



## 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.

## Forgiving but not Forgetting

As we commemorate the 150 year sesquicentennial of our nation's great Civil War we cannot dismiss the South's contempt against the way the North waged the bloody conflict contrary to the Laws of War violating every precept of the Constitution. That is why it is commonly referred to in the South as the War of Northern Aggression. We wrestle against every feeling of our carnal nature to not forgive those who have trespassed against us but with Christian devotion we are compelled to forgive even though it is impossible to forget.

If we only had leaders today like those of yesteryear our country could well heal. The most respected man in America before and even after the Civil War in both the North and South was Robert E. Lee. It is clear that the courage, honor, bravery and honesty displayed by Robert E. Lee flowed from the profound faith which he had, a faith in a power greater than himself, and a savior which guided his steps. Lee was known to show the faith he had in prayer. Lee prayed and fasted and asked others to do the same. He prayed and gave thanks for his food. He prayed for an end to slavery, He prayed for his family and friends and even for his enemies. He prayed with his men in the midst of battle. And as the war drew on year by year there was much to pray about as the North waged a total war on the South, a war even on innocent women and children. Lee issued orders stating: "The commanding general considers that no greater disgrace could befall the army, and through it our whole people, than the perpetration of the barbarous outrages upon the unarmed and defenseless and the wanton destruction of private property, that have marked the course of the enemy in our own country."

Along the Missouri-Kansas border where Lee's mention of wanton destruction had been going on for two years prior to the firing on Ft. Sumter the enemy grew more merciless in their barbarism. Union General James H. Lane who led the notorious Kansas Jayhawkers boldly stated: We believe in a war of extermination. I want to see every foot of ground...burned over...everything laid waste." Kansas Jayhawkers were responsible for burning over 2,463 homes on their patrols of pillage and destruction through Missouri. In 1863 Union General Thomas Ewing issued Order #11 ordering all Southern

sympathizers to leave the border or be killed. As these old men, women and children were attempting to take whatever they could carry to some other section of the country the Jayhawkers attacked stealing what they coveted and murdering those who resisted. A genocide never seen before in this country before or since.

Kansas Jayhawkers had already gained an unsavory reputation around Independence, Missouri. Captain Henry Palmer of the 11th Kansas Regiment described one of his Jayhawker raids. "They marched through Kansas City; nearly all dressed in women's clothes; old bonnets and outlandish hats on their heads, spinning wheels and even grave stones lashed to their saddles. Through the country strewn with worthless household goods, their road lighted by burning homes, this regiment was little less than an armed mob."

Stories of Jayhawkers terrorizing the Missouri border were numerous. One story told by Captain Henry Palmer of the 11th Kansas Regiment is a sample of what transpired along the border on a daily basis. Jayhawker Joseph B. Swain and seven of his followers made a nighttime raid on the home of a Missouri farmer named Lawrence. The party demanded the man turn over to them all his money and silverware. Lawrence said he could not comply with their demand as he had sent all of his money to a bank in Canada for safety. Dragged to a nearby tree with a rope around his neck, Lawrence was repeatedly hauled into the air and strangled as Swain tried to extract the location of his wealth. When Lawrence failed to produce the goods the men ransacked his home, smashing open locked drawers, emptying trucks, and ripping open mattresses. In the parlor they found the coffin of Mrs. Lawrence, who had died that day, resting across two chairs. Palmer recalled, "One fellow suggested that maybe money was hid in the coffin, and with that he knocked off the lid of the casket and searched for gold. A ring on the finger of the dead woman attracted his attention, and whipping out his bowie knife he cut off the finger to release the ring. Before leaving, this gallant party of Union defenders said to the terror stricken daughters: "If you want to plant the old lady, drag her out, for we are going to fire the ranch." Unaided they dragged the coffin from the burning home.

On January 29, 1863 in Jackson County, Missouri was recorded the coldest day of the year, the temperature was 10 degrees below zero. A Union patrol had seized 51 year old Jephtha Crawford who was at a neighboring gristmill getting corn ground for bread to take home to his wife and six children. The Federals took him back to his front door and there in the presence of his family shot him down in cold blood then burned down his house and barn. The spectacle was repeated time and time again on other innocent citizens.

But the most heinous act carried out by the Union authorities was the arrest and imprisonment of young Southern women in Kansas City. Over fifteen women were confined in a makeshift prison once the home of painter George Caleb Bingham. It was a substantial three story brick building. The women's guards were housed next door. In only a matter of days the soldiers cut the supporting columns away causing the building's collapse and the premeditated murder of five women, one as young as 14 years old was the result.

The Union's total-war scorched-earth policy was not a local one played out only along the Missouri-Kansas border. All across the South Federal atrocities were being conducted with ferocity. In Virginia, Union General Robert H. Milroy wrote his wife saying, "I feel a strong disposition to play the tyrant among these traitors." In Louisiana, Union General William Dwight wrote, "The scenes of disorder and pillage were disgraceful to civilized war...Negro women ravished in the presence of white women and children." In New Orleans, Union Corporal William M. Chincock raped Mary Ellen De Riley, a black woman. He was fined \$40 and reduced to private. Captain S. Tyler Reed fired his pistol at William Bird, a black boy, and put out his eye. His sentence? A reprimand. Benjamin George, a 50 year old slave tried to help save the home and barn of his white neighbor. When surrounded and questioned by Union soldiers why he would try to help a white man he was shot.

In South Carolina, Union terrorists stole everything: "Purses, watches, hats, boots, and overcoats....were taken from victims, white or black." A witness says: "Commissioned officers, of a rank as high as that of a colonel, were frequently among the most active." They took the rings from the fingers of a dying woman. They urinated on the beds. They opened graves in search of loot and left the corpses on the ground. And what did the South's leadership have to say? These are the words of the Southern General-of-the-Army, Robert E. Lee. "I pray daily and almost hourly to You heavenly Father to come to the relief of our afflicted country. There is nothing but Your almighty power that can sustain us, and to You be all the praise. Amen." God bless Robert E. Lee.

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