



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.

Yankee Hypocrisy

He wouldn't lie to the guerrillas to save his life but he lied to his friends and the world.

Gurdon Grovenor was one of the survivors of William Clarke Quantrill's Lawrence, Kansas raid on August 21, 1863. The survivors stories have been told and retold ad nauseam and taken for truth and never challenged by those in the academic field. Such is the case of the eyewitness testimony of Gurdon Grovenor a citizen of Lawrence, Kansas. Most accounts about Gurdon Grovenor include the fictitious story about Quantrill killing men, women and children.

Grovenor was born in Suffield, Connecticut. His parents came from England and settled in Massachusetts. In the fall of 1857 Grovenor brought his family to Lawrence with the New England Immigrant Aid Society, a semi-military company, armed by wealthy New England abolitionists who subsidized immigrants to go to Kansas and fight against the institution of slavery. Once in Lawrence Grovenor started a grocery and lumber business in town in partnership with Edward D. Reddington. It was his son, eighteen-year-old Patrick Reddington with a squad from Company H, of the 9th Kansas Jayhawker Regiment that was responsible for arresting the sisters of guerrilla William T. Anderson and imprisoning them in Kansas City resulting in the premeditated murder of five young girls including one of Anderson's sisters just weeks before the raid. The 9th Kansas was commanded by Colonel Charles Adams, James Lane's son-in-law.

Thirty-year-old Grovenor was elected a member of the Lawrence city council in the spring of 1860, and again in 1861. He was later elected mayor of Lawrence. In 1852 he cast his first presidential vote for Winfield Scott, the Whig candidate. When the Whig party ceased to exist he became a Republican, helping to organize that party in his native town in Connecticut, and as a staunch supporter of the Republican cause carried it with him into Kansas.

During Quantrill's raid Grovenor's house was slated to be burned. It was said that Grovenor came to Kansas and "entered the border war with religious zeal." Grovenor was in demand as a speaker in what he termed the "evils of slavery" and preached intolerance against the "shameless devils from Missouri." Grovenor's wife said that her husband was as much detested by the Missouri secessionists as was Jim Lane, commander of the red trousered Kansas militia.

Quantrill's surprise attack caught the town and its inhabitants completely off guard. Grovenor was accosted by a single guerrilla demanding to know if he was "Union or Secesh?" Grovenor prided himself in being an honest man above reproach. He stated: "My life seemingly hung on my answer, my position may be imagined but it cannot be described. The thought ran through me like an electric shock, that I could not say that I was a secessionist, and deny my loyalty to my country; that I would rather die than to live and face that disgrace; and so I answered that I was a union man." Fortunately for Grovenor the guerrilla's pistol failed to fire. In the ensuing confusion Grovenor managed to escape. But Grovenor had second thoughts about how forthright he would continue to be. When a second group of guerrillas approached him he readily sacrificed his sacred honor to remain an honest man. Grovenor recalled: "My would be murderer came up to me and placed the muzzle of his revolver in my ear. It was not a pleasant place to be in, but the leader of the new group told him not to shoot, but to let me alone until he could inquire about me, so he asked me if I had ever been down in Missouri stealing niggers or horses; I told him 'No, that I had never been in Missouri, except to cross the state going and coming from the east.'" Grovenor stated, "I did not feel my lie a sin then and never have since."



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Grovenor's lie is further revealed in the diligent research of Quantrill biographer and author Paul R. Petersen. The untruth in Grovenor's statement exposed the reality that he had indeed been in Missouri plundering, murdering and raping on Jayhawker expeditions. Never before has a single mention ever been made of Grovenor's military affiliation during the Civil War. To comply with the Lawrence survivor's misleading assertion that the people of Lawrence were only peaceful, unarmed citizens no mention is ever made of their war time service. While Grovenor lied about not being in Missouri during the war he was actually a veteran in the Union army having enlisted in Company E of the 3rd Kansas Jayhawker Regiment. A photograph shows Grovenor proudly wearing his GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) veteran medal.

Though wanting to appear as an honest man to his friends and neighbors Grovenor didn't hesitate to collude with other survivors about what transpired during the raid. Grovenor conspired in the lie with his neighboring citizens claiming that the camp of recruits killed by the raiders during their attack were unarmed and too young to be in the service. Recent evidence in the book *Quantrill at Lawrence* has proven that the recruit's average age was several years older than the guerrilla soldiers they encountered. As for being unarmed, accounts by the raid survivors themselves attest to the fact that the recruits were accustomed to firing off their rifles each day following drill. Additional evidenced proved that they were fully uniformed with the latest modern rifles equipped with bayonets.

Mrs. Grovenor known as an honest women herself told of her own personal experience with Quantrill during the raid. She recalled, "Another contingent of guerrillas soon arrived. At their head rode a man wearing a red canna blossom in the band of his broad brimmed hat. Mrs. Grovenor seized the bridle of this man's horse, demanding that he order his men out of her house. He removed his hat, bowed, and said, 'William Quantrill, at your service, Mrs. Grovenor.' 'Fiddlesticks!' she snapped. 'I know you, Charlie Hart!' 'Is your husband home?' asked Quantrill. 'I give you my word he is not in the house,' she said. 'You would never tell a lie,' responded the gallant commander. Still seated on his horse Quantrill ordered his men

to put out the fire and bring out the furniture. They obeyed. The furniture was carried from the house and the flames were beaten out before much damage was done. Before leaving Mrs. Grovenor gave Quantrill a piece of her tongue. 'You should be ashamed. You stole that canna flower in your hat. The bulb was brought all the way from Massachusetts by my neighbor. She planted it in her yard, and you stole it!' With a smile on his lips Quantrill simply replied, 'Such is the fortunes of war'."

The truthful description of the guerrillas' actions by Mrs. Grovenor was ignored by later authors since it didn't correspond with their prejudicial reporting of the raid. Mrs. Grovenor remembered that "They killed a passel of men but Charlie Hart didn't molest women or children." It was a matter of fact that "The universal testimony of all the ladies and others who talked with the butchers of the 21st...is that these demons claimed they were here to revenge the wrongs done their families by our men under Lane, Jennison, Anthony and Co. They said they would be more merciful than were these men when they went into Missouri."

A guerrilla that took part in the Lawrence raid afterwards remarked, "You may be sure a great wail went up throughout the Northland because of desolated Lawrence, but never a damnation dissenting Puritan marred the platitude of his angular countenance by frowning on the atrocities that were daily being committed by Jennison, Lane and their bloody minions throughout the grief stricken portions of Missouri."

References: *Kansas: a Cyclopedia of State History*, volume III, part 1
Quantrill and the Border War, William Elsey Connelley
Under the Black Flag by Kit Dalton

Paul R. Petersen