



Historians Corner, Paul R Petersen

Paul is the Author of *Quantrill of Missouri*, *Quantrill in Texas*, *Quantrill at Lawrence* and *Lost Souls of the Lost Township*. Petersen is a retired U.S. Marine Corps master sergeant and a highly decorated infantry combat veteran of the Vietnam War, Operation Desert Storm, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is a member of the William Clarke Quantrill Society, the James-Younger Gang Association, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Jackson County and Missouri State Historical Societies.

The Danville Raid

Often the stories in history that we've read have proven to be untrue. Such is the case of many Civil War stories that we've read throughout our lives. What proves to be the case is that the most sensational accounts that are eagerly repeated are those that are the most patently false. Blatant lies from the Yankee press are to blame for much of the misunderstanding. Yankee accounts differ radically from actual truth. Such is the account of the October 14, 1864 raid on Danville, Missouri. It wasn't townsfolk who gave resistance but Federal soldiers. Northern accounts would like to promote the fact that citizens were killed when they purposefully omit the military ranks and units of those killed.

Most of Quantrill's guerrillas had ridden to Little Dixie around Cooper and Boone Counties awaiting the arrival of General Sterling Price's eight brigades in his last desperate attempt to free Missouri from Federal occupation. They were to be used as scouts and advance elements to disrupt the Union's ability to react to Price's campaign. The guerrillas were to destroy the enemies transportation and communication links. They were ordered to destroy the railroad tracks which could bring in Federal reinforcements and were to tear down telegraph lines and attack enemy scouting parties.

Meeting Price in Boonville on October 10, was Captain William T. "Bloody Bill" Anderson with his company of men. Another attempt at Yankee propaganda was circulated that Anderson's men rode into Boonville with human scalps hanging from their bridle bits when in actuality it was local guerrilla leader Captain John Pringle, a large redheaded guerrilla leader with his own group of partisans who had accompanied Anderson into Boonville. Historians must remember that it was just days before at Centralia when Anderson admonished some Federal prisoners that, "You Federals have just killed six of my men, scalped them, and left them on the prairie," and ended by saying, "I have never allowed my men to do this."

Riding in Anderson's company were brothers Dick, James, and Isaac Berry, from Callaway County, Missouri. When they joined Quantrill their fifty-nine-year-old father remained at home to look after their sisters. Federals from the neighboring town of Danville in

from the neighboring town of Danville in Montgomery County reportedly raped the girls: twenty-year-old Catherine, eighteen-year-old Nancy, fourteen-year-old Elizabeth, and eleven-year-old Sallie Ann. As a consequence, they convinced Anderson to let them make a raid on Danville to avenge their sisters. Anderson did not go on the raid as some accounts report but was busy consulting with Price, but he did allow Lieutenant Archie Clement to take a platoon of men and exact revenge for this crime. Clement was as vengeful as the Berry brothers. Federal militiamen had burned the home of Clement's mother, leaving her destitute. Besides the Berry brothers Clement chose brothers Tuck, Tom, and Woot Hill, Richard West, Theodore Cassell, John Maupin, Moses Huffaker, Ben Broomfield, Gooley Robinson, Bill Stuart, Frank James and a handful of other volunteers. They were all heavily armed with no fewer than four revolvers apiece and all rode the finest thoroughbred horses.

Danville was garrisoned by a small detachment of Federals from Company C, 9th Regiment, Missouri State Militia. Making their way outside of Danville the guerrillas stopped to glean information from Southern sympathizers. They were provided detailed intelligence information about the town. They were told that Union troops were stationed in town and that one unit had been moved five miles east to protect the railroad at High Hill. They were also told that there was a blockhouse in town in case of an attack.

As the guerrillas rode towards Danville they were observed by Captain Alexander Graham who managed hide by jumping a fence and watch as they rode past. At 8:30 p.m. on the evening of October 14, the guerrillas paused west of town, along the Boones' Lick Road. While the Federals were preparing to post evening sentries, thirty-five guerrillas rode silently into town the sound of their horses muffled by tying sacks around their hooves. The three Berry brothers led the charge. Two sentries, Privates M. A. Gilbert and Henry L. Diggs fired on the guerrillas killing Gooley Robinson. The guerrilla's return fire killed both men.

In the initial assault only eight Union troops managed to escape. The remainder took refuge in the houses, and it was only with great difficulty that the guerrillas managed to get them out. The guerrillas split up to set fire to the houses occupied by the soldiers. Dick and Ike Berry set fire to one house while Clement and Dick West put fire to another. Theodore Cassell, John Maupin, and Moses Huffaker set fire to a third building while Ben Broomfield and the Hill brothers set fire to a fourth. In the surreal specter of fire and smoke, screaming Federals ran from the burning buildings and were shot down by the vengeful guerrillas. Private Benjamin Palmer fired on the guerrillas from inside a house. During the raid he was wounded and lay unnoticed as the building around him was destroyed. Another soldier was wounded during the exchange of gunfire and perished in the flames. Corporals Sylvester H. Baker and Merrill S. Simonds were killed during the fight as were Privates Samuel L. Moore, Andrew M. Drury and another private by the name of Watkins. The guerrillas were able to kill the five soldiers believed to have raped the Berry sisters. They then burned eighteen buildings and looted several others in the business district, including the post office. Girls from the Danville Female Academy frantically pleaded the

guerrillas not to burn their school or harm their principal. Captain Tuck Hill calmed the girls assuring them that no harm would come to them or their school. The next day the guerrillas rode into New Florence and High Hill and burned the railroad depots before riding seventy miles to rejoin their company.

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FEMALE ACADEMY DANVILLE