



Historians Corner, Paul R Petersen

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Kansas Civil War History - Not Quite True

The old adage that the victors write the history is true to the extent that anything can be printed whether true or not. Through research authors can counter lies with the truth that can be told in the printed format but what makes historical inaccuracies particularly onerous is when false statements are etched in stone. One of the most significant events during the Civil War along the Missouri-Kansas border was William Clarke Quantrill's Lawrence, Kansas raid on August 21, 1863. In the town of Lawrence the event is commemorated by a monument, which bears the inscription: *To the memory of the 150 citizens who defenseless, fell victims to the ferocity of border guerrillas, led by the infamous Quantrell, August 21, 1863*. Though the inscription notes that the casualties totaled 150, subsequent Yankee writers often boost the total to over 300. Inaccuracies continue to be perpetrated in explanations from Yankee websites explaining that the monument was erected in 1895 as a memorial to the men and boys who lost their lives during the raid.

Kansans relish telling the account of Quantrill's Lawrence raid conveniently omitting the years of brutality and atrocities committed by Kansas Jayhawkers in Missouri. The facts surrounding the raid dispel the myth Yankees continually perpetrate in their attempt to cover up their criminal complicity and paint the Missouri guerrillas in a bad light. The Yankee version of the raid would like history to show that the town was entirely defenseless and that innocent, peace loving citizens were the only ones that suffered. Lawrence was known as an armed camp and most of its male citizens were in the militia and armed with the most modern repeating rifles of their day.

The Free State Hotel in town was also another misnomer to wit, the hotel was used for military purposes and used as the headquarters for the militia.

According to Richard Cordley, a militia member and a citizen of Lawrence, "Several companies used it as a barracks." In another glaring omission by Yankee writers is that the town also hosted five forts or earthen enclosures for the Lawrence militia. According to Cordley "These earth works were circular, and some of them one hundred feet in diameter. The largest was at the crossing of Massachusetts and Pinckney streets. It was built of hewn timbers, banked up with earth, and a deep trench dug all around it. It was five feet high." Another was at the crossing of Massachusetts and Henry streets. A third was near New Hampshire Street, north of Henry. Two others were west of Massachusetts Street, one of them on Kentucky Street commanding the ravine. The [fort] at Massachusetts and Henry streets was arranged for cannon. Each of these defenses was in charge of an officer, and had a contingent of troops assigned to its defense." Trenches and earthworks surrounded the perimeters. Over two hundred soldiers could man each of these forts making over 1,000 men for defense while armed guards patrolled the town and mounted patrols guarded the town ten miles out.

Facts such as these prove that Lawrence was not a defenseless town. In addition four hundred soldiers were said to be encamped on the North side of the river opposite the town. Two separate camps of recruits were stationed in the middle of the town. Cannon were placed in strategic places within the city limits and an armory centrally located north of Winthrop Street served as a rallying place in case of emergency. The armory bell would be rung to alert the militia and call the men together. Although modern Federal arms were kept solely in the armory the militia living in town had their own personal weapons with them. It was known that almost every man in town owned a Sharps carbine. This was the weapon of choice used by the Lawrence militia.

It could fire thirteen rounds a minute, and keep it up for 38 rounds before having to put in a fresh supply of caps, which would take from twenty to thirty seconds. During the raid most of the soldiers had on their Federal uniforms and were fully armed.

Colonel Frank B. Swift was in command of thirteen companies of militia in and around Lawrence. Two military companies were constantly patrolling in and around the town. One company was led by Lieutenant Tobias J. Hadley of the 5th Kansas Jayhawker Regiment and the other by Major Edmund G. Ross, a citizen of Lawrence leading Company E, 11th Kansas Jayhawker Regiment including a portion of the 9th Jayhawker Regiment. 1stLt George Ellis was in charge of part of the 400 Kansas troops across the Kaw River. 2ndLt John Knox Rankin and Captain Leroy Beam were recruiting officers for the Kansas Jayhawker regiments and also lived in Lawrence.

Besides the regular army soldiers Colonel George Hoyt the noted Redleg leader made his headquarters in Lawrence. The Redlegs were nothing better than a band of highwaymen, arsonists, and murderers. Hoyt was probably the worst thief and murderer in Kansas. The provost marshal general for the State of Kansas, LtCol Sidney F. Clarke also made his headquarters in Lawrence. Clarke also served as the assistant adjutant general for the Lawrence militia. He exercised his powers by hiring Redlegs to plunder the Missouri countryside with the understanding that he would share in a portion of their illegal gains. Clarke's Redleg assistants freely robbed loyal Unionists as freely as they robbed those of questionable loyalty.

Thanks to University Professor George F. McCleary who has extensively researched the site of Lawrence as it stood on August 21, 1863 we now know that there were approximately 300 buildings in Lawrence on that memorable day and during the raid 86 of those buildings were destroyed by fire, half of those being destroyed by collateral damage. In contrast Jayhawkers burned over 2,500 recorded homes in Missouri along the border.

An uninformed and resistant Kansan populace continues to express ignorance about the Lawrence raid. Victoria Richter made a recent comment on the internet stating: "I had relatives killed in that massacre. I can't believe you would gloat

over that event in which not only men, but many children were killed. Shame on you." Apparently Ms. Richter has no inclination to find out the truth in contemporary writings like *Quantrill at Lawrence* that exposes the past lies and reveals that the town of Lawrence was indeed an armed camp. Ms. Richter is colluding in the lies of a Lawrence survivor, Mrs. Louis Wise who repeated that "many of the women were brutally assaulted" and "only a few escaped." In truth there were no women or children assaulted whatsoever during the raid and no self-respecting historian has ever claimed otherwise.

Compared with victims in Missouri, 80 year old elderly citizens were gunned down for their Southern sympathies and boys as young as 10 years old were torn from their mother's arms and murdered in cold blood because one of their relatives rode with Quantrill. The list of casualties in Lawrence reveals that over 40% of the victims were in the Federal army while the remainder was in the local militia. Factual evidence shows that the collusion of Yankee lies saying that the town was unarmed and defenseless and its citizens were innocent and peaceful are the stuff of tabloid sensationalism, the kind we have come to expect from the politically correct state run media.

Accounts from Lawrence survivors specifically include the version of the camp of young recruits being unarmed which was apparently constructed in an obvious collusion with other witnesses who collaborated on their mutual stories about what transpired during the raid. To reveal the brutality of the guerrillas it was necessary to show that the camp of the recruits were "unarmed" and "too young to be in the service," and as a consequence most accounts try their best to point out these disingenuous facts. Factual accounts from the official records show that the oldest recruit was thirty-six with the youngest two recruits being sixteen. Their average age was twenty-one. In comparison their ages were on average two years older than the raiders they came in contact with that day. Additional reports by Lawrence citizens stated that the recruits were armed, uniformed and daily drilled and fired upon the guerrillas as they approached the city.

Thankfully what was once etched in stone can no longer be excused as simple ignorance but can now be relegated to irresponsible and misleading historical facts. In other words, not quite true.

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