

trying to get back home. Bolin demanded to see the fugitive, and Thomas climbed down and shook hands with the outlaw. This seemed to allay the bushwhacker's suspicions.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Foster had prepared dinner and they all shared the meal. After dinner, Bolin filled his pipe and, to light it, stooped before the fireplace to get a live coal. It was an opportune moment. Thomas grabbed a plow coulter, fortuitously left nearby, and struck Bolin over the head, knocking him unconscious. A few more blows to the head insured the infamous bushwhacker's demise and ended the ordeal.

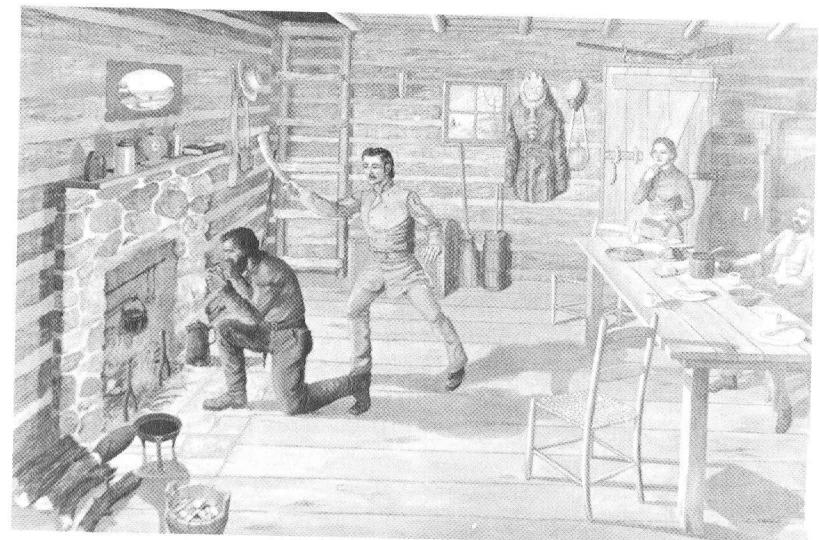
When the news of Bolin's death reached the garrison at Forsyth, a conveyance was dispatched to the scene immediately, to bring the body to Forsyth, enroute to Ozark and Springfield. On Feb. 2, 1863, three Union soldiers from the 19th Iowa Infantry, stationed at Forsyth when Bolin's body was brought in, committed to their separate diaries, in almost identical words, a description of the occasion:⁹

Boland (Bolin) was a noted character before the breaking out of this rebellion & was a bloodthirsty villain and the war furnished him a pretext for carrying on his deeds of crime, rapine and murder--he espoused the cause of the South and woe betide the Union man who was so unfortunate as to fall into his hands. With a gang as desperate as himself he pillaged & committed every atrocity in his and Several counties adjoining and Scarce a dwelling but what was pillaged by him -- he boasted of Killing forty Union men -- a boast I fear too true -- Old men of decrepitude and youth of Sixteen alike fared a bloody fate at his hands -- his name inspired terror and families fled at his approach. Several attempts were made to rid the country of this monster but without success.

I went to see the murdered murderer. He was a large sinewy (sic) man and must have been of great strength and indurence (sic) -- his hair was matted with blood and clotted over his face rendering him an object of disgust and horror. There were hundreds of men who gloated over him many of whom he had grieveously (sic) injured. Many of the Missouri troops who were acquainted with him came to rejoice over his end.

Thus perished a monster -- a man of blood who had no mercy for others and died a death of violence and today hundreds gaze upon his unnatural corse (sic) and exult that his prowess is at an end. He will be sent to Springfield as proof (of) his death so that the reward offered may be claimed by the proof.¹⁰

Bolin's head is believed to have been severed from his body and taken to Ozark and possibly Springfield. There are different versions as to how, when and where the beheading occurred. Some say it took place at the scene of the murder when he began to regain consciousness, but none of the three Iowa soldiers mentioned in their diaries that Bolin's body and head had been separated, a fact they surely would have noted had the beheading occurred before the body reached Forsyth.



Death comes to the infamous Alf Bolin (Painted by John Arnold)

The beheading, reportedly accomplished with an axe wielded by Colbert Hays, and the burial of the headless body, are believed to have taken place after the party accompanying the corpse left Forsyth. The approximate site of the burial, as verified by Sam Boswell and Douglas Mahnkey, would have been less than a mile north of town on the old Mail Trace road, the route the guards would have traveled to Ozark.

There is evidence supporting a grisly legend that Bolin's head was tied to a pole and paraded through the streets of Ozark, and that after the excitement of the parade subsided, the head was erected on a post, in public view in front of the army post at Ozark, and children threw rocks at it.¹¹

John F. Bolin, and His Wily Brothers

Alf Bolin's demise did not lessen, to any noticeable extent, the guerrilla warfare on the border. Nor did the name "Bolin" cease to strike terror in the hearts of the Unionists. In the eastern borderlands, John F. Bolin, perhaps a relative of Alfred Bolin, brought upon himself the wrath of the Federals for the Round Pond massacre and other deadly strikes against the North. After incidents in which the Federals almost hanged other men, mistakenly identified as the guerrilla leader, John Bolin was actually captured Feb. 4, 1864. While he was being held in irons awaiting trial and execution, Union troops were unofficially allowed to take him from the guardhouse and hang him.¹² Despite the untimely end of John Bolin, the fearful name, in the person of John's brother, Nathan Bolin, and another brother, lived on to haunt the Unionists.

In mid-May, following John Bolin's execution, the "Bolin Boys"