

Morgan's Raid

The textbook *Indiana*, published by Harcourt Horizons, says the following in reference to General Lew Wallace: "Governor Morton asked General Lewis Wallace of Brookville to organize troops to protect Indianapolis. When Morgan heard this, his raiders moved into Ohio." This is a bit of an exaggeration as to the power of the Wallace name to strike fear into the hearts of the Confederates. The following is a brief summary of Morgan's Raid.

Morgan's Raid is often cited as the only conflict fought between Northern and Southern soldiers in Indiana. There were other small skirmishes in which Confederate troops crossed over the Indiana border; however, Morgan's Raid was certainly the largest and most influential conflict.

From July 7-13, 1863, General John H. Morgan led a force of approximately 3,000 men, mostly on horseback, through southern Indiana parallel to the Ohio River. They covered approximately 200 miles of Indiana roads, sometimes spending more than twenty hours on horseback. To accomplish this great speed, they stole fresh horses from anyone they could. These forces burned railroad depots, bridges, mills, water tanks, and houses, dismantled railroad tracks, cut telegraph wires, looted stores, and collected ransoms. Although historians cannot be sure, their purpose was likely three-fold: 1) to create a diversion from Confederate General Bragg's army in Tennessee; 2) to recruit "copperheads" in Indiana; 3) to escape the Union forces that were pursuing them (under Brigadier General James M. Shackelford). Indiana, although populated by small farms, was still significantly forested, which, in addition to the cut telegraphy lines, made tracking Morgan's progress very difficult.

In response to news that Morgan's forces had crossed the Ohio, on July 9, Governor Morton sent a telegram to Gen. Lew Wallace on the Kankakee River, asking him to come to Indianapolis. (Lew Wallace had been relieved of command after the battle of Shiloh in April of 1862 and so was waiting in Indiana to be called back to service.) On July 10, via newspapers and telegraphs, Gov. Morton ordered that "all able-bodied white male citizens of the several counties south of the National Road" to form companies and begin to drill. (By the time Morgan left Indiana, 65,000 men had volunteered.) At the same time, Lew Wallace arrived in Indianapolis to receive command of 1,100 new soldiers to go to aid the Home Guard in Vernon. Gov. Morton was particularly worried that Morgan's forces would head toward Indianapolis, which was largely undefended and held 6,000 Confederate prisoners, as well as a large stock of arms and ammunition. Lew Wallace and his troops arrived in Vernon early in the morning of July 11 to find Morgan gone, having taken a route around Vernon to avoid a major battle. Lew Wallace and the Home Guard of Vernon pursued Morgan to Sunman, but as Morgan's forces were on horseback and the Indiana troops were on foot, they never saw Morgan's raiders. Morgan's forces crossed the Whitewater River into Ohio at Harrison, and were pursued across Ohio almost to the Pennsylvania border before the last of them were captured by Union forces on July 26, 1863.