



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.

Archie Clement

In the pantheon of Colonel William Clarke Quantrill's Missouri guerrillas only a handful of names rise to the top of those few select warriors who became renowned for their fighting abilities. Men who were brave to a fault and whose lists of enemies killed in battle brought them a reputation carried down through history to this very day. But only a handful of Quantrill's men could honestly be called natural born killers. The most feared of Quantrill's men were guerrillas like George Shepherd, Andy Blunt, William T. Anderson, George Maddox, Jim Cummins, William Gaugh, Frank James, John Jarrette, John Koger, Peyton Long and George Todd. And leading this group of fighters was Archibald J. Clement. Archie Clement was born in Kingsville, Missouri, on January 1, 1846 to a family of ten children from Johnson County, Missouri. Clement joined Quantrill when Federal militiamen killed his brother and burned down his mother's home. He soon rose in rank to lieutenant and second in command in Captain William T. Anderson's company serving under Quantrill. His desperate fighting earned him the reputation of having eclipsed the record of any other guerrilla by personally killing fifty-four Yankees during the war.

Archie was described as being 20 years old, rather thin, with black hair, eyes and whiskers. Though being short of stature at 5'4" Clement became known as Bill Anderson's executioner. In order to save ammunition, he often cut the throats of those captured with a folding knife he kept on a leather strap hung around his neck. His prowess was earned in fighting at Lawrence, Baxter Springs, the Danville Raid, Fayette and Centralia.

At the close of the Civil War, the country was in a very unsettled condition. There was no law established and bands of former soldiers took the law into their own hands. Missouri governor Thomas Fletcher ordered Major Bacon

Montgomery of Sedalia, Missouri, to round up a group of men and put down the band of former guerrillas under Archie Clement. Warrants were issued for the arrest of Archie Clement. Former enemies of Quantrill's men were often hunted down for spurious wartime charges in order to capture and kill them. Union men who had committed the same acts were never charged.

After Bill Anderson's death on October 26, 1864, Clement took over the command. Later after the war ended a new state law mandated that all men over eighteen were required to register for possible muster into the Missouri State Militia. Clement sent word to the military authorities that he would like to come in and register provided he would not be bothered by the Yankee soldiers. Fellow guerrilla Captain Dave Poole was sent out to inform him that he would not be molested. Union authorities required that all guerrillas come into Union command posts and turn in their weapons and surrender. The guerrillas agreed to surrender but refused to do unless they could keep their weapons and sidearms. Wartime animosities by their former enemies would have resulted in being shot down in cold blood if they were unarmed.

Shortly afterwards when a squad of guerrillas including Jesse James rode into Lexington, Missouri to surrender they were fired upon by the Yankees leaving a young Jesse James severely wounded and carrying this Northern treachery in his memory for the remainder of his life. This treachery had a deep impact on the remaining guerrillas seeking to surrender. The Yankees were still highly afraid of the guerrillas even after their surrender. It took every effort by Dave Poole and those guerrillas who had already surrendered to convince the remainder of the guerrillas to ignore what had happened to Jesse James and those with him and come back into town and sign surrender papers.



Yankee writer William F. Connelly wrote that, "These men were as fearless as any guerrilla ever dared be. They were not only fearless, but they were as brave as the bravest. They were, too, patriots."

On December 13, 1866, Archie Clement and twenty-six guerrillas, the remainder of Anderson's old company, heavily armed rode into Lexington in order to surrender. The company of Yankee soldiers in town were ordered to stay indoors. After the official signing of surrender and taking the oath the guerrillas were ordered to leave town and not return. Major Montgomery initially wanted to capture Clement by luring him into a casual conversation then get the drop on him. Clement and Young E. Hickland went to the saloon in town to get a drink before leaving. While they were having drinks at the bar with the three Yankee soldiers Private Joe Wood with two or three others entered the bar and began yelling, "Surrender!" But to Archie Clement this was a direct challenge. Turning back to get a drink at the local tavern owned by Mr. Hickland one of Archie's relatives. Major Bacon Montgomery the Yankee officer in charge infuriated that his orders were not explicitly obeyed ordered three of his men to go arrest Clement.

Immediately Clement and Hickland sprang back. Hickland jumped over a billiard table and was shot in the leg but escaped. Clement ran out a side door. As Clement raced out of the building he shot at 1stSgt George N. Moses who returned fire striking Clement in the right breast ultimately causing his poor shooting afterward. The wound made Clement fall, but he immediately jumped to his feet firing with his left hand while racing for his horse which was tied up in front of the Virginia Hotel Livery Barn. The three Yankee soldiers followed him down the street firing at him as fast as they could. As Clement managed to mount his horse and ride away his horse was shot several times. It had been raining and to avoid a team of horses in the street, Clement with the bridle reins in his teeth, guided his horse onto the sidewalk. The horse fell but got up with Clement still in the saddle. While this melee was going on the Yankees hiding in the courthouse emerged and began firing as well. Clement made it a quarter of a mile down the street before he fell off his horse. He would empty a pistol at his attackers then throw it on the ground and continue firing with the pistols he had left. Moses approached Clement and took his last pistol from him as he was still trying to cock it with his teeth. Moses told him, "Arch, you are dying." Archie replied, "I've done what I always said I'd do. Die before I'd surrender." His last words were, "Oh! Hell!" Clement had twelve pistols on his body when he was attacked. He managed to empty eleven of the pistols at his attackers.

They carried Clement's body to the courthouse and after an examination discovered that he had been hit thirty-four times. His murderers were indicted soon afterwards but were acquitted by a biased pro-Union jury.

Article by Paul R. Petersen