“This Just Hope of Ultimate Payment”

The Indiana Morgan’s Raid Claims Commission and Harrison County, Indiana, 1863-1887

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For more than a century, hundreds of depositions, still sealed in the envelopes in which clerks had placed them in the 1880s, lay in boxes in the National Archives. Forgotten and crumbling with age, the evidence of southern Indiana’s losses from the July 1863 depredations of John Hunt Morgan and his raiders (and the Union troops who pursued them) sat unread, even as romanticized versions of the raid—and its effects on hundreds of Hoosiers—continued to circulate as history. Few of the residents of Harrison County, Indiana, who waited in vain for more than two decades for some reimbursement for their wartime losses would have been surprised by the fate of their depositions.

On July 10, 1863, Henry Richard stood watching General Edward H. Hobson’s Union cavalry pass in front of his farm in pursuit of Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan. One of the young troopers approached Richard carrying a saddle and bridle—his horse had dropped dead several hundred yards behind. The patriotic Richard offered the only mount he had at

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hand—a mule—to the beleaguered cavalryman, who remounted and joined the chase. Like many other civilians in the area, Richard hoped that his loss would be compensated, especially since he had given his mule to Union troops; instead, he found himself among the hundreds of southern Indiana residents who lost property to either Confederate or Union troops, only to be frustrated by a long and fruitless effort to receive payment. It was not until 1882 that clerks at the federal Office of the Quartermaster General reviewed Richard's claim for $150 for the loss of his mule. Although his story seemed likely, the quartermaster refused the claim. In his efforts to aid Union forces and avenge the rebel incursion into Indiana, Richard had forgotten to ask the officer in charge for a receipt.¹

On July 7, 1863, Morgan's raiding party of almost 2,500 cavalry, backed by four artillery pieces, occupied the hills above Brandenburg, Kentucky, and then crossed into Harrison County, Indiana. Morgan's raid on the county seat of Corydon on July 9 culminated in roughly thirty minutes of fighting—a skirmish commonly referred to as the battle of Corydon—between Confederate forces and elements of the state guard aided by local volunteers. The significance of Morgan's raid into southern Indiana lies not only in the brief fighting that took place that day, but also in the subsequent inability of state officials to deal properly with local residents' claims for the extensive losses that they incurred in its wake. Historians and popular writers have neglected the raid's lasting financial impact in favor of more romantic accounts of Morgan's Confederate raiders and residents' sometimes inaccurate, but intriguing, tales passed down through generations.² Three main misconceptions continue to distort Hoosiers' thinking about

¹File 435, box 605, Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Claims Branch 1861-1889, Quartermaster Stores (Act of July 4, 1864), Miscellaneous Claims, book 214, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter Record Group 92, OQG, Miscellaneous Claims, book 214, National Archives.)

²The literature pertaining to Morgan's July 1863 raid is vast, and ranges from voluminous collections of stories to short, county-specific descriptions of events. See the following books for various, and often conflicting, accounts of the raid, including some of the incidents that occurred in Corydon and Harrison County. Lester V. Horwitz, The Longest Raid of the Civil War: Little-Known and Untold Stories of Morgan's Raid into Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio, rev. ed. (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001); David L. Taylor, With Bowie Knives and Pistols: Morgan's Raid in Indiana (Lexington, Ind., 1993); Arville Funk, The Morgan Raid in Indiana and Ohio (Corydon, Ind., 1971); Scott Roller, “Business as Usual: Indiana's Response to the Confederate Invasions of the Summer of 1863,” Indiana Magazine of History 88 (March 1992), 1-25. For a sample of the countless unpublished accounts and memoirs, see folder 6, box 3 of the Don D. John Collection, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky. The collection also includes the only known original copy of the July 14, 1863, Corydon Democrat detailing the raid.
the event. First, popular conceptions of Morgan and his troops as a latter-day Confederate version of Robin Hood and the Merry Men have led some to assume that citizens were not adversely affected by the raid, and may have even benefited in some cases. For example, folklore surrounding the raid claims that many Hoosier farmers were happy to learn that the raiders left them quality Kentucky thoroughbreds, which eventually made fine race horses. Second, several writers have misinterpreted an 1867 ledger recording claims as proof that the state paid victims for their losses—it did not. Finally, many historians view Morgan's raid as a pointless sideshow of little historical importance. It was, instead, a well-timed strike at the midwestern homefront, and it brought the pain and destruction of war to families north of the Ohio River.

A careful study of the raid's effect on Harrison County and the fate of residents' claims for compensation proves the error of these assumptions. In the aftermath of the raid, U.S. military authorities in Indiana rounded up horses confiscated by Confederate and Union troops, but then only temporarily loaned them out to farmers to harvest the wheat and corn ripening in their fields at the time of the raid. During three successive sessions of the Indiana General Assembly, residents of Harrison County and other affected counties filed petitions for relief from their losses at the same time as their representatives and senators introduced legislation intended to collect, adjudicate, and pay legitimate claims. In 1867, legislators finally authorized a commission to investigate the losses related to Morgan's raid; 468 Harrison County residents filed a total of $86,552 in claims for property and monies lost to Confederates, Legion members, and Union troops. The amount totaled about five percent of all personal property listed for the county in the 1860 census. However, Indiana lawmakers failed to pass the necessary legislation to settle the claims. In the 1870s and 1880s, residents and their descendants submitted requests for payment of $81,558.07 to the U.S. Quartermaster General (USQG), but by law that office could consider only legitimate and properly documented claims against Union troops, and thus the quartermaster paid out $8,659.

For mythology about farmers benefiting from superior horses left behind by Morgan and his men, see Horwitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War*, 377.

These totals were compiled from Claims 36-504, Record Group 92, OQG, Miscellaneous Claims, book 214, National Archives. The total of the claims submitted to the U.S. Quartermaster General differs from the Indiana Morgan's Raid Claims Commission ledger by only $152.83.

"Report of Morgan Raid Commission to the Governor," December 31, 1869, Record Group 92, OQG, Collective Correspondence File, Morgan's Raid, box 697, National Archives; U.S. Historical Census Data Browser, online at http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/.
From the start, county residents considered state and national authorities to be partially responsible for Morgan’s troops having crossed the Ohio River and for the absence of a sufficient number of Union troops to prevent Morgan’s capture of Corydon. The defense of Corydon was not, contrary to popular belief, led by a ragtag collection of home guard. Instead, the companies that assembled outside of town were but a small part of the 6th Regiment of the Indiana Legion, a state-funded military organization created to defend the southern counties and made up of men from those counties. However, the Legion mustered only about 400 members and volunteers to stand against several thousand Confederates. Gen. Jeremiah T. Boyle, who commanded the state and federal troops in the Louisville area, believed that Morgan intended to attack New Albany, and as a result refused to let the Legion companies go to the aid of their comrades in nearby Corydon. Two weeks after the raid, Harrison County treasurer William Hisey wrote to Gov. Oliver P. Morton asking for Boyle’s resignation on the grounds that the Union commander had let “rebel cavalry, with artillery, destroy a country town.” Although Hisey was justifiably bitter after losing $786.87 in cash and property to the raiders, he was right to criticize Boyle for subverting the Legion’s organization and holding back part of the regiment. Three weeks before Morgan’s incursion, more than one thousand state troops had garrisoned the town during an invasion scare. Corydon’s citizens believed that federal and state governments could have taken greater measures to protect against the raid, and that they therefore shared at least partial responsibility for the loss and destruction that followed.

The raid’s greatest immediate impact fell upon merchants and business owners, who suffered the highest monetary losses. The raiders charged
In the 1880s, the owners of the three mills applied for reimbursement for the ransom they had paid Morgan. Phillip Lopp also asked for $4,761 for his mill, which raiders burned on July 8, 1863. None of the claims fit the specifications of the U.S. Quartermaster General’s office, and they refused payment.

local businessmen a five-hundred-dollar protection fee for three of the community’s mills, and although they largely avoided needless destruction, some of the men burned a flour mill outside of Mauckport because snipers allegedly fired from the building. Theft was much more common—

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Samuel J. Wright lost $5,524 in merchandise from his Corydon store and became so financially burdened that he placed an ad in a local newspaper asking all of his customers to pay their debts to him, because “Morgan’s band of thieves robbed me of at least half my goods.” At the beginning of the war, Wright had accepted the potentially lucrative position of quartermaster for the Legion’s 6th Regiment. In January 1864, he resigned, citing the financial burden of the post, supply difficulties, and the raid’s effect on his business. Wright eventually sold his store and fell back on his legal training.

Farmers, laborers, mechanics, and tradesmen also risked privation—especially farmers trying to finish the wheat harvest. Those who had already cut their wheat lost some of their crop to both raiders and their pursuers, who stole fodder and even resorted to taking wheat out of the shock to feed hungry mounts. Both Confederate and Union cavalry also took local farmers’ horses, which were essential for harvesting and marketing agricultural goods. Farmers who could not afford cutting and threshing machinery usually cut by hand, but they still used horses for treading, to stomp the wheat away from the stalk. Wheat growers who owned, or had access to, a threshing machine needed horses to power the equipment. Large machines needed as many as ten horses, requiring neighbors to combine their resources during the harvest. The raiders took between 300 and 400 horses in Harrison County, while the Union cavalry in pursuit of Morgan took an additional 150 mounts.

A number of local men remained at their homes and attempted to hide their property, while others joined Legion companies and left the job to their wives and children—most to little avail. To maximize their speed, the raiders and their Union pursuers commandeered new mounts in a frenzied and relentless manner. Rebel horsemen often left behind one worn-out

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12S. J. Wright to A. Stone, January 18, 1864, folder 5, box 10, Indiana Legion Records, Indiana State Archives.
13Files 123, 147, 171, box 603; files 265, 342, 345, box 604; files 405, 424, 459, box 605; and file 503, box 606, Record Group 92, OQG, Miscellaneous Claims, book 214, National Archives.
14J. Sanford Rikoon, Threshing in the Midwest, 1820-1940: A Study of Traditional Culture and Technological Change (Bloomington, Ind., 1988), 14-16, 30.
mount when they took a fresh horse, and on several occasions, successive groups of raiders took and replaced the horses left by their comrades. The baffled citizens could do nothing but watch as the Confederates recycled their own spent mounts. Union pursuers then picked among the animals that had been overlooked, hidden, or left behind in order to replace their own tired mounts. Isaac Pittman formed up with the Legion while his wife Mary hid one of their horses. The couple left two plow horses in the stable, and Isaac was able to return to his fields the day after the raid to cut wheat with his three horses and one borrowed animal. A group of raiders had overlooked the animals when Mary made them breakfast on July 9, but the following day Union cavalrmen took two horses and left Isaac to finish his work with half a team. In disrupting the harvest, the raid jeopardized the economic stability of this rural community.

Morgan and his men had been relatively lenient on civilians in the Bluegrass, often taking only food or fresh mounts. Once in Indiana, however, the Confederate raiders were determined to exact retribution from inhabitants and reap the benefits of raiding a state not yet touched directly by war. Thirteen claims mention cash among the stolen items. Including the protection money paid by business owners and the cash taken from citizens, the Confederate raiders probably robbed residents of more than two thousand dollars. Some claimants listed both guns and cash lost to rebel forces, which suggests that the Confederates relieved captured townsmen of their weapons and whatever cash they had in their pockets. The raiders made off, as well, with a variety of personal items, including various articles of clothing and at least nine pocket watches. The community also lost at least ten boats of various sizes. It is unclear whether Confederate soldiers damaged and destroyed boats to slow their


17File 434, box 605, Record Group 92, OQG, Miscellaneous Claims, book 214, National Archives. Pittman died in 1866, but his wife reported the loss of a sorrel mare worth $125 and a bay mare worth $200. In 1883, the U.S. Quartermaster General investigated and approved the claim, but adjusted the amounts to $100 and $130 respectively, to correspond to prices of cavalry horses at that time.


19Claims were not itemized, so cash is listed with other items in the quartermaster's records. The author estimates $3,126 in cash lost based on subtracting the common value of the other items listed. Files 56, 66, 113, 119, 150, 192, 231, 248, 267, 274, 360, 372, 462, boxes 602-606, Record Group 92, OQG, Miscellaneous Claims, book 214, National Archives.
Union pursuers, or residents themselves caused the losses. James Trotter indicated in his claim for $40 that his wooden boat had been damaged while he tried to “prevent rebels from crossing the Ohio River.” None of these claims was covered by the laws governing the quartermaster’s reimbursement procedure. Clerks denied payment and marked the files “Taking and Use Not Proven.”

The skirmishes also caused loss of property and, more importantly, of life. On July 9, the Legion cavalry and a number of mounted minutemen spread out along the roads south of Corydon and prepared to ambush the Confederate attackers. The defenders knew that they could not stop the larger opposing force, but they hoped to cover the approaches to town, slowing down the enemy and giving the expected troops from New Albany time to arrive. Capt. William Farquar ordered detachments of cavalry, including a small group of twenty-two Legion men, to form a skirmish line along the Corydon-Mauckport Road, approximately four miles south of town. The squad prepared to make a stand near Rev. Peter Glenn’s house. Glenn’s son, John, was a member of this unit and probably suggested his father’s farm as a defensible position. The Hoosiers charged forty advancing Confederate cavalry and killed Private John Dunn of the 5th Kentucky. When the remainder of the Confederate regiment arrived, the Hoosier horsemen withdrew towards Corydon. Elsewhere, citizens, determined to protect their property and livelihood, distracted the approaching raiders by firing from concealed positions and then withdrawing.

Events at the Glenn farm exemplify the sorrow and loss caused by the raid. Shortly after the cavalry retreated, Confederate troopers shot Peter Glenn and set fire to the house. A number of variations on the incident appeared over time, including one version that suggested that raiders murdered Glenn because they recognized him as an abolitionist.

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20 Quote from file 454. Claims for destroyed or damaged boats are located in files 91, 106, 113, 114, 115, 185, 209, 264, 266, 272, boxes 602-604, Record Group 92, OQG, Miscellaneous Claims, book 214, National Archives.


22 Horwitz, The Longest Raid of the Civil War, 61-62.
Later newspaper reports indicated that Glenn's wife, Catherine, and his daughter-in-law were in the house when Confederate reinforcements arrived and discovered Dunn's body nearby. Concluding that gunmen inside the house had killed him, rebel officers ordered the house to be destroyed. Confederate accounts depict Glenn and his son as “bushwhackers” who resisted cavalrmen's attempts to burn the house—common retribution when civilians fired on troops from buildings. Legion reports claimed that the rebels told the minister to surrender and then murdered him in cold blood. In 1881, William Weaver testified in a sworn affidavit to the U.S. quartermaster that Peter Glenn had helped the Legion troops during the skirmish; the account matches the Legion's version of events. Weaver attested that rebel troopers killed Glenn: “When he came forward he was shot and murdered and his dwelling house and barn burnt.” Regardless of the details of varying accounts, Confederate troops killed Peter Glenn, wounded John Glenn, and destroyed the Glenn farm because the minister and his family opposed the Confederate advance. Ironically, the family hid their horses during the raid, only to have Union troops take one of the mounts from a nearby field as they stopped at the smoldering ruins of the farm the next day. The Glens were among the most prominent victims of the raid, and their losses should have been reimbursed—but they were not.

State and military authorities took steps to restore order after the raid, although not all of the regulations worked in favor of farmers. Gov. Morton ordered Gen. Henry B. Carrington, commander of the Indiana military district, to issue a detailed description of the procedure for reporting and recovering stolen or appropriated horses. The message detailed the policies and procedures needed to remedy “the exigencies of the harvest and the interruption of the farming interests by the John Morgan raid.” Carrington ordered all citizens who had replacement horses to give these animals to the provost marshal, who gathered all of the recovered horses in each locality and redistributed them to farms based on individual need. Farmers who had lost horses were able to bring in the wheat harvest and transport it to market. Citizens who did not turn in animals after that time were open to prosecution, and those who tried to gather stray horses and

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sell them to the quartermaster faced severe punishment under the martial law which was still in effect.24

Civilians encountered a number of problems with the procedure for claiming animals and applying for reimbursement. Owners were responsible for finding and identifying their horses. They filed descriptions and affidavits, often traveling as far as Cincinnati to find their animals. By the time Morgan's command was finally captured near West Point, Ohio, Union regulars and state militia had caught every missing horse. The U.S. Quartermaster Department, however, made no attempt to return animals that Union forces had captured, instead offering them for sale with the government keeping the proceeds. The department also required each claimant to produce a receipt or at least two sworn witnesses' statements indicating that Union forces had taken the property. In the confusion and urgency of the pursuit of Morgan, many claimants had not obtained valid receipts and those who did could not always produce them.25

The romanticized, anecdotal accounts compiled by local and amateur historians do not depict the lasting economic impact of the raid on Corydon and the surrounding area.26 Individuals needed to replace what they had lost and resume their daily routines; the loss of important community assets threatened to have long-lasting effects on the local economy. In 1865, when the Indiana General Assembly finally reconvened, victims in Harrison County and elsewhere in southern Indiana turned to what they believed to be their only source of relief—the state government.

Unfortunately, Indiana's bitter political partisanship prevented victims of Morgan's raid from receiving the swift action they needed to replace property and pay debts. Ohio's legislature had taken immediate action, evaluating and paying the majority of claims related to the raid by 1865; the U.S. Quartermaster General's office then reimbursed the state for claims against Union troops.27 In contrast, Indiana Republicans rendered
state compensation impossible, as they attempted to maintain control of the state’s government. After Democratic gains in the 1862 election and that party’s subsequent attempt to take away the governor’s control over the state Legion, Republicans left the capital in mid-session in 1863, and left the legislature without a quorum to conduct its business. For the remainder of that year and all of 1864, Gov. Morton operated the state with a combination of government and private funds.28 The legislature did not meet, and for seventeen months claimants had no chance of appealing to the state.

When the Indiana General Assembly finally met in January 1865, Republicans and Democrats jockeying for advantage concerned themselves more with political matters and issues of loyalty than with the plight of southern Indianans who had lost property in 1863.29 In his address to the assembly on January 6, Gov. Morton indicated that compensating the victims of Morgan’s raid was the duty of the state, and he called for the payments to be made from the state treasury. However, the governor also outlined the creation of a commission to assess and adjust the losses, so that the people of Indiana were not burdened with paying false or exaggerated claims. Although Morton’s charge was reasonable and straightforward, efforts to pass legislation were met with political maneuvering and squabbling. Some representatives, including many from southern Indiana, supported House Bill 13, introduced by Rep. Hiram Prather from Jennings County. But political and geographic divisions led Rep. M. F. Shuey (representing the northern towns of Elkhart and LeGrange) and others to derail discussion of the bill. Shuey demanded that a provision be added to disallow payment of claims to citizens associated with any disloyal organization (a reference to the Knights of the Golden Circle, the Sons of Liberty, and other groups of “Peace” Democrats opposed to the war). Senate Bill 15, intended to create the claims commission which Morton had requested, met with similar opposition. Senators argued about the commissioners’ pay and whether John Hunt Morgan should be referred to as a legitimate “General” or simply as “the guerrilla chief.” In spite of Gov. Morton’s statement that Indiana should bear the cost of paying the claims, Senate proceedings soon devolved into political debates over

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28Emma Lou Thornbrough, Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880 (Indianapolis, Ind., 1965), 185-87.

the responsibility of state versus federal government for wartime damage claims. When the assembly finished their winter session, neither chamber had passed any legislation. 30

When the legislature met again in 1867, southern Indiana politicians re-introduced legislation to pay for the losses. In March, the Senate committee considering House Bill 14 returned it with a recommendation for indefinite postponement. The last chance for payment during the session then lay with House Resolution 13, which simply called for the Senate and House to pass a bill allowing for payment of the claims. Opponents of the Morgan’s Raid bill believed that the question of appropriating money to pay the claims had been settled by previous votes rejecting such a proposition. One of the Senate’s final actions during the 1867 session was the passage, 27 votes in favor and 7 against, of a resolution to create a committee to assess the claims. 31 The result was a “non-binding concurrent resolution” that allowed new governor Conrad Baker to “appoint three commissioners to . . . hear, determine and adjust all claims, for losses” to Confederate, state, or national forces. Although the resolution featured detailed instructions on how the commission should gather concise statements of loss, including the witnesses’ affidavits, it contained no mention of payment of the claims. 32 The Indiana Morgan’s Raid Claims Commission (IMRCC) was charged with recording and adjusting the claims, so that when the state legislature approved funds to pay them the proper records would be in order. Ohio’s state legislature had gathered, assessed, and paid the claims in their state in one motion, but Indiana’s combustible political atmosphere prevented such a swift resolution.

On July 10, 1867, four years and a day after the skirmish between townspeople and Morgan’s cavalry, an attorney, three commissioners, and a clerk began taking affidavits and auditing claims in Corydon. Citizens swarmed to the courthouse to apply for compensation. On July 11, commission chair Thomas M. Browne wrote to Gov. Baker requesting additional


31The “Morgan Raid Indemnity Bill” would have allowed for claims up to a total of $370,000 to be paid out; if the total were higher, funds were “to be paid pro rata.” Brevier Legislative Reports, vol. 9, 1867, pp. 235-37, 396-97, 429-30, 435-37, 445-48.

32“Concurrent Resolutions in Regard to the Appointment of Commissioners to adjust the Morgan Raid Claims,” folder 5, box 2, Conrad Baker Papers, M0008, Indiana Historical Society.
staff, reporting that on the previous day the commission’s single clerk had been able to process only 28 cases out of a total 458 filed for Harrison County alone. Browne pleaded that “the work before us is elephantine” and wrote that he was “hoping that we may live long enough to see the end of it.”

The commission’s efforts, however slow, renewed citizens’ hopes that they would receive payment for their losses. In December, the IMRCC finished its work and released a report, but its recommendations were of little worth without a bill from the state legislature to pay the claims. The commission’s report noted the effort of Corydon’s defenders and the raid’s extensive toll: “The town, having been captured, was to a great extent despoiled.”

The 1869 session of the general assembly once again took up the matter of recompense for victims of the raid. The commission report was printed and distributed, and on January 25, Senator F. J. Bellamy, representing Ripley and Switzerland Counties, introduced S. 97, an appropriations bill that would make available $413,599.48 “to pay the Morgan raid claims.” In spite of support from Gov. Baker and continued petitions from citizens of southern counties, too many politicians still opposed the bill. Extensive debate in the Senate revealed a general unwillingness for the state to assume the considerable cost of paying out the claims. Some senators argued that neither the nation nor the state was responsible for recompensing wartime damages; others agreed that the claims might be just but that the federal government, and not the state, should pay them, since “the damage done to property was not attributable to Morgan and his men alone, but in a great degree to the Federal troops.” One supporter of the bill argued conversely, and correctly, that a large portion of the damage was done by rebel forces, and that the state had a responsibility to protect citizens and to compensate the losses of those who had rallied to defend Indiana. In spite of all this debate, at the end of the year’s session, no money had been allocated for those who had lost money and property—now six years earlier.

34 “Report of Morgan Raid Commissioner to the Governor,” December 31, 1869, Record Group 92, OQG, Collective Correspondence File, Morgan’s Raid, box 697, National Archives.
Through the 1870s and into the next decade, southern Indiana politicians continued to work to obtain payment for losses incurred during the raid. Strother Stockslager had been a lieutenant in the state Legion at the time of the raid. While serving in the state senate from 1874 to 1878 and as a representative to Congress from 1881 to 1885, he was among those who advocated for their constituents. In 1873, state representative William H. Pfrimmer wrote to the U.S. Quartermaster General asking for “a statement of the amount the government received for sales of horses and other property abandoned by and captured with Morgan.”36 Pfrimmer was still working on legislation to pay the claims and trying to determine how much property had been seized by the Union army and sold at auction. Because the army had confiscated all horses and equipment from the rebels, and auctioned off animals it could not use, the government had certainly kept some civilian horses or profited from their sale. In his response, the quartermaster general pointed out that although army quartermasters had recorded the number of horses confiscated and sold, the reports available through the U.S. Treasury would not differentiate between horses that Morgan’s force had brought from Kentucky and horses seized in Indiana. The federal government had no policies that took into account the possibility of enemy forces using stolen horses, and under existing law, could only reimburse citizens for supplies taken or used by the Union army—and then only if army officers had left the civilians with receipts or vouchers.37 The quartermaster general could, however, collect the IMRCC’s claim records, review them, and be ready if Congress allowed for the repayment of claims; he could also pay the claims for items taken by Union troops (with proper receipts).

Not until 1879 did the quartermaster general’s office request the IMRCC dockets in order to determine what property had been taken by Union forces. Federal law also restricted compensation to property included in the quartermaster’s stores—including horses, saddles, and fodder, but excluding damaged property and items not normally supplied to troops. (One claim requesting payment for cakes consumed by Union cavalrymen was denied because the quartermaster did not regularly supply troops

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36William H. Pfrimmer to General Meigs, January 20, 1873, Record Group 92, OQG, Collective Correspondence File, Morgan's Raid, box 696, National Archives.
37General Meigs to William H. Pfrimmer, January 28, 1873, Record Group 92, OQG, Collective Correspondence File, Morgan's Raid, box 696, National Archives.
with confections of any kind.) A list of claims with affidavits and witness testimonies would have hastened federal efforts, but obtaining the state’s records turned out to be difficult. In December 1879, the USQG’s office asked Indiana’s adjutant general to send the IMRCC records; the Hoosier official promised to send them as soon as he could have copies made. In March and again in May 1880, the USQG sent requests without receiving any reply. In July, the adjutant general claimed that the records had been “mislaid.” Eventually, the quartermaster general concluded that the adjutant general was withholding the records for some reason, and he sent a letter to Indiana’s governor, who replied that the adjutant general had already sent the appropriate records. Clerks in the quartermaster general’s office noted that they had received only six ledgers listing claimants and amounts, not the dockets that IMRCC had collected. One clerk concluded in his report: “The whole thing is imperfect, being to a large extent written in lead pencil there is not ‘abstract of evidence’ in these books.” By November 1880, the USQG had given up on receiving any additional information and ordered local agents to investigate only the 1st Class claims, i.e., property taken by Union troops. He took no immediate action on any other claims.  

Between 1880 and 1887, the U.S. Quartermaster General assessed and adjudged the claims as best he could, based on resubmitted information from the citizens of southern Indiana (including 468 claims from Harrison County). Most of the residents who lost property during the raid had kept copies of their 1867 claims; there were, however, several cases in which depositions had been lost or misplaced. All claims other than those for property lost to Union troops were marked “taking and use not proven” or “rebel.” In 1884, the Senate Commission on Claims drafted Senate Bill 527, in an attempt to pay all Morgan’s raid claims in Indiana and Ohio. Stockslager, a congressman at the time, worked in vain to gain sufficient support for the bill, which he believed did not pass because politicians from other states did not have any vested interest in compensating Hoosiers.

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38Report by M. J. Kinney, November 18, 1880, Quartermaster General’s Office, Record Group 92, OQG, Collective Correspondence File, Morgan’s Raid, box 696, National Archives. The other three classes of claims were property taken by state militia, rebel forces, or unknown parties. According to the report, the value of property taken by U.S. troops was $58,017.51, compared to $24,268.80 taken by state militia and $331,228.17 taken by Confederate troops. There were only 3 cases where claimants could not identify who took the property, and these claims totaled $35.

39Hon. Secretary of War from Samuel B. Holabird, Quartermaster General, February 11, 1884, Record Group 92, OQG, Collective Correspondence File, Morgan’s Raid, box 696, National Archives; Corydon Democrat, August 29, 1923.
Although Stockslager’s criticism was surely accurate, the passage of over twenty years since the raid’s occurrence likely factored into the resistance as well. By the 1880s, the nation was focused on industrialization, and the reconciliation between North and South was well under way. Those citizens who had lost property or money to the raiders must have shared Stockslager’s cynicism—their sacrifices and losses were long forgotten and politically inconvenient.

The fate of Indiana’s Morgan’s raid claims, and specifically those from Harrison County, is obscured by the stories of Morgan’s daring raid and the harrowing tales of civilians who witnessed it. Without help from state or federal authorities, citizens who suffered loss felt the true burden of war. For almost twenty years, many claimants continued to expect that they would be compensated. Governor Baker’s appointment of a commission and the efforts of politicians such as Stockslager and Pfrimmer must have kept up the hopes of beleaguered residents, but the claims were never settled. The system failed the “losers” in Indiana, but the failure was more than just an example of the destructive partisanship of the state’s Civil War-era politics—it demonstrates the true impact of Morgan’s raid.

Popular books, reenactments, and even a musical have focused on the entertaining and sensational aspects of John Hunt Morgan’s raid through southern Indiana. The victims of the raid may have felt excitement during the event, but its aftermath brought anxiety, uncertainty, destruction, and loss. This is the part of Morgan’s raid that is easily forgotten and not often searched for. In 1923, eighty-year-old Strother Stockslager wrote a letter to the Corydon Democrat, criticizing both the state and federal governments’ inability to redress the claims stemming from the raid. The commission’s endeavor, he wrote, had been “a false hope” that “served to buoy up the loser who struggled on as best they could with this just hope of ultimate payment.” Stockslager would not be surprised that his words were soon forgotten and lost to history.

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