



### 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.

## Quantrill's Guerrillas Invade St. Albans, Vermont

Guerrilla Charles Hunt Higbee was William Clarke Quantrill's treasurer up until the Lawrence raid. He was born at Higbee Mill in Fayette County, Kentucky, near Lexington. As a young man Higbee moved to Independence, Missouri, where he married a young widow also from Kentucky. Higbee was well-educated and attended universities in both Kentucky and Missouri. During the winter of 1862 Higbee and Andy Blunt accompanied Quantrill to Richmond, Virginia, where Quantrill sought a colonel's commission of partisan rangers.

During the Lawrence raid Higbee was said to have secured \$75,000 from the Lawrence banks. Some of Quantrill's men called Higbee a traitor for leaving for Canada with fellow guerrilla Bennett Wood after the raid and disappearing with the money. Bennett also had Kentucky roots and had been with Quantrill from the beginning. But what Higbee's fellow guerrillas did not know was that Higbee and Wood had both embarked on a secret mission.

When Higbee and Wood arrived in Canada the week following the Lawrence raid they were joined to the Confederate Secret Service. In July of 1863 following General John Hunt Morgan's daring raids into the North with 2,500 men through Indiana and Ohio, Morgan and many of his men were captured and imprisoned at Chicago's Camp Douglas. There, over 12,000 Confederate prisoners were being held at any one time during the war. Of that number up to 6,000 died from freezing to death or scurvy, dysentery, smallpox and other deadly diseases.

The Confederate Secret Service planned a daring escape attempt. Judge William E. Cleary had enlisted early in the Kentucky military but was soon called to Richmond and assigned duties as the secretary to the Confederate legation in Canada.

He appointed Lt. Bennett Young an officer of Morgan's command to be put in charge of the operation. During the summer a group of Southern loyalists and sympathizers planned to seize various prison camps throughout the country, release the Confederate prisoners and assume political control of the North. Their original intention was to strike during the convention of the National Democratic Party at Chicago in August. The "Supreme Grand Council" of this group met in Chicago on July 20, 1864 and planned a series of training meetings for their people. They set August 28, as the date on which to strike. Higbee and Wood were on a list to be given pistols by Judge Cleary and a list of Lt. Young shows Higbee and Wood in on the attack to free Morgan's men. Through particularly good detective work, their movements were known and watched. On August 9, Northern detectives alerted Washington and Camp Douglas was reinforced and the Southern escape plan was abandoned.

Another plan was soon developed. Lt. Young organized twenty-two men mostly Kentuckians including Higbee and Wood for an attack on St. Albans, Vermont. The raid was planned to avenge attacks on Southern cities, to obtain money badly needed by the cash strapped Confederacy, and to cause confusion and panic on the Northern border and to pull badly needed troops from the front lines.

The raiders in civilian clothing entered town by train in twos and threes over a 10-day period all armed with two to four Colt revolvers. They planned on robbing all three banks in town and taking local horses for their escape. During the raid local citizens armed themselves and fired at the raiders. Only one citizen was killed, Elinus Morrison who was running towards town

**Continued On Page 6...**

***Petersen continued from Page 5...***

to help. Refusing the order to stop he was shot by Higbee and died two days later. Having robbed the banks of \$200,000 the Confederates began to gather in the city park. The local newspaper stated, "During the period of their stay, they uttered fearful threats and a good deal of blasphemy. They had fired their pistols many times with the greatest impunity."

Lt. Bennett recorded that Higbee wore a black feather in his hat supposedly given to him by Quantrill. During the raid Higbee was severely wounded during the gunfight, shot "through and through" both shoulders according to Lt. Bennett. As they fled, Higbee couldn't stay in the saddle impeding the escape and was left behind in Vermont in the care of a Southern sympathizer. Higbee was soon secreted out of Vermont and into Montreal, Canada where he was treated for his wounds by Dr. Montrose Pallen at the St. John Baptiste Society.

After the war Higbee returned to Kentucky and started a mercantile business before moving to Texas and working as a cashier in the First National Bank in Fort Worth. It was said of him that he was, "one of the best men any country ever boasted of." Higbee died of "lock-jaw" in 1891 and was buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Fort Worth. In 1903, Higbee and his wife were re-interred in the Lexington Cemetery in Lexington, Kentucky.

Article by Paul R. Petersen

References: St. Albans Historical Society Museum, St. Albans, Vermont; Headley, John W., Confederate Operations in Canada, 1906, Neale Publishing Co.; Benjamin, L. N., The St. Albans Raid, T. L. Wilson Printer, Montreal, Canada; C. H. Higbee in History of Texas, 1895, pg 268-73.