manufacturer. He used his wealth to equip a 60 man militia company – the Lexington Rifles – and spent considerable time drilling with them.



When the Civil War began, Kentucky was a neutral state. Morgan went to Tennessee and joined the Confederate States Army; there he raised the 2nd Kentucky Cavalry Regiment. Morgan took part in the Battle of Shiloh (April, 1862), after which he was promoted to colonel. Morgan used the cavalry for thrusts behind Union lines to disrupt enemy communications, reinforcements, and supplies. Throughout the rest of 1862, he conducted several dangerous raids into Union held territory in western Kentucky and Tennessee. His squadron swept through the countryside with lightning-like speed, destroying railroad and telegraph lines, seizing supplies, taking prisoners, and wreaking havoc. Morgan became a hero to Confederates; poetry was written praising him, and he was compared to Francis Marion (*Swamp Fox*) of the Revolutionary War.



In 1863 Morgan initiated a new series of raids and was authorized to traverse Kentucky with 2400 men, but in July he disobeyed explicit orders and crossed the Ohio River, riding through Indiana and Ohio on what became known as the Great Raid. Morgan's cavalry split into columns when they entered Hamilton County on July 13, 1863. They stopped at hamlets and farms along the way, zigzagging to elude the Union troops pursuing them. There were encounters that reduced the ranks of Morgan's men. They exchanged their tired horses for fresh ones stolen from local residents, destroyed railroads, buildings, and bridges, scavenged for food and caused such panic in Cincinnati that martial law was declared on July 14. Skirmishes occurred north of the city, along the current day I-275 corridor. Morgan's Raiders fought and rode 50 miles in 29 hours, going from Harrison to Williamsburg, across both Hamilton and Clermont counties.

After passing through current day Indian Hill, there was a confrontation between the Raiders and the troops at Camp Dennison. The Union troops held firm, and Morgan's men withdrew, but forced a train to run off the tracks nearby. Another clash between the Federals and the Confederates occurred on a bridge over the Little Miami River in Miamiville. For three weeks, the Raiders raced through Ohio, but finally their leader, John Hunt Morgan was captured on July 26, ending the Great Raid.

They had averaged 40 miles per day and penetrated deeper into enemy territory than any other troops. Morgan's Raid boosted Confederate morale, and it changed the way war was waged in the future. Many military leaders adopted General Morgan's "lightning war" and his guerilla techniques.

The John Hunt Morgan Heritage Trail signs in the Village mark the byways where his men traveled. They are reminders of the events that happened in this rural area 150 years ago during the Civil War. The educational markers make history come alive.