



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.

Reconstruction in Missouri

The battles along the Missouri-Kansas border during the Civil War were bad enough for William Clarke Quantrill and his guerrilla band but few could have envisioned the hardships of what transpired in the aftermath. Though the Civil War lasted for four long years Reconstruction continued for almost twice that long and for the civilian population almost as harsh.

Following Appomattox with the surrender of all organized Confederate forces Union domination continued in cruel treatment of their former foes. During the war Yankees had invaded and stolen all Southern belongings, digging up graves looking for valuables, raping wives and sisters, killing old men and young boys and even pouring oil over fields to keep from growing crops for many years. Yankees stole every item of food to be found, burned down homes and left the citizens desolate and penniless. In Missouri roving bands of Federal vigilantes gathered in the middle of the night riding to the doorsteps of their former guerrilla enemies, calling them out of their beds and shooting them down on their doorsteps in the presence of their wives and children.

Guerrilla Harrison Trow recalled, The law which should have protected them was overridden. Indeed, there was no law. The courts were instruments of plunder. The civil officers were cutthroats. Instead of a legal process, there was a vigilance committee. Men were hung because of a very natural desire to keep hold of their property. To the cruel vigor of actual war, there had succeeded the irresponsible despotism of greedy highwaymen buttressed upon assassination. The border counties were overrun with bands of predatory plunderers. Some Confederate soldiers dared not return home and many guerrillas fled the country.

The Federals began closing in on Quantrill's men

one by one. Joseph Gibson had fought beside Quantrill in Kentucky at the end of the war and returned to Missouri after his surrender. A few days after returning to his home in Henry County, he was shot just a few feet outside his own door. Guerrilla William Hulse was surrounded at his farm in southeast Independence. Eighteen heavily armed men hid behind his barn and waited for Hulse to emerge from his house to go to the barn. Then they opened fire without warning leaving Hulse for dead. About the same time two men from Shawneetown, Kansas, killed one of Quantrill's former guerrillas, a soldier named Johnson, in Lee's Summit, Missouri. He had been with Quantrill on the October 17, 1862, Shawneetown raid. Even Quantrill's Negro bodyguard, Henry Wilson, was forced into hiding for ten years after the war.

Another Quantrillian, John C. Peters, was escaping out of Missouri through western Kansas and spotted by a group of vengeful Unionists. They waited in ambush for him to return to where he had his horse tied up. Peters stepped into a barbershop and had his whiskers dyed, then he went into a clothing store for a different set of clothes. When he entered the store the owner recognized him as having saved his life during the war. Aided by the storeowner, Peters escaped to Omaha, Nebraska, where he eventually settled before being allowed to return to his home in Liberty years later.

Guerrilla Oliver Shepherd wrote to the Federal commander in Liberty to say he and six of his men wanted to surrender but would only do so if they were allowed to keep their weapons and horses. Shepherd stated, "We must keep our side arms for you know we have personal enemies who would kill us at the first opportunity." They were told they would be given no special terms.

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Paul Petersen continued... Shepherd and his men subsequently surrendered. When they did, the Clay County sheriff arrested two of them, one for murder and the other for horse stealing—crimes committed during the war from which Union soldiers were exempt. After Theodore Cassell of William Anderson's company surrendered, a band of militia shot him down in cold blood in his barn lot. After killing him, a member of the militia amputated Cassell's finger so he could steal his wedding ring.

When Missouri Confederate General Joseph O. Shelby heard the news of Lincoln's death he exclaimed, "God help us! If that is true, it is the worst blow that has yet been struck the South." Andrew Johnson, ill-fitted for the high office which Lincoln's death had thrust upon him, wished to carry out Lincoln's policy of leniency and conciliation. But he could not control Congress, dominated by a radical group who believed that ex-Confederates were incorrigible, that the South must be held under an iron yoke. For ten years their harsh doctrines prevailed. In Missouri the Radical Republicans in control of the State offices set up the Iron Clad Oath denying any of their former enemies to take part in government, education or law. The Iron Clad Oath was a key factor in the removing of ex-Confederates from the political arena. To take the Iron Clad Oath, a person had to swear he had never borne arms against the Union or had "voluntarily" given "no aid, countenance, counsel or encouragement" to persons in rebellion and had exercised or attempted to exercise the functions of an office under the Confederacy or to have even tacitly supported secession. The Iron Clad Oath also covered the offices of attorneys, teachers, newspaper editors, ministers, railway workers, Federal employees, Federal elected officials and other professionals. The Radical Republicans with the backing of Federal bayonets had long ago forced out any judges or state officials that questioned their authority. With the state government completely in their control the stage was set for greed, graft and unspeakable corruption.

Northerners called Carpetbaggers raced south after the war for purposes of political profit. They were joined by poor whites who earned the ire of their Southern neighbors and soon earned the contemptible name of Scalawags. President Johnson divided up the defeated South into military districts each ruled by a former Union general in command of Federal troops many of them former slaves in order to exert martial law.

With Northerners in control of all areas of state and local governments high taxes were levied against ex-Confederates forcing many of them to lose their homes and farms. The looting of Southern state treasuries under carpetbagger rule brought with it a wave of cynicism and distrust unmatched in past history. Congressmen and even cabinet members were involved in scandals. Contracts for public works, franchises for water, light, or street railways, even the licensing of a lowly pushcart peddler, offered opportunities for graft. Most notable was the Boss Tweed Ring in New York City whose members grabbed \$70,000,000 from the city treasury and gained another \$100,000,000 in bribes. **Continued on Page 8...**



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While unethical and immoral behavior had always been anathema in the genteel societies of the Old South the new wave of crime, greed and immorality had to be stopped at whatever cost. Most galling to Southern people was the active participation of Negroes in politics. Inexperienced Negro voters lent themselves to exploitation by unprincipled men. In North Carolina and Alabama negro convicts were made justices of the peace; men who were unable to read or write. The carpetbaggers and scalawags formed secret societies holding meetings on how to teach ex-slaves how to take vengeance on their former masters. They were then given arms and sent out in to the night to rape, kill and destroy. Barn burnings became a familiar happening to those former Confederates.

Along with the carpetbagger and scalawags came the Union League supported by Union militias made up of former slaves and former black soldiers. The illiterate, simple-minded freedman became easy prey for their political agenda. By promising them the land of their former owners in such phrases as "Forty acres and a mule," former slaves became pawns to these Northern crooks and the former slaves lost all incentive to work expecting an easy handout from those who were raping the state treasuries in order to enhance their political schemes. For those former slaves that did not support and vote for the Radical Republican's policies they were hanged and the crime blamed on former Confederates.

In the face of corrupt Federal occupation clandestine societies using sometimes harsh methods sprang up to combat these excesses. Most recognizable was the "Invisible Empire of the South," commonly called the Ku-Klux Klan. These secret societies pledged to uphold the ideals of the Lost Cause and the former old plantation system. To their credit their actions did bring about an end to Reconstruction until Federal troops were withdrawn and state and local government was returned to democratic ideals.

Article by Paul R. Petersen

Ref: *Truths of History* by Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Old South Institute Press, Harrisonburg, 2009.

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To the left: Capt. Harrison Trow at a Quantrill Reunion, and to right, a younger version of Cpt. Trow.

