



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.

The Real Kate King

When well intentioned but untrained individuals make decisions of historical impact that prove to be incorrect their erroneous opinions can have a ripple effect for ages.

A photo supposedly of Kate King, the wife of famous Missouri guerrilla leader William Clarke Quantrill, has only recently been brought into question regarding its authenticity. This is of great import since this is the photo most widely circulated and identified as being Kate King. The photo is in the files of the Jackson County Historical Society attributed to as being Kate King as well as being featured in numerous books and being posted on various web sites for many years. The photo claimed to be that of Kate King was identified as long ago as the 1950's and was supposedly confirmed by family members still living in Jackson County as being Kate when she was still alive in the 1930's.

But a recent call from a John Dawson claims the photo is actually his great, great, great, grandmother, Mary Eleanor Jarboe Shannon. Provenance shows that the image is in the family photo albums of several family members, besides Mr. Dawson, namely Steve Soden and Douglas Blodgett, all of whom are direct descendants of Mary Jarboe Shannon. The photo was taken in Kansas City in 1863, when Mary was 21 years old. It is identified in period ink on the reverse. While Kate King has been discovered to be between 4' 8" to 5' 1" in height, Mary Shannon was described as a tall, thin woman. Without proper provenance it might have been a natural misidentification as both women were exceptionally attractive for the period and shared some common features.

Mary Eleanor Jarboe Shannon was born on August 4, 1836, in Kansas City, Missouri, and married Patrick Shannon with whom she had six children. Mary's parents were Joseph Jarboe Jr. and Lydia Ann Clements from Kentucky. They left Kentucky with their children in 1834 before settling in Kansas City. Rather than being a Southern heroine Mary Jarboe Shannon was the wife of Kansas City merchant Patrick Shannon, a close ally of Unionist Robert Van Horn, mayor of Kansas City from 1864-65 and a colonel of the 25th Regiment, Missouri Volunteer Infantry. Robert Shannon served as a Captain in the 77th Enrolled Missouri Militia. Although the family did have friends and neighbors who were Southern sympathizers the Shannon's were staunch Union supporters. Mary Jarboe Shannon died on April 21, 1902, and is buried in Mount St. Mary's Cemetery in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Her husband Patrick Shannon born in 1824 died in 1871.

How do these misidentifications occur? I once met an individual who had a vast collection of Civil War photographs nearly all purchased from garage sales and flea markets. This individual swore that every one of his photos was of some famous personage. Even with zero provenance if individuals can get their photo image published or displayed on a website it will give the image an increased monetary worth and give credence to erroneous identifications.

Another example is from a call I received from an individual insisting that a photo he owned was of Archie Clement, one of Quantrill's guerrillas. When I informed him Archie died in 1866 and that the pistol he was holding in the photo was a cartridge type revolver not produced until after his death this individual was still undeterred in his assumptions. E-bay and other various websites are notoriously known for portraying bogus photos of

Quantrill and his men, most notably those of Frank and Jesse James and the Younger brothers.

Photos without any kind of provenance are many times misidentified. Photos in this classification have to be compared with another known image with rock solid provenance and the photos have to be compared by an expert. Comparisons are made mostly by facial features, such as the same hair-line, fullness or thinness of lips, shape of eyes and eyebrows, shape of nose, cheek bones, jaw line, shape of face and most telling will be if the photos of both individuals have the same attached or unattached earlobes.

And just as it is an exciting find to discover a new and never before photo image of a well known historical character, it is just as satisfying to finally discover the truth in the identification of a well known but misidentified and misrepresented photo image that all are acquainted with.

I wish to thank John Dawson for bringing this photo to our attention and to Emory Cantey for permitting the general public to view his 100% provenanced Civil War era photos including those of Kate King on the canteymyerscollections.com website.

Article by Paul R Petersen,

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Reference: John Dawson family album and memoirs: The Jarboes and the Shannons in Early Kansas City @pinecountyherald.blogspot.com

Steve Soden family album

Douglas Blodgett family album

Jackson County (Missouri) Historical archives

The Making of a Cowboy, Willie Newbury Lewis, U of Texas Press, 1972