



## When the Civil War came to Ohio

BY RICH WARREN

150 years ago, Morgan's Raid induced statewide terror

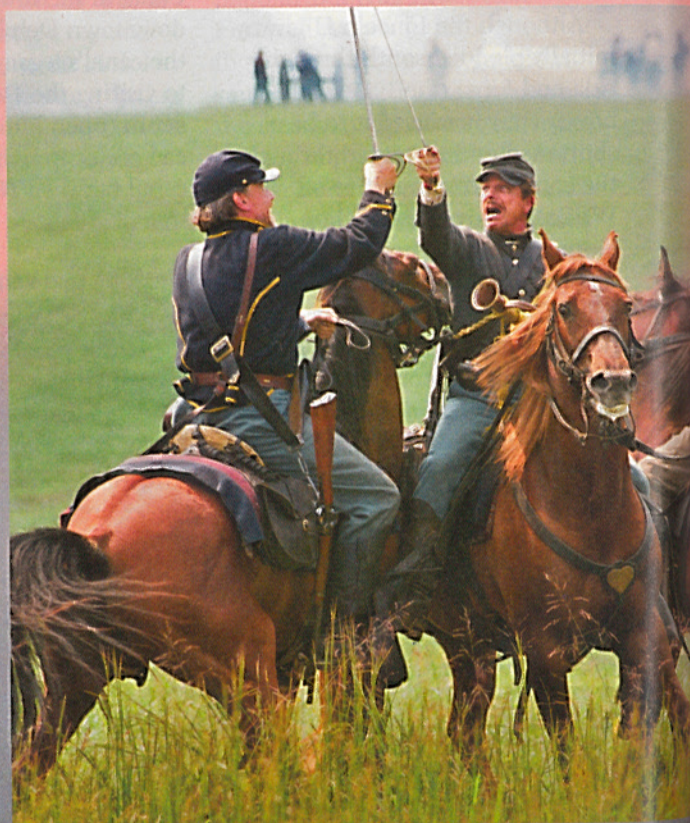
IT WAS ESSENTIALLY a Confederate invasion of Ohio. It was the cause of the state's only Civil War battle. And it happened exactly 150 years ago this July.

It, of course, was Morgan's Raid, the daring, lightning-fast movement across 20 of Ohio's counties by Brigadier General John Hunt Morgan and nearly 2,500 of his men. Starting in Tennessee and sweeping across Kentucky and Indiana before entering Ohio, it was both the northernmost penetration of the Union states by Confederate forces and the longest continuous march by so large a fighting force during the Civil War. By the time it ended with Morgan's capture in northeast Ohio, it had spread terror across the entire state.

But spreading fear among a populace that was used to the war happening elsewhere was only one of its purposes. The more important objective was to divert Union forces from the strategic struggle taking place in middle and eastern Tennessee, where Northern troops were trying to cut important supply routes of the Confederacy.

Morgan's Raid achieved both those goals. As many as 8,000 Union soldiers were engaged in either chasing him or engaging him in battle at Buffington Island, where he and his men were trying to slip back across the Ohio River into West Virginia and return southward.

And newspapers of the time are filled with accounts of the general mayhem and sheer panic that developed in communities both on and near the route



These dramatic photos were taken by Cleveland photographer Carl Staub at a re-enactment of Morgan's Raid in Meigs County in 2003.

Morgan took, since no one knew which way his troops would head next. Even residents of sizeable towns like Cincinnati and Columbus were concerned that they were targeted. Cincinnati went so far as to declare martial law.

Ironically, Morgan and his men did not behave like an invading army. Yes, stores and businesses were looted in the towns they passed through. Bridges were burned to slow the pursuit of the Union forces chasing them, and other structures were torched that were deemed as aiding the enemy's war efforts.

But even though Morgan's men filched food and horses from every farm and town they passed, they were under orders not to harm any women or children nor to use deadly force on anyone unless it was used against them first.

Dozens of historic accounts are filled with comments on how gentlemanly the Southerners treated civilians, even as they were relieving them of their goods. Relatively little civilian blood was shed during the course of the raid, and the private property of homeowners was largely left intact.

Morgan entered Ohio at Harrison in Hamilton County, taking a wide diversion around Cincinnati — he was not so foolhardy as to invade a city so heavily defended. He did use bogus telegraph messages, however, to lead Union forces to believe that both Cincinnati and Hamilton were his targets and to give false information on his route. This bought him some time to slip across the farmlands of the counties along the Ohio River on a course parallel to it. His intention was to end his raid at Buffington Island in Meigs County, where a shallow ford would allow his troops to return southward.

His plan failed. Not only was the river swollen by heavy rains, but a Union army was waiting for him there — as well as federal gunboats. Plus, this was the place where pursuing troops finally caught up with him.

The result was a fierce battle that ended with many of his men captured. A few managed to cross to West Virginia either at Buffington or farther upriver, but Morgan himself and a few hundred of his men fled first west and then northward, this time in many cases with Union troops only minutes behind him,

### Relive Morgan's Raid

A number of commemorative events are planned to observe the sesquicentennial of Morgan's Raid. Go to the website [www.ohiocivilwar150.org/morgans-raid](http://www.ohiocivilwar150.org/morgans-raid) to see a complete calendar of event listings.

Lester Horwitz will deliver several lectures across the state during July. On July 13 at 4 p.m., he will be at the Colerain Historical Society in Cincinnati. On July 15 at 1:30 p.m., he will speak in Winchester at the corner of Main and Washington. He will be at Campus Martius in Marietta on July 20 at 2 p.m. On July 28 at 2 p.m., he will speak at the Wellsville River Museum.

A brand-new John Hunt Morgan Heritage Trail is being unveiled for the sesquicentennial. Drivers can follow all or any portion of the route the raiders took across Ohio guided by more than 600 directional signs. In addition, 56 interpretive signs along the route offer historical information and describe the scene as it would have appeared in 1863. Dedication ceremonies for the new trail will be July 13 in Harrison and July 20 at the Buffington Island battleground near Portland.

Be aware that the Trail follows modern highways and is not always the actual route that Morgan took. For the diehard who wants to see the very roads that Morgan and his men were on, a new guidebook is available that follows Morgan's exact path, as much as possible, since in some cases the roads no longer exist.

Be forewarned that these roads may be either dirt or gravel, and many of them are steep, narrow or prone to washouts. Both trails visit all 56 of the interpretive signs. The guidebook is available as a "print on demand" document through [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com), and there will also be a link on [www.ohiocivilwar150.org](http://www.ohiocivilwar150.org). Cost will be in the neighborhood of \$25.

An advance copy of the guide sent to *Country Living* shows an astonishing amount of detail of occurrences at the very places the road passes. In many cases, you can read what transpired in or outside of the buildings you will pass. And there are many immensely entertaining stories as well.

not hours as had previously been the case.

The remainder of the raid was a frenzied attempt by Morgan and his men to reach another place to cross the river with their pursuers thwarting their every attempt. Smaller skirmishes occurred at Old Washington in Guernsey County and at Salineville in Columbiana County, but the actual capture was bloodless. The surrender took place on July 26, 1863, six weeks after the raid began on June 11. Only the final 14 days of the raid took place in Ohio, but in 1863 that was an amazingly short time for an army to move from one end of the state to the other on horseback, a total of 586 miles.

Historians are more likely to focus on the importance of the campaigns at Vicksburg and Gettysburg,

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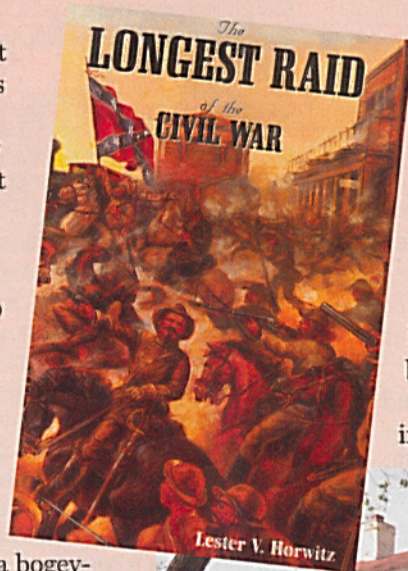
which were taking place at the same time as Morgan's Raid. And many modern-day Ohioans, if they know about the raid at all, aren't aware of the terror it created.

That fear remained vivid in the minds of Ohio residents long after 1863, however. For years afterwards, mothers would level a simple threat against their unruly children to quiet them. That threat? "Morgan will get you!" Who needs a bogeyman when John Hunt Morgan and his raiders are even scarier?

### A man and his book

You might say he wrote the book on Morgan's Raid. Literally. Lester Horwitz's *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, considered the most authoritative work on the subject, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize when it was published in 2001.

Though other books can be found on the subject, many of them focus only on portions of the raid, whereas Horwitz's comprehensive work traces



closing, the realtor told him, "Your house was raided by the Confederates."

That was the spark that ignited a bonfire. Already a lover of history, Horwitz started poring through archival material and found that, indeed, the raiders not only had passed by but also had taken two horses, a saddle and a bridle from the farm's then owner, Nathaniel Humphrey, who was later reimbursed \$155 by the state of Ohio for his losses.

From there, Horwitz started researching other claims for reimbursement that



This is the former farmhouse Horwitz bought in 1980, which he discovered had been visited by Morgan's Raiders.

had happened in the Cincinnati area and locating on maps where those original claimants had resided. Not one to do anything by half measures, he began an enormous map with red dots indicating where those persons had resided, since he wanted to figure out the exact path Morgan and his men had taken. Eventually, as he started charting the course of the raid beyond the Cincinnati area, the six-foot-high map stretched 25 feet long, filling his entire living room.

Morgan and his men along the entire thousand-mile course they followed through four states.

Horwitz came by his interest in the raid quite by accident. In 1980, when he was the owner of an advertising agency in Cincinnati, he and his wife, Florence, purchased an old yellow brick farmhouse in the middle of a modern subdivision near Loveland. At the

And that was just the beginning. He and Florence jumped in their car and started making weekend visits to other communities where Morgan had been. While there, he would pore through the archives of the town's newspapers and visit with local historians. Eventually, he started placing ads, asking people of the towns to send in their families' stories of what had happened to them when Morgan passed through in 1863. More than 600 people sent stories, which Horwitz then dutifully researched for authenticity.

For 15 years, Horwitz collected his material, then spent another five years writing the book. When it was published, it sold like hotcakes, especially in the Cincinnati area, where it even



Lester Horwitz in his living room with a Civil War-era rifle in front of a portrait of John Hunt Morgan.

### From *The Longest Raid*

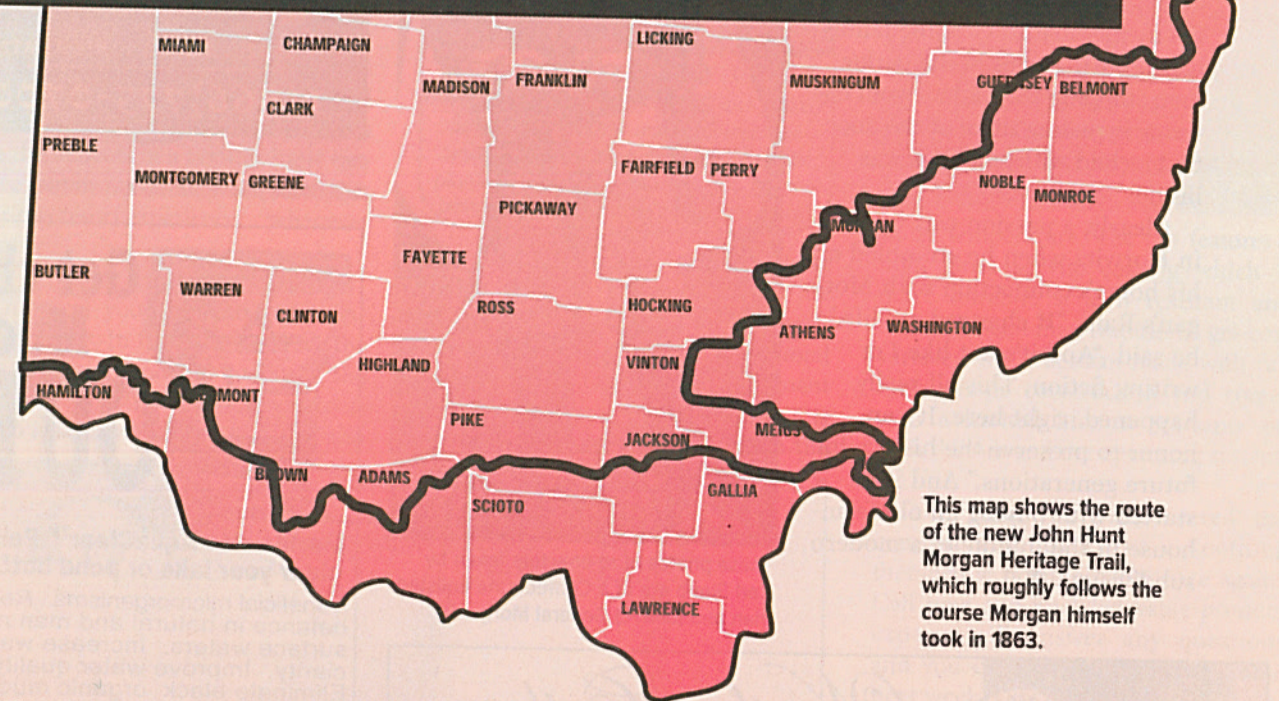
Horwitz's book is filled with choice anecdotes of things that happened during Morgan's Raid. Among them are:

- There are numerous accounts of the lengths people went to hide their valuables from Morgan and his men. There are stories of people who buried money (some of whom weren't able to find it later), of a woman who hid money in her petticoats, of another woman who hid freshly baked bread in pillows. One family hid their silver spoons in the fireplace chimney and then were forced to light a fire when the raiders demanded a meal. Fortunately, the raiders were spooked by something and left quickly, allowing the family to retrieve their spoons before they melted. Perhaps the best story is of the man who hid his horses in his parlor and then met the raiders at the door, telling them there was a child with smallpox inside. Needless to say, they didn't enter!
- Some Ohioans took in wounded or gravely ill raiders and nursed them back to health. In at least one instance, a raider was smitten with an Ohio girl he met only briefly and returned after the war and married her.
- The raiders had an encounter with the "Drummer Boy of Shiloh," William Asbury Steele, who was home on furlough. Steele hid his drum under a bed, then went

outside and hid himself in a tree. The raiders searched, finding the drum and destroying it. But Steele himself escaped their attention.

- A Guernsey County family has a treasured heirloom — John Hunt Morgan's army blanket. He spent the night in their home but left hastily, leaving the blanket behind.
- A Senecaville woman inside her home trained a gun on General Morgan as he passed and was about to fire but stopped herself when she considered how anguished she would be if a Southern woman did the same to her own husband.

Perhaps the most memorable story of all was Morgan's incredible escape from the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, where he was sent after his capture. He and several of his men burrowed through the floor of a cell and found a ventilation shaft that took them to the prison yard, where they scaled the walls and fled. Morgan himself walked to the Columbus train station and brazenly took the night train to Cincinnati, even striking up a conversation with a Union officer on board. As the train passed the penitentiary, he was able to see the rope they'd used to clamber over the walls swinging in the breeze.



This map shows the route of the new John Hunt Morgan Heritage Trail, which roughly follows the course Morgan himself took in 1863.

outsold *Tuesdays with Morrie* and Dr. Atkins' diet books. And then came the call from the Pulitzer Prize committee. "There are half a million books published each year and for my book even to be nominated was an enormous honor," he said.

Readers of *The Longest Raid of the Civil War* will likely be as impressed as the Pulitzer committee. Lovers of military history will especially savor the enormous amount of detail recounting where Morgan went and what happened along each step of the way. In addition to more than 300 anecdotes and stories from personal letters of the time, there are maps, county-by-county overviews, 180 historic photos, and

detailed analyses of the battles. (In addition to Buffington Island, a second battle took place at Corydon, Indiana.) With 528 pages (including 1,500 endnotes!) and 68 chapters, it's clear Horwitz left no stone unturned in gathering his information.

Horwitz even wrote a musical based on the raid, *The Rebels Are Coming!*, performed in Glendale in 2005 and currently available on CD. He's currently working on a sequel to *The Longest Raid* that will cover its aftermath and what happened to many of Morgan's men. He is also nearly finished with his memoir and a second musical about the Moon sisters

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of Oxford, who were spies for the Confederacy. For more information on Horwitz and his books, go to [www.longestraid.com](http://www.longestraid.com).

Of all the stories Horwitz collected in his research, which one touched him the most? It's the one that he opens the book with. Early on in his information collecting, Horwitz knocked on the door of a home in what is now Deer Park where he knew Morgan had stopped. An elderly woman answered and, when informed why he was there, she invited Horwitz in, went to a closet and gave him a cardboard box filled with yellowed newspaper articles and photographs.



"I've been waiting for you for years," the woman said, passing the torch of the family's history

to someone intent on publishing it. What happened in this home is the memorable story of the family hiding their horses in the parlor, then stopping the raiders from entering by telling them at the door that a child with smallpox was inside.

Clearly, a passion was ignited in Horwitz when he stumbled on his home's connection with Morgan's Raid. "It changed my life," he said. "And it's not like I'm writing fiction. This all really happened, right here. It's an honor to preserve the history for future generations." And it all started with buying an old farmhouse in the middle of a modern subdivision. ☪



These photos of re-enactors taken by Carl Staub are of a Confederate enlisted man and (above) General Morgan.

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