

## MORGAN'S 'BEACON'



This old stable at West 7<sup>th</sup> and Main, according to one well-authenticated story, figured in Morgan's historical raid through Southern Indiana. Now a feed store but then the Sweet Gum stable owned by Capt. John J. Lyons, the building was fired by Morgan spies or sympathizers. The blaze told a detachment of Morgan's cavalry, stationed on top of the Edwardsville hill, that New Albany's defense force was alerted and too strong for the raiders to overcome and capture the important military stores here. The Confederates accordingly marched north to Salem after sacking Corydon.



Sweet Gum Stable, later Farmer's Feed & Supply Co.  
625-627 West Main Street

[725 P5 2025 - Gift of Pam Peters]

## *Country Jottings*

# How the Women of New Albany Saved the Town While the Men Watched for Morgan's Coming Over the Knobs.

By HERMAN RAVE

It was a record fire from more than one point of view which threatened New Albany during the agitated days of Morgan's invasion of Indiana. Almost every man in the city had taken his gun to repel the expected march over the Knobs into the town. Even the volunteer firemen had gone with the improvised militia, and only the women and some of the oldest men remained to guard the city.

No one feared any danger in the rear of the citizen army, ambushed in the forested hills. Morgan had left Corydon on July 9, 1863, on his march through the State. He was expected any moment to appear in the hills for a swift attack on the Indiana Falls Cities, which expected nothing less than destruction.

The men lay night and day among the dense thickets along the Edwardsville and other roads, with only scant provisions, but probably a flask in their hip pockets. They expected a fierce battle in defense of their home town. But while they hid ambuscaded in the hills, another enemy attacked from the rear.

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The Sweet Gum Stable, a large frame structure, filled with combustibles, caught fire and in a trice was a mass of flames. Nearby was the American Foundry, one of the largest establishments of its kind in the Falls Cities. It was then that the women of New Albany proved their nerve and efficiency. There were two old hand engines, and these were dragged out.

A bucket brigade was swiftly formed to fill the tanks of the old machines, and the women, their long gowns tucked up, went to work resolutely to save the town, which was threatened with a general conflagration. There was no water supply in those days but the wells and pumps at various street corners, and there women, and a few old

men worked at the pumps, and buckets filled with water flew along the line of women to return empty for more of the precious water.

Facing the heat of the flames, their clothing soaked, faces blackened with soot and smoke, hands blistered with the unwonted labor, they fought fiercely and well, holding the blaze in check. One would like to know who were the leaders and who else were in that valiant and unusual fire brigade, but unfortunately, there is no one who can tell.

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Meanwhile, someone had sent an SOS across the river to Portland, with which there was a friendly understanding of reciprocating assistance in case of fires. Portland saw the signalmen and hurried across on the ferry just in time to prevent further spread of the dangerous fire, and before long the flames were quenched and only smouldering ruins remained. The women went home to change their torn and soaked dresses and to clean up, and counted it a day's work.

It is probably the only time in history that a woman fire brigade fought and conquered a fire, and saved a town from destruction. Not much was said about it at the time, and today, so far as the Jotter knows, the only record of this fight is to be found in the history of the Fire Department, published several years ago. Today it would be a first page sensation all over the country.

[See VF INDIANA – MORGAN'S RAID for more information.]