

Danville Female Academy

The Danville Raid

On October 11, 1864, at Boonville, Missouri, confederate General Sterling Price met with an already infamous “Bloody Bill” Anderson, during Price’s westward march on his 1864 Missouri Expedition. Price instructed Anderson to take a



party east to disrupt and destroy the North Missouri Railroad. Anderson’s men traveled east on the Boonslick Road, passing through Franklin and Rocheport, and skirting Columbia, then continuing to Williamsburg and Danville. After the attack on Danville, described here, the raiders moved on New Florence and High Hill, to the east, and destroyed tracks and railroad facilities there. The damage to the railroad, however, was relatively slight, and the raiders ended

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Missouri's CIVIL WAR

You are standing on the site of the Danville Female Academy, and at your front is the sole surviving building of the Academy, the chapel and dormitory.

The Female Academy was founded in 1853 by the Reverend James H. Robinson at a time when Danville was an important stop on the Boonslick Road, and it is considered one of the first female “colleges” west of the Mississippi River. As shown by the woodcut at the upper right, the academy became a substantial facility during the years of its operation (1853-1865). The Rev. Robinson moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1865, and he became a prominent educator there.

On the evening of October 14, 1864, rebel horseman rode east into Danville on the Boonslick Road - a rare segment of which survives two blocks northwest of here. Danville was a predominately Unionist settlement at the time and was garrisoned by Union troops operating out of a large blockhouse that stood at the southeast corner of the public square. The night of Anderson’s Raid, these union troops were stationed several miles to the east, protecting the North Missouri Railroad.

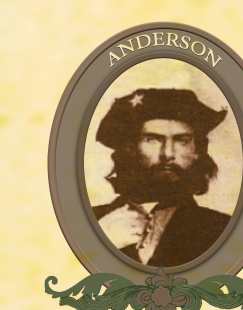
Arriving in town at 8:30 p.m. without warning, Anderson’s men began their rampage by indiscriminately killing several of the townspeople, including 12-year-old Ira Chinn. For three and one half hours, the southern raiders

practiced their grisly trade. Some, like “Little Archie” Clements had been at Centralia just two and a half weeks earlier and knew well how to terrorize a town. The raiders moved east, to New Florence, about midnight and left most of the town of Danville in flames and ruins. Still intact was the substantial brick home of Missouri legislator Sylvester Baker, which stands to this day down the road about a mile to the east.

The most fascinating story to come out of the Danville Raid happened right here. Guerrillas entered the academy grounds believing that Union troops had secreted themselves in the chapel and demanded the keys from Mrs. Robinson. While this scene transpired, some of the students housed in the second floor dormitory ran for the woods, while some came out to confront the guerrillas, claiming they were southern girls and begging that the school be spared. Local lore holds that one of the girls hung her petticoat on a staff over the front door of this place as a sign of truce. Whatever the reason, the school survived and this chapel survived, a testament to the grit of some young Missouri women, some northern and some southern in heritage.

This building was a Methodist Church until the 1950s and is considered by some to be the finest example of Greek Revival architecture still standing in central Missouri.

Learn more at www.mocivilwar.org



Was Bloody Bill Anderson at Danville? Major historians have disagreed on the issue of whether Anderson commanded the raiders at Danville, but some of the literature also places him at Glasgow, Missouri on the wrong date - i.e., on the same day as the Danville Raid. The Draper sisters believe they saw the infamous Anderson here. If he was not, then his sidekick, the diabolical “Little Archie” Clements (at right) was in command.



The Danville Raid

(continued)

their eastward dash well before reaching their objective, a bridge at the St. Charles County line.

After High Hill, Anderson’s men camped on the New Florence - Hermann Road several miles southeast of here, then crossed the Missouri River west of Hermann.



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Sources: “The History of St. Charles, Montgomery and Warren Counties,” St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1885; Letters of Laura and Eliza Draper, Gateway Heritage Magazine, Spring 1993.

