

Attack at Goslin's Lane

Missouri's

CIVIL WAR

Prelude to Centralia

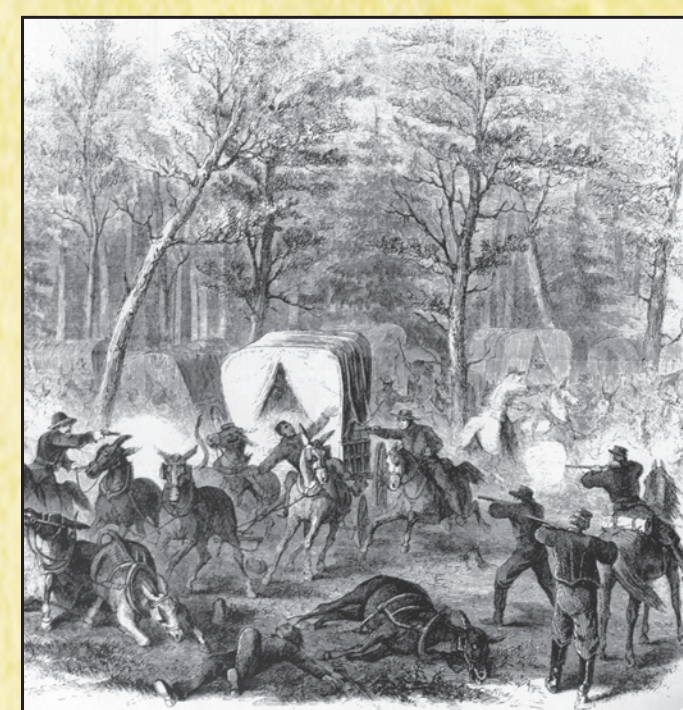
The guerrillas that attacked at Goslin's Lane took their booty of arms, ammunitions and supplies, and moved north into camp on Bonne Femme Creek, south of Fayette, Missouri. There, a number of independent guerrilla bands were collecting, including one commanded by William Clark Quantrill. These irregulars had been summoned by Confederate Major General Sterling Price to aid his expedition, which was at this time in southeast Missouri.



The next morning, September 24, 1864, these bands attacked a federal garrison in Fayette, with disastrous consequences for the Southerners. Attacking the brick courthouse and a fortified block house occupied by Union troops, Anderson lost 40 men, killed and wounded.

Frank James, who was also at Goslin's Lane, was to say that "The worst scared I ever was during the war was in the Fayette fight."

Bill Anderson led the attack on Fayette against the advice of Quantrill. In the days after Fayette, though, Anderson increasingly took the lead among the guerrilla leaders. The consolidated bands, now constituting probably the largest guerrilla force assembled in the western theatre of the war, moved northeast and destroyed much of the town of Renick, and threatened Paris, Missouri in Monroe County. They went into camp several miles southeast of Centralia on the evening of September 26, 1864. On the next day, the Massacre and Battle at Centralia occurred.



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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 cavalymen from the 3rd Missouri State Militia set out from Sturgeon to supply the troops stationed at Rocheport. 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. Douglass had entered Rocheport, 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 Rocheport the next day.

These 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 Thraikill. The surprise was so complete that the troopers had no opportunity to defend themselves. Many of the soldiers hid 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 3 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 Reeves Leonard of the 9th Missouri Cavalry from Fayette, surprised six guerrillas staying at the home of a southern sympathizer, north of Rocheport. 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 scalps from Union soldiers hanging from the bridles. 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 27, 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.



BLOODY BILL

William T. "Bloody Bill" Anderson was born in 1839 and grew up near Huntsville in Randolph County. As leader of a small army of secessionist guerrillas during the Civil War, he was known for his brutality toward Union soldiers, Kansas Jayhawkers and pro-Union civilians in Missouri and across the western border.



Anderson became a lieutenant in William Clarke Quantrill's Confederate guerrilla company. The two split in early 1864, and Anderson formed his own guerrilla band.

On September 27, 1864, four days after the fight at Goslin's Lane, Anderson led his bushwhackers to Centralia, where they barricaded the tracks of the Northern Missouri Railroad and forced a train to stop. They robbed the civilian passengers and killed 21 Union soldiers who were returning home on furlough. Union Major A.V.E. Johnston of the newly raised 39th Missouri Infantry Regiment set off with his men to pursue Anderson's band. A detachment lured Johnston's men into a trap and cut them down. Those who tried to surrender were executed. Around 120 mounted infantrymen were killed.

On October 26, 1864, militia Colonel Samuel P. Cox, assigned the task of eliminating Anderson, located him near Albany in Ray County. Cox sent a mounted detachment to lure the guerrillas into an ambush, and Anderson led his men in a charge straight into the waiting militiamen, who fired a volley. Anderson fell from his horse, shot through the head. A silk cord with fifty-three knots, allegedly found on Anderson, reportedly recorded the number of men he had killed.

During the Summer of 1864, Bloody Bill Anderson visited the town of Rocheport on many occasions, and called the town "my capital." Rocheport 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 Rocheport's community center.



Sources: O. R. Series 1, Vol. XLI, Part 1; Switzler, William F. *History of Boone County, Missouri* (St. Louis, MO: Western Historical Company, 1882) pp. 437-438; McCorkle, John, *Three Years With Quantrill: A True Story Told by his Scout John McCorkle* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992) p. 159.

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