

Massacre at Lawrence

“He was a living, breathing, aggressive, all-powerful reality, riding through the midnight, laying ambushes by lonely roadsides, catching marching columns by the throat, breaking in upon the flanks and tearing a suddenly surprised rear to pieces; vigilant, merciless, a terror by day and superhuman. If not a supernatural, thing when there was upon the earth blackness and darkness . . .” Thus was the description of William Clark Quantrill given by Major John Newman Edwards, CSA, (January 4, 1839 – May 4, 1889) who was famed General Joseph O. Shelby’s adjutant during the American Civil War, an author, a journalist and the founder of the Kansas City Times. He is perhaps best known for contributing to the folk hero status of outlaw Jesse James.

One of the most infamous figures in the War of Northern Aggression, erroneously known as the Civil War or the War Between the States, Quantrill spent his early life as teacher and a gambler. Shortly after the war began, Quantrill assembled a ragtag band of guerrillas and began harassing and killing Union soldiers and sympathizers along the Missouri-Kansas border. The Confederate Army gave him a commission as a captain as a result of his efforts. The Union Army, however, labeled him an outlaw and viewed his tactics as illegal and even murderous.

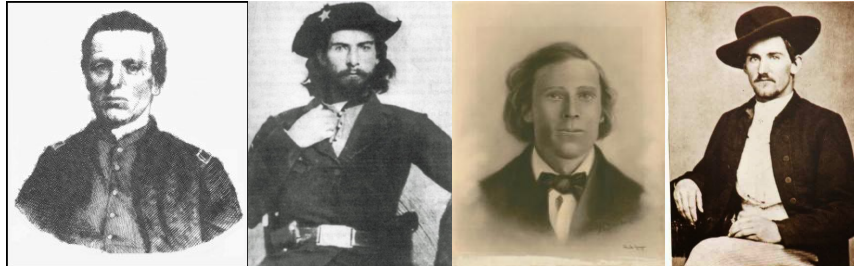


William Clark Quantrill

In July of 1863, the Federals arrested nine women accused of spying or otherwise aiding and abetting the bushwhackers. Among the nine were sixteen-year-old Mary Ellen Anderson and fourteen-year-old Josephine Anderson. Ten-year-old Janie Anderson had nowhere else to go, so she was allowed to accompany her older sisters. The Federals confined the females on the second floor of a three-floor building in Kansas City. An adjoining building was used as a guardhouse and the soldiers removed supporting posts and partitions to make more room. The building began to sag against the prison building. On August 13TH, the building collapsed and buried the female prisoners in the rubble. Josephine Anderson was killed, and both her sisters were crippled and disfigured for life. The Anderson women were the sisters of William “Bloody Bill” Anderson and he vowed to kill every Union soldier he met to avenge the death of his sister.

Another act that required revenge by the Missouri rebels occurred two years earlier when Union General James Lane and his band of Kansas Redlegs raided the town of Osceola, Missouri, killing twenty people, robbing the banks of \$8,000, burning the city and stealing hundreds of wagons and horses.

On August 10, 1863, Quantrill held a meeting with all of his lieutenants at his camp near Blue Springs, Missouri. Notable among his lieutenants that day were George Todd, William “Bloody Bill” Anderson, Andy Blunt, Dick Yeager, Bill Gregg, Ol Shepard, Little Archie Clements and several others, some of the most psychopathic killers of the Civil War.



L. to R.: George Todd, Bloody Bill Anderson, Dick Yeager, Archie Clements

Quantrill caused a great deal of alarm with good cause when he announced, “Let’s go to Lawrence.” Then he went on to say, “Lawrence is the great hotbed of abolitionism in Kansas. All the plunder, or the bulk of it, stolen from Missouri, will be found stored away in Lawrence. And we can get more revenge and more money there than anywhere else.”

Raiding Lawrence held a lot more risk than just talking about it. The city was thirty miles inside the Kansas border and had a population of near 3,000 people. The Missouri-Kansas border was well covered by Federal troops. All of the countryside between the border and Lawrence, and the surrounding area would be up in arms before Quantrill and his men could get there. The Lawrence Home Guards would be fortified inside brick buildings and waiting to ambush them. Even if they could get to Lawrence and destroy the town, the odds of them getting back into Missouri again would be really slim. Attempting this raid would surely spell disaster and that caused the alarm among Quantrill’s lieutenants.

Quantrill responded with these concerns by telling them that he and two of his men had recently scouted the border and ridden almost to Lawrence. The scouting effort revealed to them that the Federal border posts were weak and widely separated. The country between the crossing of the border and Lawrence was sparsely populated. By traveling fast and by night their raid on Lawrence would be a total surprise. Dick Yeager had managed to get from Council Grove back to Missouri, and Lawrence would be easier. Because of the size and the distance inside the border, the Federals would not be expecting a raid on Lawrence.

The spirited meeting with the Quantrill lieutenants lasted twenty-four hours. Every aspect of the raid that could be imagined was winnowed out. Every lieutenant finally agreed to the plan. Some of them still had some concerns, but as Quantrill pointed out, ‘If you never risk, you never gain.

The men had not been informed of the upcoming raid, but they sensed that something big was about to happen. They were busy cleaning their weapons, repairing harnesses, molding bullets and making thousands of cartridges. A few of the men were guessing that it would be a raid on Lawrence, but most suspected that Kansas City was the target.

Quantrill sent Fletch Taylor and John Noland, a black man, to spy on Lawrence. After several days in Lawrence they returned with good news. The small Union force had moved to the north of the Kansas River, there were no pickets on the roads leading into Lawrence, and the citizens believed that guerrillas would not dare to attack the town.

On August 18, 1863, in the early morning, the guerrillas left their camp near Blue Springs and headed south to a farm northeast of Lee's Summit, Missouri. On the way, George Todd took a few men and rode to the house of a man named Wallace. Todd accused Wallace of providing information to the Federals. Todd drew a pistol and Wallace pleaded for mercy. Rather than shooting him he struck Wallace across the face with the revolver and told him that if he ever heard of Wallace talking to the Federals again he would return and kill him. He then entered Wallace's home and played the organ for several minutes.

After a brief rest Quantrill resumed the march and stopped for the night on the Blackwater River. He was joined there by Anderson with thirty or forty men and Blunt with one hundred men. When he brought them up-to-date on the news from Lawrence he asked if they still wanted to participate in the mission. They answered in the affirmative.

In the morning the bushwhackers turned westward and with a circle of scouts watching for Federals they marched slowly and quietly. At noontime they camped near Lone Jack and here Quantrill finally informed the men of the planned raid on Lawrence. He said, "Boys, you will have to go through a lot, there is great danger ahead of us, there will be troops behind us, troops in front of us. There may be very few of us that get back alive. Now if there is any man in the outfit that don't want to go, now is your time to fall out, for after we leave here there will be no falling out or turning back." About a dozen men took him up on the offer and two of them were from his own band.

They began their nighttime march and only halted a few times throughout the night. South of the Blue River they accidentally met up with Colonel John Holt in command of one hundred Confederate recruits. Holt accepted an offer to join the bushwhackers and give his men a little experience "under fire." Then they camped at daylight on the middle fork of the Grand River about four miles from the Kansas line. They were joined by fifty guerrillas from Cass and Bates Counties, bringing Quantrill's force to approximately four hundred fifty men, thus becoming the largest guerrilla band of the Civil War under one command.

At 3 P.M. on August 20, the band decamped and three hours later they crossed the line into Kansas, five miles south of Aubry, Kansas, the location of Quantrill's first raid in Kansas. Captain J. A. Pike commanded a garrison of one hundred Federal cavalry. A scout informed Pike of the presence of the guerrillas. Pike forwarded the info to other border posts. He did not make any attempt to deter the guerrillas. Even worse, he failed to inform any of the towns to the west of the approaching guerrillas. Had he performed either of these basic tasks the pending Lawrence Massacre might have been avoided.

Ten miles inside the Kansas border and two and one-half miles from Squiresville, they again halted to wait night fall. On the march again, around 11:00 that night, they

reached the town of Gardner. They were spotted by Union soldiers in Gardner and were asked who they were and where they were going. Many of the guerrillas were wearing captured Union uniforms and claimed to be a Union cavalry unit on the way to Lawrence to get their horses shod.

The next town in their nightly march was the small German village of Hesper and it was here that Quantrill began forcing locals to act as guides. He was familiar with the area but knew a wrong turn in the darkness would lead to disaster. When a guide was no longer of use to Quantrill he would shoot him. Ten men lost their lives in this manner.

Around 2 or 3 A.M, the bushwhackers captured a Missouri refugee named Joseph Stone. George Todd was about to shoot him when he was stopped by Quantrill because they were now so close to Lawrence that a gunshot might alert the town. Todd then ordered a new recruit, Sam Clifton, who was of suspected disloyalty to beat Stone to death. A young man by the name of Frank Smith was so sickened by this activity he almost fell off his horse. By the next nightfall he would consider acts like this as normal business.

On the crest of a summit overlooking Lawrence, Quantrill ordered a halt and sent Gregg and five men to reconnoiter the town. At this moment a few of the guerrillas lost their nerve. "Let's give it up—this is too much." An angry Quantrill said, "You can do as you please—I'm going to Lawrence. Then without waiting for Gregg's scouting party, he ordered his men to advance.

The bushwhackers rode into town about five o'clock in the morning. The streets were deserted and most of the town was still asleep. Quantrill dispatched Holt and his recruits to the east side of town and Blunt and his men to the west side. Quantrill then took his outfit toward the river. He had gone only a short distance when they discovered tents occupied by twenty-two Union recruits. They began to trample and fire into the tents, killing seventeen of the troops. One of Anderson's followers, Larkin Skaggs, took the camp's flag, tied it to the tail of his horse and dragged it through the dust. They next attacked a camp of black recruits. The recruits were forewarned by the attack on the white camp and most managed to escape.

After destroying the camps, Quantrill's group, a yelling horde of long-haired, wild looking men, riding with reckless skill on magnificent horses rode up Massachusetts Street with their six-shooters firing away. Quantrill ordered his men to turn around and surround the Eldridge Hotel. Having been destroyed in 1856, the hotel had been rebuilt and was now a four-story brick with iron grilles on the ground story. Captain A. R. Banks, Provost Marshall of Kansas, was a resident in the hotel. Under a white flag, he was allowed to speak with Quantrill who told him the guests would be taken to the Whitney House Hotel and would not be harmed. One drunken guerrilla did fire into the group killing one man.

Quantrill then ordered his men to spread out over the town. He screamed loudly "Kill! Kill! And you will make no mistake. Lawrence should be thoroughly cleansed, and the only way to cleanse it is to kill! Kill!"

As the guerrillas rode off with wild shouts of glee to carry out their orders, Quantrill and a large number of his men entered the hotel. As the guests fled down the stairs they were met by armed raiders who relieved them of their money and valuables. Other bushwhackers ascended the stairs to ransack the rooms. They found one door locked and ordered the people out. Three easterners inside refused to come out. When shots fired through the door wounded one of them, they quickly changed their minds. When the hotel was completely looted the gang set it on fire. It has since been restored a

couple of times and the Eldridge Hotel sits on the same spot today. Famous for being haunted, the hotel still does a brisk business.



Eldridge Hotel Today

Quantrill had once been a resident of Lawrence and he stayed at the Whitney House, where he was known as Charley Hart. Nathan Stone, the owner, had befriended him during his stay and his wife and daughter had once nursed him through a long sickness. He set up a headquarters in the hotel, had the Stones prepare breakfast and, as he ate, talked with the Stones, and other acquaintances, about the old times.

After breakfast he took a buggy ride through town. On all sides buildings were burning, dead and dying men and boys lying in the streets and women were grief stricken. His followers were everywhere, yelling, shooting and plundering.

There were individual scenes of tragedy and horror everywhere in Lawrence. At the Johnson House, hangout of the hated Lawrence Red Legs, all male residents were lined up and shot down by a hail of revolver shots.

Dr. J. F. Griswald, State Senator S. M. Thorpe, Harlow W. Baker, a merchant, and Josiah Trask, co-editor of the Lawrence *Journal*, were shot down in a group after being told their lives would be spared if they gave themselves up.

A bushwhacker chased Judge Louis Carpenter through his home and into the backyard, firing at him all the way. The judge was finally wounded and fell to the ground. His wife threw her body over his in an attempt to save him. The raider lifted her arm up and shot the Judge in the head. Mrs. Carpenter's face was covered in blood and brains.

Guerrillas riddled Edward Fitch with bullets in his doorway and left his body there while flames were devouring the structure and in sight of the wife and children. The guerrillas refused to allow Mrs. Fitch to remove the body. One of the killers removed Fitch's boots put them on his own feet. All of this occurred because the Fitch children had placed a small U. S. flag on a shed in the backyard.

Two eighteen-year-old boys, James Perine and James Eldridge, working as clerks in the country store on Massachusetts Street, were asleep in the back of the store when

the massacre began. A group of raiders entered the store and captured the boys and ordered them to open the safe. They were promised that if they did so they would not be harmed. As soon as the safe popped open both boys were shot dead.

One man was killed while he provided his killer with a drink of water. Another was killed when his crying baby revealed their hiding place in a cornfield. The child remained crying in his dead father's arms.

Mr. J. W. Thornton was fleeing his burning home when he was shot three times in his hip. He continued his flight until another bullet dropped him to the ground. His wife tried to shield him from further bullets until a guerrilla pushed her aside and shot him again. When the guerrilla saw that Thornton was still breathing he yelled, "I can kill you!" and began beating him on the head with his pistol butt. Despite all these wounds and beating, Thornton lived for many years, but was horribly disfigured and crippled.

Some bushwhackers shot and injured D. W. Palmer and another man as they stood in the door to Palmer's shop. Then they set fire to the shop, bound the wounded pair and threw them into the burning building where they burned to death begging for mercy and screaming in agony.

The summer before the Lawrence raid Quantrill had led a raid on Shawneetown, Kansas. William Laurie had been captured by the guerrillas but managed to escape. He then moved to a farm near Lawrence where he lived with his wife and his brother, John. On August 20, 1863, the Lauries went into Lawrence and planned to return to the farm the next day. The following morning when they heard the shooting they tried to flee, but both were wounded. Mrs. Laurie pleaded with the raiders to spare the brothers. When it was obvious the plea was falling on deaf ears, John asked them to spare his brother. One of the bushwhackers recognized William as the man who escaped in Shawneetown. The killer said, "We are not so particular about you, but that fellow, we will put him through." The guerrilla then killed both brothers and turned to the wife saying, "We are fiends from hell! Get back into the house, or by heavens, we will serve you the same!"

Anderson personally killed many citizens and his band was by far the most blood-thirsty of the bushwhackers. Peyton Long, in Quantrill's band shot down more men than any other. Three other Quantrill members were close behind him.

The recruits under Colonel Holt generally abstained from the killing. One of the young men told a Lawrence woman that he was sorry he had come on the raid. Some of the recruits showed their unfired weapons to prove that they had not killed anyone. Some of the raiders even helped the women folk remove furniture before firing the house. No women were killed or raped.

The menfolk employed various tactics in trying to stay alive. They hid in cellars, cornfields, underbrush, and under the board sidewalks. Some were spared when they claimed to be southern sympathizers and advanced the claims of Masonic brotherhood, others aided the raiders in various ways, and even offering large sums of money. One man paid \$1,000 to a guerrilla to spare his wife and was killed immediately afterward by a different bushwhacker.

The most famous Lawrence citizen to escape death was Senator Jim Lane. Jim Lane was one of the leaders of the Union raid on the massacre at Osceola, Missouri two years earlier. His capture was one of Quantrill's primary objectives for the raid. He wanted to take Lane back to Missouri and burn him at the stake. Because his black scout, Noland, had informed Quantrill that Lane was not in town he did not go immediately to Lane's house. Lane had returned a day or two before the raid. Knowing he would be a primary target, Lane fled into a nearby cornfield wearing only his nightshirt. When

Quantrill arrived at the Lane home, Mrs. Lane informed him that the senator was not at home. This confirmed the scout's information and Quantrill did not do a search. But he did set fire to the fine new home and it was reported that there were two pianos in the parlor that had been stolen by Lane in the Osceola raid.

Just before 9:00 in the morning, a lookout on Mount Oread reported to Quantrill that dust to the east indicated that troops were coming. Quantrill immediately gave the order to reassemble and return to Missouri. Almost as quickly as they appeared, they vanished, with the exception of several that were too drunk. Several of those were hanged the next day.

The raid lasted less than 4 hours, but the devastation was immense and heart-breaking to the survivors and all members of the families of the victims. Estimates of the number of dead men and boys range between one hundred sixty and one hundred ninety. The figure is probably much closer to one hundred sixty. Of the approximate 450 bushwhackers, forty were killed. The only bushwhacker killed in the raid was Larkin Skaggs and his body was treated the same as he had treated the U.S. flag. Besides those hung the next day, the remainder were killed in skirmishes as they raced to get back to the safety of home.

Lawrence was almost totally destroyed. The business center along Massachusetts Street was left in a pile of smoking rubble. Every business had been destroyed. One hundred homes had been burned and one hundred more damaged by fire and almost every home had been pillaged. Bodies littered the street, sidewalks, yards and garden. Among the embers and ashes, bones were visible. The smell of burning flesh was oppressive. And some bodies were burned so badly they could not be identified.



MEMORIAL IN OAK HILL CEMETERY LAWRENCE
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY CITIZENS
WHO DEFENSELESS FELL
VICTIMS TO THE INHUMAN FEROCITY OF BORDER
GUERRILLAS LED BY THE INFAMOUS QUANTRILL
IN HIS RAID UPON LAWRENCE
AUGUST 21ST, 1863