

THUNDER FROM A CLEAR SKY

STOVEPIPE JOHNSON'S CONFEDERATE RAID ON NEWBURGH, INDIANA

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*The Longest Raid of the Civil War:
Little-Known & Untold Stories of Morgan's Raid into
Kentucky, Indiana & Ohio*

by Lester V. Horwitz

456 pages, published 1999

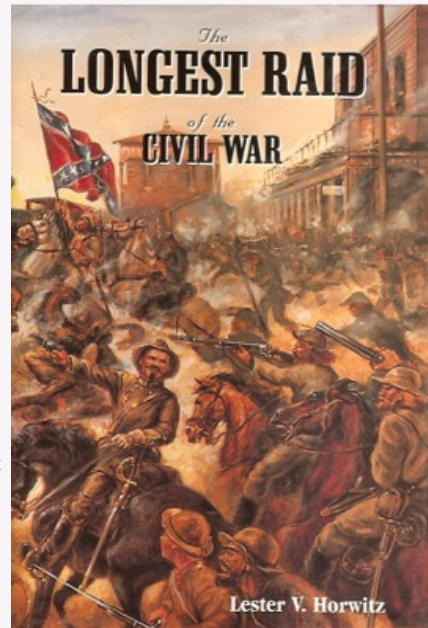
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THE STORY

On July 26, 1863, CSA General John Hunt Morgan's hopes evaporated on a country road in Columbiana County, Ohio. The hope of crossing the Ohio River south to safety, the hope of returning to his wife, the hope of fighting on for the Confederate cause—all these thoughts were gone now. The last few tricks were expired. His journey had been so long and desperate that relief was perhaps the most overwhelming of the many emotions experienced by Morgan and his cavalry when they finally accepted that the greatest adventure of their lives was over. Their immediate concern was rest.



Chased by thousands of Union blue after Corydon, like outlaws on the run from an angry posse, the list of country hamlets that Morgan's men had trundled through was too long to think about now that they were on their way to Union prison camps. Decades later there would be time to consider *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*.

The two questions that persist for those *not* involved are: "What did Morgan mean to accomplish, and, what did he actually accomplish?" The need to ask these questions may indicate how little came of it. But to those involved in the chase, and to those touched by the dusty herd of strangers in a strange land, it was the event itself that would persist (and grow) for generations.

Once firmly on northern soil, Morgan's soldiers engaged Hoosier citizens in the only important battlefield conflict to take place on Indiana soil—The Battle of Corydon on July 9, 1863. The 450 hastily assembled Home Guardsmen put up a staunch defense against General Morgan's vastly superior cavalry, and the Indianans briefly halted the invaders with the help of the Henry repeating rifle. Eventually, however, the Corydon men were overpowered and word went out across the Midwest, "Morgan is coming!"

Although Morgan had been north of the Ohio River for only one day, the Corydon battle would be the last serious offensive action for Morgan's rebel cavalry. After Corydon, Morgan started a long trek eastward with the eventual intent of crossing the Ohio River south into Kentucky or West Virginia. Like the fingers of a great grey hand, Morgan's men split into groups along the raiders' route, entering each tiny town to raise the curtain on a recurring one-act play. Detachments of various sizes rumbled onto unsuspecting Indiana and Ohio farms, exchanged spent Confederate mounts for fresh farm horses, roused the owners for food and water, and then passed on to the next well-provisioned rural settlement. Day after

day, the need for fresh transport and sustenance churned a repetitive scene. To spice the picture, Morgan occasionally burned a bridge to slow his pursuers, held a mill ransom, or took a townsman as a temporary prisoner to serve as a guide through unfamiliar territory. At one town bolts of fabric were stolen by the rebels and used as streamers; at another town ice skates were taken. When the world of the Southern horseman collided with the environs of the Northern farmer, the result was an endless array of random acts.

Two steps behind in the hunt was an endless list of Union commanders: Hobson, Judah, Wolford, Shackelford, and others. One pursuer after another spent a few days on the trail only to hand the baton off to another in a relentless and aggravating chase. The erstwhile bandits of Morgan's tribe visited dozens of Indiana and Ohio towns, while more and more Union pursuers were fed into the grueling race. Rarely did Morgan have more than a few hours at any one locale before a dust cloud in the distance signaled the oncoming blue hoard.

After scaring Cincinnati by skirting north of the city, on July 19 Morgan proceeded to Buffington Island, Ohio, and ordered his men to start construction on makeshift flatboats. Laden with booty from Northern farms and with ammunition running low, Morgan's 1,900 tired riders sensed that one more trial awaited them before the passage to redemption. Eight thousand Union troops converged on Buffington as Morgan prepared to cross the Ohio River. It was here at Buffington that Morgan met the Union's secret weapon—U.S. Captain Leroy Fitch on the Ohio River gunboat *Moose*. Not only did the *Moose* render deadly fire from the river during the Buffington battle, but also the testy captain kept his guns trained on anyone attempting to cross the river. Of the hundreds of rebels who could have swum or boated to safety at Buffington, only a handful of men made it across alive.

The Union victory at Buffington Island bagged half of Morgan's command. However, despite being boxed in on all sides, Morgan himself once again slipped the noose. Morgan, brigade commander Stovepipe Johnson, and almost 1,000 Confederate raiders found an escape route and made their way fourteen miles upstream to Reedsville, Ohio. At Reedsville, Morgan once more tried to cross the Ohio River. More than 300 rebels of the 1,000 present were safely across when once again the Federal flag of Captain Fitch on the Union gunboat *Moose* arrived to spoil the party. Faced with escape or leadership of those stranded on Ohio soil, Morgan chose to stay with the rebels who could not cross because of the *Moose's* timely gun work.

The 600-man rump of Morgan's original command spent six more days wandering the back roads of southern Ohio, eluding Federal clutches. But with countless pursuers around each bend, the question was not *if* but *when* would the end come. Technically, Morgan surrendered at least three times in Columbiana County as a line of ever higher-ranking officers showed up at the final act to claim their elusive prize. For the trail-bitten rebels, it hardly mattered. Although Federal penitentiaries and Union prison camps were no match for Kentucky hospitality, captivity meant regular meals and welcome rest. For the moment, that was enough.

THE BOOK

Although several good books cover the life and Civil War exploits of CSA General John Hunt Morgan (*Rebel Raider* by Howard Swiggett, 1934; *John Hunt Morgan and his Raiders* by Edison H. Thomas, 1975; and *Rebel Raider: The Life of General John Hunt Morgan* by Dr. James A. Ramage, 1986), Lester Horwitz has narrowed his focus to what is known as Morgan's "Great Raid." Initially, it would seem impossible to produce a book of nearly 500 pages primarily on the events of just one month—July 1863—but Horwitz has succeeded in opening up a whole new world. In short, Horwitz has undertaken the staggering and unprecedented task of recounting the raid's every step in mind-boggling detail. Each country road, each two-horse town, each creek, bridge, and breakfast visited by Morgan's men has a long buried story brought to life in *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*. It is a job well done.

Horwitz writes in the style of a manic diarist with plenty of time (and ink) on his hands. As the hours tick by on each day in July 1863, the parade of events begins anew. Up to this point, many historians have recounted the raid as if they were sitting on Morgan's shoulder,

experiencing everything through the eyes and ears of the famous cavalryman. Here Horwitz completes the puzzle by filling his book with seemingly endless quirky encounters as told from the side of Morgan's victims in Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. For example, there's the wonderful story of the woman in New Alsace, Indiana, who unwittingly served her own brother—then a soldier with Morgan—breakfast on July 13, 1863, without realizing it until after the war; and the man who was busily setting up a commissary for local Indiana militia units in Corydon only to be surprised by Morgan's hungry men who made good use of the commissary's handiwork; and the funeral procession that was waylaid in Bashan, Ohio, where Morgan stole the hearse (after unloading the deceased) and all the fresh horses in the cavalcade. These events and dozens more are what make *The Longest Raid* not just a history of Morgan's Great Raid, but also a detailed source document for future generations of historians and genealogists on both sides of the Ohio River.

Mr. Horwitz is strictly a meat and potatoes writer. His imagery, style, and word usage are mostly unadorned and, occasionally, a missing punctuation mark is noted. No matter, the story has a good pace on its own, and every page that seems relatively plain is immediately followed by another page that you can't forget. Yes, Morgan rides endlessly into town after town, but each town reacts to the intrusion with its own personality. It is the careful presentation of these varied personalities that makes Mr. Horwitz's book a first among many forerunners.

The Longest Raid is chock-full of informative maps and dozens of photos, all used to good effect. The bibliography is helpful and informative, and the font is plenty big enough for those with middle-aged eyes (a pet peeve of mine). These items are the clinchers for anyone balanced on the fence about spending the \$34.95 for the hardcover. In fact, compared to most new Civil War releases, the book is an outright bargain in terms of new information presented per dollar spent. The softcover version has a list price of \$29.95, making it seem senseless not to go with hardcover.

Following is a short e-interview conducted on October 12, 2006, with the author of *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*:

The Interview

RM: Books like *The Longest Raid of the Civil War* sometime have the effect of drawing forth long buried, previously unknown facts about the raid after publication and release of the book to the public. Has this happened? If so, could you share with us a few new things about Morgan's Great Raid that you have learned since the release of your book?

Mr. Horwitz: Yes, more information surfaced after the book was published. Doesn't it always? After 15 years of research and five years of writing (1979-1999), my wife, Florence said, "When are you going to stop collecting stories and finally publish your book?" So, in early 1999, I had completed 99 chapters. One of my editors, Dr. James Ramage, Regent Professor of History at Northern Kentucky University, said, "Lester, you have two books in your manuscript. I would end your first book with chapter 68 and save the other 31 chapters for another book." So, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War* was published with 528 pages.

My follow-up book, *After the Raid*, will include those 31 chapters plus many more stories uncovered since *The Longest Raid* was published. It may fill 400-500 more pages. Since 1999, I have collected hundreds of new stories that will tell what happened to the people mentioned in the first book after the raid and after the war. It will also include stories of their descendants up to today's date, provided this information would have great interest beyond the family circle.

For example, on page 91 of *The Longest Raid* is a story about a Quaker farmer. It tells about the rebels coming into his farmhouse seeking food. Being a pacifist, the Confederates were pleased with the farmer's hospitality, even inviting him to visit them in the South "when this cruel war is over." In *After the Raid*, it will tell that this incident was made into the movie "Friendly Persuasion" in 1956. The Quaker farmer was played by Gary Cooper. The movie won many Academy Awards. The follow-up story will also reveal that the farmer had a great-grandson who achieved the highest office in our nation. The farmer's name was Joshua

Vickers Milhous. Yes, his great-grandson was Richard Milhous Nixon. There's even more to this story, but I'll save it so you can read it when the book is published.

Missing from the movie and not discovered until very recently, I learned that several Indian tribes in Michigan made up Co. K, 1st Michigan Sharpshooters. Hundreds of Native American Indians fought Morgan's men in the skirmish at Vernon, Indiana, the same battle in which the Quaker farmer's son participated. After this conflict, the Indians were recalled to Detroit and then assigned to Camp Douglas where they arrived in time to become prison guards as Morgan's men were dispatched to the POW camp. First they fought them. Then they guarded them.

Lt. Col. James Bennett McCreary, 11th KY CSA, was captured in the raid at Cheshire, Ohio. After the war, he was twice elected governor of Kentucky.

Morgan delayed his Great Raid to go to the assistance of Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, who it was thought was being threatened in Knoxville (page 14). Buckner's son, Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr., was killed in action at Okinawa in WWII.

Col. A.R. Johnson returned to his home in Texas after the war. Blinded by friendly-fire during the war, his wife became his eyes until his death. When he learned that the state of Texas was planning to build a new statehouse in Austin, he generously donated the pink marble found on his property. The state built a railroad to his ranch to haul the marble to Austin. Today, the beautiful pink marble facade of the Texas Statehouse was the gift of one of Morgan's men.

The stories go on and on. I am still seeking new information from the public if they can tell me what happened to those associated with or affected by Morgan's Raid and/or their descendants ... after the raid and after the war. I can be contacted at Horwitz@aol.com.

RM: As you may know, my book, *Thunder From a Clear Sky*, is about Stovepipe Johnson's 1862 raid on Newburgh, Indiana. Naturally, in my research, I read Johnson's autobiography, *Partisan Rangers of the Confederate States Army*, many times, and it is an important source of information for your book also. On page 140 and again on pages 144-145 of *Partisan Rangers*, Johnson indicates that he had cut a deal with Morgan to be detached once at the Ohio River crossing in order to attack Union towns in Western Kentucky and Southern Indiana by steamer. Morgan reneged on this deal and burned the steamer behind Johnson's back, essentially tricking Johnson into participating in the Great Raid into Indiana and Ohio. You don't mention this incident in your book. What do you make of this event?

Mr. Horwitz: I think Morgan led Johnson on. I can't believe that Morgan seriously entertained the idea that once they were north of the Mason-Dixon Line, he would allow Johnson to depart in another direction with half of his limited force. Morgan had two brigades. One commanded by Col. Duke, the other by Johnson. To allow Johnson to go his separate way and allow himself to be so weakened would be suicide. Johnson must have convinced himself that Morgan would let him go his separate way, but I think Morgan didn't want to make it an issue until they crossed the Ohio River. The reason Morgan ordered the two boats burned was to prevent them from falling into Union hands to be used by the Federal cavalry pursuing him. That act delayed the Union cavalry for almost a day and allowed Morgan to widen the gap between himself and his pursuers.

Johnson remained with Morgan until he recrossed the Ohio River at Reedsville, Ohio, following the Battle of Buffington Island. Morgan could have gotten away as well, but he chose to return to the Ohio side when he saw that six hundred of his men were still trapped in the North. Union gunboats interfered with the crossing, stopping two-thirds of Morgan's force from escaping back into the South. Johnson, with 350 of Morgan's men, returned to Richmond where he formed a new force. He named it after Morgan, declining to name it after himself. When Morgan escaped from the Ohio Penitentiary in November 1863, he found Johnson and those who had escaped were happy to see their commander free once again.

RM: *The Longest Raid of the Civil War* must have been quite a personal journey as well as a huge labor of historical research. Can you tell us a little about how this book has changed your life and what your hopes are for the legacy of your work?

Mr. Horwitz: This book made a significant change in the direction of my life. Until it was published, I had owned and operated an advertising agency for over 40 years. I was hoping to retire from my marketing company, but I wasn't sure how I could accomplish that without disappointing my loyal clients and staff of a dozen skilled and talented employees. One day, soon after the book was published, I received a phone call from the president of another advertising agency. I had competed against him several times when soliciting new clients. Never met him but knew of him. He asked, "Did you write a book about the Civil War?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, I bought your book, and I would like to get your autograph."

We met for lunch, and I signed his copy. He asked, "Are you planning to write more books?"

Again I replied, "Yes."

"I am in the same business as you, but I don't have time to write a big book like you did. When are you going to have time to write these books?"

"Some day I'll sell my agency, and then I'll have time to write all those books," I informed him. He said, "When you sell your agency, I'll buy it. How much do you want for your business?" He looked me straight in the eyes to sense my reaction.

Six months later, we completed our negotiations and in July 2000, I no longer had the ownership or responsibility of operating an advertising agency. He merged our two agencies, our clients, and our staffs. He named it DHA: Dektas Horwitz Advertising, but now I was an employee and remained with his agency through a transition period. After that, I was free to devote full time to writing, publishing, traveling, lecturing, playwriting, and all the other new opportunities that lay before me.

Other unexpected but happy events occurred. I received a letter from Columbia University saying that *The Longest Raid* had been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for History. They directed me to send review copies to those who were judging that category. I didn't win the Pulitzer, but it was an honor to be nominated.

In mid-September 1999, I opened *The Cincinnati Enquirer* to see that *The Longest Raid* was listed as the #1 Best-Selling book of nonfiction in the Greater Cincinnati area. It was even outselling *Dr. Atkin's Diet* and *Tuesdays With Morrie*. For the next three months (Oct-Dec), it remained on the list of top ten best-selling books.

It is now in its seventh printing. Because of its success, a half-dozen other authors have called me to ask what they can do to stimulate the sales of their books. This led me to write a how-to book revealing the secrets of my success with *The Longest Raid*. In fact, 25 other authors have contributed their personal stories of what they have done to write, publish, and market their books. I am hopeful of publishing this book early next year.

Because of *The Longest Raid*, I have had the pleasure of speaking to more than 200 organizations across our nation from the Los Angeles CWRT to the Blue and Gray Educational Society in Virginia. C-SPAN filmed one of my presentations and broadcast it nationwide. PBS TV and radio stations have had me on their shows as a guest. Traveling around with my wife Florence, primarily in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania, we have met some great people and participated in events only authors are privileged to experience.

The mayor of Glendale, Ohio, invited me to adapt my book for the stage. He and the Glendale community theatre wanted to stage an outdoor play about Morgan's Raid as the key event in the town's Sesquicentennial celebration in 2005. For this occasion, I wrote *The Rebels Are Coming!* It's Morgan's Raid in music. The musical play has 18 songs, 11 of which are original compositions that my composer Dennis Duvall and I wrote. Now several more communities in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee have contacted me about performing the play. The success I've had with this play has encouraged me to write other plays.

My life is completely different from what I had known before 2000. I have some great projects in the works. Every day is different. I look forward to many new accomplishments in the coming years. The legacy will take care of itself.

For anyone interested in the book *The Longest Raid* and the play *The Rebels Are Coming!*, they can visit www.LongestRaid.com.

My thanks to Mr. Lester V. Horwitz. If you are looking to buy a copy of [The Longest Raid](#),

go [here](#) .

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