



CIVIL WAR CASUALTIES: These two weathered gravestones in the old Cox cemetery near Hunnewell stand hidden in a grove of trees. The two men buried there, Joel Ridgeway and James Price, were two of three confederate sympathizers who were "bushwhacked" by Union soldiers near Northfork in what was

probably one of the first casualties of the Civil War in this area. The third man, James Lasley, was a great uncle of the late Lasley brothers of Shelbina. Roy Neff and Vernon Smith, of the Historical society made the stones legible enough so that these pictures could be taken.

In Cox cemetery

Weathered gravestones lonely reminders of Civil War bushwhacking

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In an old overgrown cemetery about ten miles southeast of Shelbina, two weathered gravestones stand forgotten in a confusion of undergrowth. To an unbeknown passerby, who by chance might come across the old graveyard, the two stones probably would attract no more attention than any of the other 100-year old markers in the cemetery. But one thing might possibly strike him as

being odd. Inscribed on the stones are the names of two young boys, Joel Ridgeway and James Price, who died on the same day—July 20, 1862. If the man was to further delve into the cause of death for these two boys, he would likely discover the tragic tale of one of the first "Bushwhackings" of the Civil War in this area.

It was with the intention of finding more about this incident that Roy Neff, Vernon Smith, Roland Reed, and this reporter set out Sunday afternoon to try and locate the gravestones of three men—James Price, Joel Ridgeway, and James Lasley—who were "bushwhacked" near here by Union soldiers in the early days of the Civil War. Bushwhacking, as Neff explain-

ed, was quite common in this area during the Civil War. Since Missouri was a border state, there were sympathies with both the North and the South, and because of this, bushwhackings and ambushes were much more prevalent in the area than outright clashes between opposing forces.

Although there was a great number of southern sympathizers in this area, two Union forts, one at Shelbyville and another near Northfork, were the main strongholds in Shelby and Monroe counties. It was near this latter fort, a blockhouse on the Salt River, that the bushwhacking took place. The following account of the incident appeared in an 1862 edition of the Paris Mercury.

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siderable excitement of the neighborhood, and Maj. Caldwell was petitioned to investigate the matter. He went out on Monday and endeavored to soothe and allay the excited feelings of the people, assuring them that though the persons implicated in the transaction were outside his military jurisdiction, he would see to it that the matter was properly investigated. Justice to the living and the dead, as well as the character of the federal service, demands such investigation - and presuming that such investigation will be had, it is not deemed prudent to indulge in any reflections upon the mournful transaction. Mr. Lasley was one of our most worthy and popular citizens."

Lasley, a great uncle of the late Lasley brothers of Shelbina, is supposedly buried on the Gib Styles farm near the old Cox cemetery where the Price and Ridgeway graves were discovered. The location of the Lasley grave, however, still remains a mystery. Roland Reid, who grew up in the Northfork area, took us to the old Styles farm but all that was located was an old Ragsdale plot.

The Ridgway and Price graves, however, were discovered very easily, although finding the Cox cemetery would have probably been a problem if Neff and Smith had not known its location. The old graveyard was surrounded by trees and undergrowth and lay just off an old field road. As one entered the old cemetery, the bright sunlight seem to turn to darkness as the tall trees shut out practically all light. The two stones were located within fifty feet of each other and both were still legible, although the Price marker was partially inbedded in dirt and the Ridgway stone lay broken in two on the ground.

The old Lasley house, near which the men were shot, and located only a mile from the old Union blockhouse, was torn down about three years ago. Now, only the foundations remain of the old house, although a rusty windmill and an old dilapidated barn still stand as grim reminders of a tragic incident that occurred there 108 years ago.

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"On Monday morning last our citizens were shocked by the report that James M. Lasley, a well known citizen of the county living near the North Fork Bridge, on the Hannibal-St. Joe Railroad with two young men of the same neighborhood, named James Price and Joel Ridgway, had on Sunday evening been taken prisoners and shot within sight of Mr. Lasley's residence, by a squad of some 10 or 15 men from Capt. Barnes' company stationed at the bridge. It appears that Mr. Lasley and his family, with two younger ladies from this place and the young men mentioned above, on returning home from a meeting at the village of Clinton, (now Northfork) found a squad of soldiers at this home, who immediately ordered him and the other young men to accompany them to camp. They had gone only a few minutes when the discharge of firearms were heard, and soon the prisoners mentioned above were all badly shot and in the last agonies of death, within less than 100 yards of the house and their captors gone. As a matter of course it produced con-