



Civil War Came to Garrett County

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 1863 THE CIVIL WAR CAME TO GARRETT COUNTY. THE CRACK OF A UNION SENTRY'S WARNING SHOT PIERCED THE QUIET OF AN OTHERWISE TRANQUIL OAKLAND SUNDAY. HAVING THE GOOD MANNERS TO WAIT UNTIL CHURCH SERVICES HAD ENDED, CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS INVADED THE TOWN UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF COLONEL ASHER HARMAN. THE RAID TOOK THE TOWN BY COMPLETE SURPRISE - EVERYONE FROM THE CITIZENS EXITING CHURCH TO THE UNION SOLDIERS STATIONED AT NEARBY FORT ALICE WERE SHOCKED BY THE SITE OF THE SOLDIERS IN GRAY.

As the citizens scurried in the streets, seeking the safety of their homes, the Confederate soldiers took food from hotels and stores for themselves and for their animals. Some ate dinner at private homes, as the impeccable manners of the Rebel soldiers were hard to refuse. Some townsfolk were even reimbursed for their hospitality with Confederate currency.

At the time of the invasion, the Union soldiers stationed in the town were all either at church, relaxing or out hunting groundhogs. That particular past time had earned them the nickname "Groundhog Company", although they were officially known as Company O of the Sixth West Virginia Infantry. They were unpopular with the citizens due to an overall lack of patriotism and vigilance. Fort Alice was located between Oakland and Crellin. Made of earth and wood, the fort's purpose was to protect the vital Baltimore & Ohio railroad bridge from Rebel forces.

With the Union soldiers caught off guard and outnumbered, it was an easy victory for the Confed-

erates. Fort Alice was taken without bloodshed. Colonel Harman later reported that he "surprised and captured 57 men, with two commissioned officers, and paroled them. Destroyed a railroad bridge east of town and the railroad and turnpike bridges over the Youghiogheny River." They then pushed as far north into Garrett County as Deep Creek before heading west to take Kingwood and Morgantown.

The remains of Fort Alice can still be seen today. A historical marker northwest of town indicates the location of a path that runs parallel to the Yough that leads to what is left of the fort. To the casual observer it may appear to be nothing more than a large wooded hill. Soon it will be the site of a new excavation project that will be conducted by the Archaeology Department at West Virginia University. The town of Oakland now owns the land and hopes it will serve as an educational feature for residents and visitors.