



### 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.

### Gabriel William George – Quantrill's First Casualty During the War

Quantrill did not pick his men. They were delivered to him by fate. They fought for no personal gain, with no aspirations other than to protect their families and property and fight for State's Rights and Southern independence. Many of them were farm boys. Their families had come mainly from Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Most were hard-working, God-fearing young men who worked the land, built new homes and churches and became financially comfortable, some even well-to-do. The border war in Missouri was a war of revenge, unlike in the eastern theater where principles for an ideal inspired many to choose loyalty to their State over the dictates of the central government.

One by one they came into Quantrill's camp already touched by the horrors of war. In the Sni-a-Bar Township of Jackson County, Missouri, where Quantrill began his operations many of his staunchest followers lived in Oak Grove in eastern Jackson County. Here lived four George brothers, twenty-nine-year-old Nathan Bass, twenty-seven-year-old Hiram James, twenty-three-year-old John Hicks and eighteen-year-old Gabriel William George. With Gabriel riding with Quantrill early in the war the other George brothers all wound up in Company C, of the 2nd Missouri Cavalry under Colonel Upton Hayes in the Missouri State Guard under General Sterling Price early in the war. They fought in many of the early skirmishes and battles in Missouri before their enlistments ended and they joined Quantrill.

During the early winter of 1862 Quantrill was patrolling with Confederate Colonel Benjamin Parker around Independence, Missouri. Parker had been busy recruiting for General Price and now had more than sixty men while being escorted by Quantrill and fifteen of his guerrillas. On February 15, the 2nd Ohio Cavalry stationed in Platte City, Mo. was ordered to Fort Scott, Kansas. On their way they stopped in Kansas City where 150 Federals from the regiment were ordered to

Independence to capture Quantrill and Parker. They surrounded the town during the night after setting up camp one half mile to the west and searched for Quantrill the next day but were unable to find him. The next morning a squad of Federals gathered at Uhlinger's Bakery on the south side of the square getting bread for their breakfast when Quantrill and Parker came riding in.

It was 8 o'clock in the morning on the 22nd of February. It was a cool morning with slush covering the dirt streets and with a thick cloud of fog hanging in the air. Visibility was so poor it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. As Quantrill's men met the Ohioans, they opened up with their Navy Colts and fired point blank into the Federals. During the brief exchange two of Parker's men were killed while Quantrill had two of his men mortally wounded. Escaping Federals rushed back to their camp to alert the main body. As the entire force of Federals arrived the Confederates found themselves outnumbered two to one. They attempted to escape down the Spring Branch Road east of town. Parker's inexperienced recruits were no match for the experienced cavalymen. As they made their escape Quantrill's men tried to form a rear-guard action at the city spring in hopes of slowing the Federal attack while covering Parker's withdrawal. Quantrill was trying to save his wounded men but young Gabriel George and Hop Wood died before they could get away. Gabriel was the first of Quantrill's guerrillas to die during the war. Quantrill himself had been shot in the thigh and had his horse shot out from under him. He only managed to get away by climbing up the rock outcroppings surrounding the Spring Branch Road before making his escape. Author John Newman Edwards claimed that seventeen Federals were killed while the Confederates lost four killed.

Two days after the battle Quantrill attended Gabriel George's funeral in Oak Grove. The funeral was officiated by the Reverend Hiram Bowman, pastor of the Oak Grove Baptist Church where Quantrill was a regular attendant. Quantrill leaning on a cane came forward to speak a few words concerning the bravery of young Gabriel and encouraging support for the Cause in which he died. The George family suffered greatly. In their retaliation the Federals burned down their mother's house and dwellings three times the first time being on June 12, 1862 along with the house of their relative Ezra Moore. Then on August 15th, in an attempt to get him to tell where Quantrill was hiding John Hicks George was hung by the neck. When he refused the Federals rode away. His wife, sister and mother, who had been watching from hiding raced to cut him down and revive him just in time. A few months later Federal militia led by Captain Anderson Morton murdered David C. George father of the George brothers in February, 1863.

The George brothers exacted their own revenge during the course of the war by taking part in many of the major battles and skirmishes in Missouri. After fighting at the Battle of the Little Blue and the 2nd Battle of Independence they continued with General Price fighting at the Battle of Westport. Later John Hicks was captured at the Battle of Mine Creek and sent to the Federal prison in Rock Island, Illinois. After the war the brothers came home and became carpenters busying themselves in rebuilding the towns that were burned to the ground by the Yankees during the war.

***Article by Paul R. Petersen – author of Quantrill of Missouri, Quantrill in Texas, Quantrill at***