September 23, 1864, was a cold and rainy day. That morning, a Union supply train, commanded by Captain James W. McFadden and an escort of 80 cavalrymen from the 3rd Missouri State Militia set out from Sturgeon to supply the troops stationed at Rochesport. The train consisted of 18 wagons that were driven by white and three black civilian teamsters pressed into service by the Union army. The supplies consisted of 18,000 rounds of ammunition, uniforms, and 1000 rations of food. The muddy roads impeded the progress of the wagons and it was dark when the supply train arrived at this point in the lane near Sylvester F. Goslin’s farm. The Union escort had already dismounted, and was making preparations to camp for the evening. Earlier in the day, Union Brigadier General J.B. Dollas had entered Rochesport, and learning that the supply train was still en route, ordered an additional 30 troopers to link up with McFadden that evening and escort the supply train to Rochesport the next day.

Three Union reinforcements had just arrived at Goslin’s Lane when they were suddenly attacked by 100 Missouri guerrillas under the commands of Bill Anderson, George Todd, Thomas Todd, and John Thrailkill. The surprise was so complete that the troopers had no opportunity to defend themselves. Many of the soldiers fled in an adjacent cornfield while others mounted and retreated to Columbia or Sturgeon. Twelve soldiers surrendered to the guerrillas and they were executed along with three black teamsters.

In his memoirs, guerrilla John McCorkle said of the encounter, “We dropped out of sight under a hill and, when about half of them had passed Goslin’s [sic] house, we dashed on them and they divided, fleeing in utter confusion.” Union Brigadier General J.B. Douglass wrote after the skirmish, “All the soldiers were shot in the head, showing that they had been murdered after being captured.” The guerrillas sustained one killed. The guerrillas took the ammunition and uniforms then set fire to the supply train. Then they rode north into Howard County.

Later that evening, Union troops commanded by Major Reyes Leonard of the 9th Missouri Cavalry from Fayette, surprised six guerrillas staying at the home or a southern sympathizer, near of Rockport. Five of the guerrillas were killed as they attempted to reach their horses to make their escape. One guerrilla, Cave Wyatt, was captured, and taken to Columbia where he was put in jail. Thirty revolvers were found on the horses and bodies of the guerrillas as well as scarp from Union soldiers hanging from the bridges. Evidence suggests that in retaliation, Union troopers scalped the corpses of the 5 guerrillas. Guerrilla Captain Bill Anderson was told by locals that these men had been mutilated and that the incident upset him very much. His resentment over the treatment of his men carried over to September 22, 1864, when he was engaged in the Centralia Massacre and Battle in which 23 Union unarmed soldiers were shot down in cold blood. Later that same day, a Union command, consisting of 155 troopers, were annihilated by Anderson’s guerrillas and after the battle, some of the corpses were mutilated.

During the Summer of 1864, Bloody Bill Anderson visited the town of Rochesport on many occasions, and called the town “my capital.” Rochesport is about 10 miles southwest of here, via Highway J and U.S. Highway 40. Pictured at right is an 1860 church that now serves as Rochesport’s community center.


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