CIVIL WAR

In 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States, and the wrangle between North and South over slavery reached a crisis. The South feared Lincoln's election meant the end of Southern political influence in Congress. The crisis deepened and on April 12, 1861 at Charleston, S.C., Confederate artillery fired at Fort Sumter. New Albany read the news with dismay. The Civil War had begun . . .

Fire bells all over New Albany rang out wildly on July 8, 1863. The sound reverberated through the streets with a thunderous din. Volunteer firemen rushed to their stations to man the hand drawn fire engines – certain that the whole town was in danger of being burned to the ground.

But the firemen rushed through the streets looking for a fire they could not find. There was no fire. The bells were warning of something more ominous. General John Hunt Morgan, the dreaded Confederate raider, had crossed the Ohio River into Harrison County with a troop of cavalry. The Civil War was coming to New Albany's front door.

The nation had been at war for two years when Morgan and his men made their daring raid into Indiana. Over 1,000 volunteers from Floyd County were serving in the Union armies. New Albany's schools had been closed and converted to hospitals for wounded soldiers. The Floyd County Fair Ground at Silver Street and Charlestown Road had been converted into a military training post.

The war had closed the Mississippi River to steamboat traffic and New Albany's ship yards were building iron-clad gunboats instead of the beautiful steamers which made New Albany famous.

But despite this, the fighting had seemed far away. Now Confederate troops were less than 30 miles from the city. A New Albany gunboat, the Springfield, had steamed to Mauckport to prevent Morgan's troops from crossing the river. But its one gun was of short range and it had been forced to retreat from the Confederate artillery fire.

Soon after the fire bells had sounded the alarm, State militiamen from New Albany and Jeffersonville were stationed in the Knobs, expecting Morgan to attack the two cities to destroy the Union Army supplies stored there. But Morgan headed for Corydon and Salem instead. Only a few of Morgan's men entered Floyd County and camped overnight near Greenville.

Morgan rode on across Indiana and Ohio before he was captured by hard-riding Union cavalrymen, and New Albany settled down to two more years of war. The old Monon Railroad depot at Pearl and Oak was a beehive of activity with troops and Army supplies constantly arriving from the North. A pontoon bridge was built across the river from the foot of East Fifth Street to Portland. Troops marched across it to continue the journey south. Louisville residents once used it to flee to Indiana when they feared the Confederates were about to attack the Kentucky city.

And on a quiet, tree-shaded area outside of town, [New Albany's National cemetery](#) was established in 1863 as the last resting place for soldiers who gave their lives for their country.

When the long, bloody struggle ended in 1865, New Albany veterans returned home to a city that was rapidly changing. The war had stopped the boat building and it was never important to the city again. The Robert E. Lee,

the most famous New Albany boat, was built after the war, but it was almost the last. In place of the steamboat building, the city entered a new industrial age that brought the glass works, the iron foundry, the woolen mill, and other factories to the city. New Albany continued to grow and to be an important place on the Ohio River.

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