



### 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.

## Battlefield Devotion

*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13*

William T. "Bloody Bill" Anderson came to be a Southern guerrilla in the normal pattern during the Missouri-Kansas Border War: the result of Federal barbarity. While living in Kansas with his family and not having taken any part in the conflict a Federal patrol was scouring his neighborhood in the wake of William Clarke Quantrill's March 7, 1862 raid on Aubry, Kansas. Three days after the raid a company from the Eighth Kansas Jayhawker Regiment in Olathe went to Aubry to investigate. Southern sympathizers were sought out and accused of aiding the raiders. William Anderson's father and uncle were named as such. When the Jayhawkers arrived at the Anderson farm on March 11, William and younger brother Jim were away delivering fifteen head of cattle to the U.S. commissary agent at Fort Leavenworth. When the brothers returned they found their father and uncle hanged. Before the day was done, Bill Anderson killed a Union picket in revenge. The next night he killed two more pickets then fled to Missouri. Two nights later, on March 15, as Anderson made his way through Jackson County, he was discovered by John McCorkle, Quantrill's chief scout, who took Anderson to join Quantrill's band.

Anderson's received little recognition as a guerrilla until after the August 13, 1863, Kansas City women's jail collapse where one of his sisters was killed and two others mutilated in a premeditated attack by Kansas Jayhawkers when they collapsed a three story brick building on a group of young Southern women. Afterwards, Anderson soon commanded his own company known for vicious fighting and not taking any prisoners. He only recruited the bravest of men. On one occasion when one man wished to join his command Anderson refused him

several times finally telling him he didn't want him because he was a coward. At that, the man knocked Anderson down. When Anderson rose to his feet he replied, "Anyone that would knock Bill Anderson down surrounded by his own men can't be a coward."

In late October, 1864, operating north of the Missouri River, Anderson saw the report that General Price had been defeated and that guerrilla George Todd had been killed. He determined to punish the Federals for the Southern defeat at Westport. With Anderson was a detachment of regular Confederate soldiers, and among them was Capt. A. E. Ashbury in charge of fifty recruits traveling with Cols. John Holt and James Condiff along with Capt. John Rains.

As Anderson made his way into Mound City, he discovered three hundred Federals to his front commanded by Maj. Samuel P. Cox in charge of the Thirty-third and Fifty-first Missouri Infantry from Ray, Davies, and Caldwell Counties. Unwaveringly, Anderson attacked despite advice from his other officers. Ashbury knew his new recruits could not execute the type of desperate charge Anderson would demand, but Anderson was resolute.

The Federals were encamped along the north side of the Missouri River between Richmond and present-day Orrick. Cox reported that Anderson charged his line with twenty men. The guerrilla leader wore a wide brimmed white hat with a large black feather in it. Riding a fine gray mare and armed with eight pistols Anderson went right through the line, shooting and yelling with a revolver in each hand. When the Federals opened fire, many of Anderson's command went down while others turned and fled.

Harrison Trow recalled that William Smith,

a veteran guerrilla with four years' experience, rode next to Anderson. Trow claimed that five bullets struck Smith and three struck Anderson, and at the end of the fight, both men were dead. The company suffered other casualties in the initial volley: John Maupin was wounded twice, Condiff once, and Ashbury four times. Colonel John Holt, Jim Crow Chiles, and Peyton Long all lost their horses. While the rest of the guerrilla company drew rein and exchanged fire with the Federals, they realized their leader had fallen. Knowing the history of brutality practiced by the Federals toward captured guerrillas, Anderson's men tried desperately to recover his body. Richard West and the Hill brothers fought their way up to Anderson and tried to carry him away. They managed to throw his body across a horse, but before they could withdraw, the horse was killed, pinning Anderson beneath it. For their effort Tuck and Woot Hill and West were seriously wounded. Others also made valiant efforts to rescue the body of their slain leader, but they too were shot down. Henry Patterson fell dead next to Anderson. Anson Tolliver, Paul Debonhorst, Smith Jobson, John McIlvaine, Jasper Moody, Hodge Reynolds, William Tarkington, and two other men, A. J. Lockett and Ed Simmons all died trying to recover Anderson's remains.

Also killed was John Rains, son of James S. Rains, a Missouri state senator and a general in Price's army. Guerrilla John Pringle, a veteran of the Mexican War, was the last man killed. Pringle attempted to tie a rope around Anderson's leg so he could pull him from beneath the horse, but before he could get away, Pringle's own horse was killed. Pringle was shot four times

while he emptied three revolvers at the enemy. Even the recruits proved their mettle. Joseph and Archibald Nicholson, William James, and Clell Miller were wounded once. John Warren was shot four times before he managed to crawl away. All these men were either killed or wounded trying to regain Anderson's body. But the odds were simply too great. With the Federals standing their ground, the guerrillas had no choice but to withdraw. Twelve guerrillas died trying to recover Anderson's body.

Even in death Federal brutality knew no limits. Not satisfied at simply conquering the enemy and killing him, Cox had a rope tied around Anderson's

neck, affixed it to the back of a wagon, and dragged the body through the streets of Richmond. There Cox had pictures taken of the slain guerrilla leader. By this time the Federals had already cut off Anderson's finger to steal his wedding ring.

One of Anderson's cousins lived near Richmond. When she heard that his body was in town, she drove to Richmond and attempted to persuade the Federal commander not to take a picture of Anderson until she had combed his matted hair and washed the blood from his face. Cox refused. Cox had Anderson's head removed and attached to a telegraph pole in town as a warning to other guerrillas. His body was then buried in an unmarked grave. Cox was promoted for these atrocities.

Compassion came to Anderson years later from an old comrade, Cole Younger. Forty-three years later when Younger was in town officiating his traveling carnival he met fellow guerrilla Jim Cummins and both decided to help decorate their former leader's grave. Younger gathered his band from the carnival which struck up a funeral march as they proceeded towards the cemetery. The grave had already been beautifully decorated with flowers. Arriving at the old cemetery, the crowd gathered around Cole Younger while he, in a reminiscent yet with a reverent way, addressed them in a few short sentences. He said that as a soldier, prior to 1863, he had known and served with Capt. Bill Anderson as a soldier, that he was a fearless man, standing back for nothing in the performance of his duty as he conceived it. At the conclusion of the exercises, 'taps' was sounded and the company withdrew. In 1967, as a final tribute Bill Anderson received a tombstone from local historian Donald Hale who obtained a grave marker from the United States government and placed it on the grave 103 years after Anderson died.

### **Paul R. Petersen**

Ref: Quantrill of Missouri by Paul R. Petersen

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