The federal authorities levied a tax on the people of Shelbina and vicinity amounting to about $20,000 to pay for the damage done by Anderson and his band of men. This was done under an old general order requiring that "citizens of disloyal sympathies" should be held accountable for all damage done by rebel raiders to the property of "loyal men." There was much consternation among the people when they learned they were to suffer for something they could no more help than the people of Illinois, and the $20,000 was a large sum. The Catholic priest of the parish, Father D. S. Phelan, volunteered to go to St. Louis to see General Rosecrans about the matter. He did go and made such an effective intercession that the General revoked the order and removed the tax from the people.

The town was often disturbed by alarms of various kinds, such as "Bushwhackers are coming," "the town is to be destroyed," etc. At times the merchants actually boxed up their stock and moved it to Quincy until the danger was over, when they returned to Shelbina and resumed business. In spite of this, the merchants made money. Prices were constantly advancing, and seemingly people had money to spend. Calico sold at 50c a yard, muslin at 85c. Hogs were $8 and $9 cwt., and other produce proportionately priced. People had no confidence in greenbacks and sought to convert them into goods or something else of value. Some people bought gold and hoarded it.

The war seemed to leave an era of prosperity in its wake and Shelbina grew in both business and population. One of the federal generals active in wartime, settled in Shelbina, established a bank, and erected a $15,000 residence here. This was Brigadier General John F. Benjamin.

Capture of Tom Sidener: An incident in the war in 1862 concerned a family living near Shelbina, and was long remembered. Captain Thomas Sidener, 31, son of P. A. and Mary Smith Sidener, a handsome young man living south of town, had served with Col. Joe Porter, a Confederate, and was in charge of a company of men under Porter at the battle of Kirksville. Most of his command was killed and young Sidener was discouraged and thoroughly tired of war. He decided to leave the service and go into Illinois where he would be able to start a new life.

He dressed in women's clothes (he had long hair) and accompanied by his brother, Jackson, and two relatives, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Gillispie (later Mrs. Thomas Ragsdale) and Miss Mary Jane Patterson (later Mrs. John A. Magruder) set out in a carriage for Canton, ostensibly on a pleasure trip. They went by way of Shelbyville and encountered some federal officers who were stationed there.

After passing through Shelbyville they were stopped by Col. John F. Benjamin at a point about two miles east of Shelbyville, who thought they might be taking some food or supplies to someone in hiding. Thereupon he ordered the carriage and its occupants to return to Shelbyville. Upon arriving there the passengers were forced to alight so the carriage might be searched. In so doing, Captain Sidener's boots (which he had neglected to exchange for women's shoes) came into sight and he was promptly arrested by Col. Benjamin, and the ladies and Jackson Sidener held for questioning.

Sidener was sent to the military jail in Palmyra where he arrived not long before General McNeill's infamous order that resulted in the Palmyra Massacre.

When McNeill ordered ten prisoners from the Palmyra jail to be shot, Sidener was picked up by Provost Marshall Strachan to be one. When told of his fate, Captain Sidener took the news bravely. He was young and handsome, of strong physique, and single. He was of a prominent farm family and was about to be married. In fact, he had his wedding suit tailored and ready for the occasion. He had much to live for, but only a few hours of time left. In the remaining time he wrote a last letter to his sweetheart, Miss Mae Martin, a lovely girl from south of Hunnewell. He also wrote a letter to his friends back home.

Captain Sidener died bravely as he had lived. Attired in his fine black broadcloth wedding suit, white vest and immaculate shirt, he refused a blindfold. He was truly a handsome man with long wavy hair falling to his shoulders. To the executioners he said, "aim here," placing his hand on his left breast. His orders were well carried out. He sprang forward, falling face up, hands clasped on his breast, dead.

The story has been handed down in his family that General McNeill sent word to another brother of Tom, Noah Sidener, that if he would bring $1,000 to Palmyra he could save Capt. Tom's life. Noah got the sum of money together and rode horseback to Palmyra. He arrived only to find the prisoners had been taken to the fairgrounds for execution. He offered the money to McNeill and even offered more than the specified thousand. McNeill laughed at him and told him he might watch the execution. Noah refused, but claimed his brother's body and brought it home. Captain Tom was buried in a temporary grave for the duration of the war. The letter he wrote to his friends was read at the funeral by Miss Prudence Helen Grout (a relative of the family) and there was not a dry eye in the church. After the war was over the body was exhumed and taken to the family plot at Middle Grove, south of Madison.

Many relatives of Captain Tom Sidener live in and around Shelbina. Among them are Mrs. Raymond Conway, a granddaughter of Noah Sidener; Mrs. Annie Sidener Ash, Walter Sidener, the family of Weldon Ragsdale; the family of Thornton Smith and probably others.

U. S. Grant Guards Bridge Near Shelbina: General and President Ulysses S. Grant began his military career near Shelbina. In the first year of the war it had become an established fact that Missouri soil would be stained with the blood of war and the federal government decided that the Hannibal-St. Joseph Railroad was most important to its cause. The road was needed to transport troops, provisions, and munitions. It was also necessary for the transmission of messages. The wooden railroad bridges were especially vulnerable and it was decided they must be carefully guarded.

Accordingly, Col. U. S. Grant, commanding the 21st Illinois Infantry, and Col. John M. Palmer, commanding the 14th Illinois Infantry, were sent to guard the Salt River Railroad Bridge about 6 miles east of Shelbina. The bridge had been burned a short time ago and they were to guard the construction of the new one. While Grant was located at the Salt River bridge he erected a block house which stood for many years. He was described by Edgar White, a newspaper man, as a rather stout, short, quiet man, usually with a cigar in his mouth. He had only a handful of men and was so quiet and easy going that nobody thought he amounted to shucks. They paid little attention to him until they began to notice he didn't let his soldiers rob hen houses and steal horses. If anyone missed anything all he had to do was to complain to this quiet, stolid fellow and the possessions were returned with an apology.

Soon Grant had more friends than anybody. He knew the settlers were Confederate sympathizers and he respected their feelings and never talked politics or got into controversies. He and his men protected the railroad at the big bridge and made the bushwhackers afraid to attack. That was his assignment. Soon people began to go down to the bridge and get acquainted with him. He talked to them about fishing and hunting and woodcraft and the everyday things in which the natives were interested. He seemed to prefer to listen than to talk. He always remembered what was told him. There were three Union commanders within a range of 60 miles and Grant was the only one who made the history books.

Grant extended an invitation to the Southern men (who had