



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.

BLACK CONFEDERATES

The good news about the Civil War sesquicentennial is that it is causing a new resurgence of research about the many aspects of the Civil War. As the Civil War affected many of our ancestors ongoing research is continuing to affect those living descendants today. One major topic of concern is the subject of Black Confederates. As more and more stories come to light about the role Blacks took in the war revisionist historians are doing their best to keep the truth from being told. Last year a Virginia textbook was pulled off the shelves over protests that it inaccurately claimed thousands of Blacks served as Confederate soldiers. More recently, a North Carolina community turned down an effort to erect a monument to 10 black men who served the Southern army and later collected Confederate pensions.

Yankee historians are doing their best to argue that the only service Blacks contributed to the Confederate war service was mostly menial work done under duress or for survival, not out of support for the secession movement. The North's avant-garde intolerance in allowing the truth to be told has won a modern day victory at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond where once they sold Black toy soldiers, clad in Confederate gray, they were pulled from shelves after complaints were made. Monuments to Black Confederates have been denied by governments throughout the South with no other reason except expressing an intolerant and perverted bias of history.

Slaves during the Civil War were occasionally conscripted from their owners to help work on roads and other infrastructure needed by the army. Southern Blacks built bridges, erected fortifications, worked on the docks and offered all kinds of support work to free whites up to go and fight. The successes of white Confederate troops in battle, could only have been achieved with the support of these loyal black Southerners. Slaves who had been trained in specialty jobs on Southern plantations

offered their services in defense of the South. Many were highly skilled workers. These included a wide range of jobs: nurses, military engineers, teamsters, ordnance department workers, brakemen, firemen, harness makers, blacksmiths, wagon makers, boatmen, mechanics, and wheelwrights. In the Southern capital a quota was set for 300,000 Black soldiers to fight for the Confederacy. 83% of Richmond's male slave population volunteered for duty. Black musicians, cooks, soldiers and teamsters earned the same pay as white Confederate privates. This was not the case in the Union army where blacks did not receive equal pay.

The Border War between Missouri and Kansas sufficiently proved the disdain that the Union had towards Missouri's slave population. During their Jayhawking raids into Missouri often Blacks were coerced at the point of the bayonet to join Kansas units. They were used as political tools to further the political aspirations of the Kansas officers who thought that the first officer to raise colored troops would gain politically after the war besides being able to use the Black regiments to despoil the Missouri countryside. Blacks not of military age were also induced to run away. Those who did not chose to do so were cruelly punished. The men were beaten and the women raped often in the presence of their owners. Whatever plunder they were ordered to take with them when they "ran away" was seized from them when they entered Kansas on the charge that they could not prove ownership. Once these "runaway" slaves reached the free state of Kansas they found that they were offered lower pay than white laborers. In the abolitionist town of Lawrence, Kansas nearly every household employed a fugitive slave from Missouri. The *Lawrence State Journal* explained their plight. "The women had their household 'servant' and the men had their own personal



Paul Petersen continued...

'hired hand.' Freed Negroes were paid a pittance by their Kansas patrons. They normally received the paltry sum of only one dollar a month. They were used to 'saw wood' and 'do chores' and the females have many of them entered families as servants. After being armed and equipped many of those of military age were forced into the ranks of various militia units."

Finding Blacks who served in combat units for the Confederacy is not hard to find thanks to the recent work of noted historians Scott K. Williams, Roland Young and Erwin L. Jordan just to name a few. In their estimation there were approximately 15,000 to 120,000 Black Confederates serving the South in combat or in direct battlefield support. A lower estimation probably proving more accurate would be a figure of 65,000 scattered across the entire South. For instance in General Stonewall Jackson's command alone there were 3,000 Black Confederate soldiers carrying rifles alongside his white troops.

Research provides us a wide array of examples proving the participation of Black Confederates. During the Civil War Northern Black abolitionist speaker Frederick Douglas reported, "There are at the present moment many Colored men in the Confederate Army doing duty not only as cooks, servants and laborers, but real soldiers, having musket on their shoulders, and bullets in their pockets, ready to shoot down any loyal troops and do all that soldiers may do to destroy the Federal government and build up that of the rebels." Douglas warned the President that unless slaves were guaranteed freedom and land bounties, they would take up arms for the rebels. Many today do not realize that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation did not free any slaves in Union controlled territory but only those behind Southern lines which the North had no control over.

Revisionist historians will argue that calling Blacks soldiers is an overstatement of their actual services. Northern historians also try to downplay their involvement in combat operations. While these debates will continue for some time in the future we cannot debate the provenance of Black Confederates that reveals itself in photographic history. The Library of Congress contains many Civil War images of Southern white soldiers proudly sitting

shoulder to shoulder with their Black slaves both armed with rifles, muskets, sabers, bowie-knives, dirks, etc. proving them to be an integral part of the Southern Army. Another un-debatable truth finds the provenance of Black Confederates in the newly discovered Cantey-Myers photographic collection, shown by the generosity of Major Emory Cantey on the web site quantrillsguerrillas.com. Cantey's collection is the most unsurpassed contribution to Missouri Civil War History to date. Here in this incredible photographic collection are the images of not only Black Confederates serving under Colonel William Clarke Quantrill as combat soldiers, hostlers, cooks, bodyguards and spies but also Native American Indians and women who heroically served the South.

Along with the writings of modern day authors in books such as *Quantrill of Missouri*, *Quantrill in Texas* and *Quantrill at Lawrence* are stories of slaves and former slaves that aided the Confederate forces under Quantrill in his partisan ranger company. The most noted Black Confederate was John T. Noland. During the First Battle of Independence on August 11, 1862 Noland and four other volunteers had to crawl more than two hundred yards under a withering fire to gather combustibles to smoke Union Colonel James T. Buel out of his headquarters building on the square. During the Battle of Lamar, Missouri on November 6, 1862 Noland stood by Quantrill's side shouting more orders than any other of Quantrill's men trying to make the Federals inside the brick courthouse surrender by thinking they were surrounded. Noland made three separate charges against the Federal stronghold before withdrawing and continuing into Texas with his fellow guerrillas. During the raid on Lawrence in August of 1863 Noland risked his life spying out the town to gather intelligence information prior to the raid. Federals once offered him ten thousand dollars to betray Quantrill and his men, but Noland only replied with scorn. After the war Noland attended the Quantrill reunions and when he died he had all white pallbearers at his funeral. His white comrades referred to him as "a man among men."

Two other Black men served in Quantrill's company, John Lobb and Henry Wilson, both photographed as members of Quantrill's company in the Cantey-Myers collection. Lobb like Noland aided Quantrill as a spy prior to the Lawrence raid. Wilson served as Quantrill's bodyguard. Interviewed



Petersen Continued...

after the war Wilson explained that he did not want to be free. He ran from Union troops for miles without stopping and joined Quantrill's band. He also served as the company's cook in camp. Wilson was also one of Quantrill's best spies, because he could slip into a village without alarming the occupants and secure significant information. Wilson reported his experience in his own words following the war when he was offered a chance by the Jayhawkers to go to Kansas. "When they asked me if I wished to go, I said, Hell, no! I don't want to have nothing to do with such robbers and thieves. I joined Quantrill when Master Wilson moved to Texas and I carried supplies to [Quantrill] and his men. I took an oath that I would stick to the end, and Quantrill trusted me because I didn't drink whiskey and because I was dependable and could shoot." Facts such as these in writing and in photographic history set the record straight against the efforts of revisionist historians that are battling hard to distort the truth to the public that true Southern patriots are constantly trying to educate.

Article Written by Paul R. Petersen

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Quantrill of Missouri, Paul R. Petersen, Cumberland House, 2003
Quantrill in Texas, Paul R. Petersen, Cumberland House, 2006
Quantrill at Lawrence, Paul R. Petersen, Pelican Publishing, 2011

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