

MORGAN'S RAID IN JACKSON COUNTY, INDIANA

Much has been written about Morgan's raid into Indiana so everything within this article is coming from some written history.

We know that General John Hunt Morgan, with a command of some 2,400 men and two batteries of horse artillery, crossed the Ohio River on July 8, 1863, and entered Indiana near Mauckport in Harrison County. They eventually made their way north and through Salem and up to the area of Millport on the Muscatatuck River. It is believed that a force of some 800 men was sent ahead, led by Captain Hines.

It is contended that this force passed Russell Chapel Methodist Church on the morning of June 15, 1863. A short time later they moved through Tampico before turning north again and headed towards St. John's German Methodist Church. It is from here that we have an eye witness account of what happened that day at that church.

Her story reads in part reads as follows:

"...I remember your father (George Fosbrink) very well, and I know just where he sat in church and the kind of coat he wore...but I knew your mother (Mary Catherine Westendorf) even better because she joined St. John's Methodist Church in 1852...and was soon converted. (In 1905) I stood by the bed of my dying brother, Henry Strodtsmann, and we recalled the Sunday School lessons and the raid on our church...

...That Sunday morning, while the preacher Charles Luecker was preaching, we heard an unusual noise outside in the churchyard...we all jumped up and looked out the windows and saw Morgan's Raiders... all dressed in service, one was on Mr. Peters' black horse...

...After the soldiers had left, we all went outside to see... they had stole(n) two horses, but they took the saddle off the black one and left it on the steps and went on down the road toward Tampico... Brother Niemann put the saddle in our wagon and rode home with us and time and time again, I heard him say, "What will Mrs. Peters say?"

The eyewitness who wrote the forgoing is believed to be, at the time, 12 year old Elizabeth Strodtsmann. I have always wondered what she must have thought that morning. I do believe that it was general knowledge that General Morgan had crossed over into Indiana and was heading northward. The whole state had been alerted and troops and militiamen had been called out. All of Indiana was in a state of alarm.

During the Civil War, a force of 2,400 Cavalrymen had the means to cause a lot of concern. They could have easily taken control of about every town in Indiana and destroyed them as they threatened to do to Salem.

History suggests that General Morgan's intent was not to destroy towns but instead to forage his way across Indiana destroying anything which could have been useful or considered war material or helpful in transporting war material such as bridges. History also suggests that General Morgan was considered a

"gentleman" who tried to control his men and keep them from stealing.

But history is only a means which allows us to look back, and from recorded knowledge, assume or believe what we all choose to believe. Perhaps no one will ever know all the truths of this raid into Indiana and maybe no one cares any longer but I would like to ask a question in closing:

What do you think your feelings would have been if you had lived during this time?

Richard Rumph

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