



THE drum roll

385th Regular Meeting Volume 40 Number 4 Dec. 2, 2022



The December meeting will be held via ZOOM, on Friday, Dec. 2, 2022, at 7 PM.

One of the most famous of Confederate cavalry raiders was John Hunt Morgan. On November 4, Phil Angelo led the Round Table through Morgan's most famous raid—the Great Raid north of the Ohio River.

John Hunt Morgan grew up in Kentucky, and (unsurprisingly) was a superb horseman. He attended Transylvania University but wasn't a good student. Still, he made a good living in the manufacture of wool and hemp. Morgan also dealt in slaves, using some of his own slaves for factory work. He fought in the Mexican War, then between the wars he served with the Lexington Rifles, a militia unit.

When war broke out, Morgan fell in with the Confederacy, his entry being delayed by the death of his first wife, Rebecca Bruce Morgan. Once Morgan joined up, he progressed quickly to command of a cavalry regiment, then a brigade. Consisting mostly of Kentuckians, Morgan's unit operated more like a mounted infantry than cavalry. They had no sabers but used pistols and rifles. He was an inspiration to his followers, sometimes viewed as being in the vein of

Francis Marion (the "Swamp Fox" of the Revolution) or novelist Sir Walter Scott's character Ivanhoe. In other words, the ideal of a dashing cavalier. It was a different story within the framework of Confederate command; Morgan generally did not get along with his superiors, due in part to the lax discipline of both himself and his command. Although not a facile public speaker, Morgan was able to cultivate reporters, and thus got good press.

Morgan quickly made a reputation as a daring raider. His August 1862 Gallatin raid netted some 2,000 prisoners while losing only 139 men. In December—soon after marrying his second wife, Mattie Ready—Morgan launched his Christmas raid, employing 3,900 riders against the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, the lifeline of William Rosecrans's Army of the Cumberland. As Angelo pointed out, the actual military value of these raids can be debated. But they did raise Confederate morale, and tied up a number of Union troops to guard the rear areas.

These exploits set the stage for his most ambitious raid of them all: the Great Raid of summer 1863. Depending on when the start of it is placed, the operation traversed 958 or 1,100 miles, covering three states. Characteristic of Morgan's relationship with his superiors, it was undertaken directly in violation of orders from his corps (Joseph Wheeler) and army (Braxton Bragg) commanders. Additionally, he misrepresented the number of men he was depriving his army of; he reported 1,500 men as his strength, but actually headed north with 2,460 horsemen.

Striking north through Kentucky, Morgan crossed the Cumberland River and scrapped with the 25th Michigan Infantry at Tebbs Bend. On July 5, 1863, the raiders had a fight at Lebanon, Kentucky, where Morgan's 19 year old brother was killed. After this, the violence perpetrated by Morgan's command escalated.

(Ordinarily, they would parole any Federal prisoners, but instead the Lebanon prisoners were force-marched south.) Feinting at Louisville, Morgan crossed the Ohio instead, capturing steamboats that regularly plied the river as “water taxis.”

In southern Indiana, Morgan captured/paroled some 450 prisoners at Corydon on July 9. Then he moved east into Ohio, threatening Cincinnati but instead circling around it to the north. During this stretch, they traversed 85 miles in 35 hours. Typically, the raiders looted the mails when they could. They demolished newspaper presses and stole from banks, merchants, and government buildings. They seized local horses to replace their jaded mounts as needed. As Angelo noted, this had two side effects. Firstly, the quality of mounts in Morgan’s command gradually eroded as their superb Kentucky mounts were replaced with local farm animals. Secondly, the swapped-out animals improved the quality of the stock in the southern regions of Indiana and Ohio, adding Kentucky thoroughbreds into the mix.

As they proceeded, the raiders got increasingly careless, even as the Federal noose began to tighten. Unlike back home, Morgan’s men met a cool reception among the local populace (although not uniformly; at least four of the raiders would return to the area after the war, marrying local women they had met during the operation.) The plan was to recross the Ohio into West Virginia, from where they could return to Kentucky and Tennessee. But the Ohio River had risen, increasing the difficulty of crossing while allowing gunboats to operate further downstream, and the landward pursuit was closing in. On July 19, matters came to a head at Buffington Island, where 3000 Union troops, with gunboat support, reduced Morgan’s force by half and scattered the rest. About 300 made it to West Virginia, while the remainder tried to evade the Federals. Morgan himself finally surrendered a week later. He was incarcerated in the Ohio State Penitentiary, from where he later escaped. Morgan returned to raiding in 1864, with much less effectiveness, and was killed in Tennessee in September 1864.

As to the Great Raid’s effectiveness, Angelo likened it to the Doolittle Raid of World War Two, with morale effects far surpassing the physical impact. Morgan’s actual military results were negligible, but the operation did tie up 40,000 Northern troops (of varying quality), and it raised Southern morale. On the Union side, it spurred enlistment, and led to a further crackdown on Copperhead elements. (But it also

essentially removed 2,000 cavalrymen from Confederate ranks.)

On behalf of the Round Table, I would like to thank Phil Angelo for his trip through the southern Midwest with John Hunt Morgan.

Pat McCormick

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Dave Powell is not able to speak at the December meeting. He will join us in January for his talk on Tullahoma. Pat McCormick has agreed to fill in with his talk on the Confrontation at the North Anna.

The Overland Campaign of 1864 is justly famous for savage fighting of the first order, in three of its four “movements”: The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor. But the campaign’s other major interlude, the move from Spotsylvania to the North Anna River, saw much less pitched combat. Perhaps for that reason, it is relatively unknown compared to the rest of the Overland saga. Over the course of a few days in late May, Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee left the wreckage of Spotsylvania and shifted south, each of them exposing their own armies to danger while missing opportunities to damage the opposition. Ultimately, they came to blows along the North Anna River, where Lee was able to recover from some errors via an ingenious defensive strategy.

Patrick McCormick is a member in good standing of the House of Lords (former presidents of the Round Table), as well as Historian and Treasurer for the group. He has been a student of the war for almost fifty years, and is an avid battlefield tramper and wargamer, as well as a Chicago Cubs season ticket holder,

The link for the Friday meeting is in a separate PDF attached to this message. Join in hearing Pat’s talk on Friday, December 2, 2022, at 7 PM.

Please join us for the next Saturday discussion on Saturday, December 17, 2022, at 10 AM. We will continue our discussion of the Atlanta Campaign. Many have walked this area, so the discussion is great. Come join us. Link will be sent later.

Speaker lineup:

- Sept. 9: Laurie Schiller. The 29th USCT at the Crater
- Oct. 7: Jerry Allen. 8th Wisconsin
- Nov. 4: Phil Angelo. Morgan’s Raid
- Jan. 6: Dave Powell: Tullahoma
- Dec. 2: Pat McCormick. North Anna.
- Feb. 3: Mary Abroe. Civil War Centennial, Rhetoric, Reality, and the Bounds Of Selective Memory
- Mar. 3: Rob Girardi. TBA
- April 7: Michael Wynne. The Real Story of The Rock Island POW Camp. This Program will be on ZOOM.
- May 5: Wayne Rhine. The Kersage
- June 2: Banquet. David Zarefsky. The Strategy of Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address

Historian	Pat McCormick
Trustee	Tom Gavigan (2024)
Trustee	Fred Reczkowitz (2024)
Trustee	Danielle Kafka (2026)
Trustee	Vacant (2026) (Limberg)
Trustee	Alisa Corsi (2028)
Trustee	Vacant

Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Vacant
Newsletter Editor	Jerry Rodosky gjerosky@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

As a note the board has decided not to collect dues for the 2022-23 year.

Laurence Schiller is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83292409507?pwd=cGV1UStlYU96R2IyRmVVTXZKZWVJvQT09>

I will be publishing a list of books for sale. Anyone interested in these can contact me, Jerry Rodosky. Some books are spoken for, but many remain. We will be having a big book sale in late spring where we hope to reduce our holdings.

Please email Laurie or Wayne if you are interested in volunteering for an open position. Also, please think membership! We need new people!

2022-23 Officers and Trustees

President	Laurie Schiller
1 st Vice President	Wayne Rhine
2 nd Vice President	Vacant
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