

THE BLACK FLAG AT LAWRENCE

The historical truth in uncovering many Civil War legends has never been more exemplified than in the photographic proof in images graciously shared by Emory Cantey in the Cantey-Myers Collection. One legend in particular taken as myth by Yankee society and skeptical historians is the legend about the Black Flag carried by Colonel William Clarke Quantrill's partisan ranger company during the August 21, 1863 Lawrence, Kansas raid. The Black Flag was a well-known symbol of ruthless combat, characterized by giving no quarter to the enemy. First instituted during the Civil War in Missouri by Union General Henry Halleck when he issued a general order on December 22, 1861, ordering all Federal troops operating under his command to summarily execute all guerrilla fighters when captured and those particularly serving under Quantrill along the Missouri-Kansas border. "Such men," he declared, "were to be immediately shot whenever captured." On January 1, 1862, Halleck published further orders for the treatment of captured guerrillas in the same vein. Forced to respond contrary to their nature as gentlemen to this un-Constitutional aberration of the Rules of War, Quantrill's guerrillas fought a war so brutal toward those waging total war on women, children and unarmed civilians that his name and reputation resounded throughout the country.

The story about Quantrill's Black Flag at Lawrence was first brought to light by one of Quantrill's officers, Lt. Coleman Younger in a book about his exploits during the Civil War and after called, *The Border Outlaws*, published in 1881. The heroine of this story was a young girl named Ann E. Fickle. The account of her presenting Quantrill a black flag with his name in scarlet has been dismissed by critics for over 150 years as being pure fabrication. The story unfolds in May, 1862, when Annie's family home was invaded by a company of Federal soldiers. They arrested Annie when she was found to be in the company of a guerrilla soldier. Later, the legend states that Annie was rescued by Quantrill's men, and she never forgot this act of bravery and kindness. As a token of her appreciation, Annie made a battle flag for Quantrill's company. The flag was made of four layers of black, quilted alpaca, and was three by five feet. Running edgewise through the middle of the flag was the name QUANTRELL in dark red letters. This was her response to the Union's recent order raising the Black Flag of 'no quarter'. Annie, in the dead of night, took the flag into Quantrill's camp near a little church in the Sni-a-Bar Township, wrapped in a piece of plain paper.

Walking to the center of Quantrill's camp she addressed the men in a patriotic tone saying, "It is a hard fate which awaits every brave Southern soul found in Missouri fighting for a cause as sacred to every true man as is the love of God...let the border ring with the cry of freedom. And ever let your battle cry be, Quantrill and Southern Supremacy!" Quantrill accepted the flag and gave a deep and heartfelt thank you to Annie. He promised to carry and protect the banner so long as he had life to do it. Guerrilla James Little was chosen as the initial color bearer. Quantrill's men gave three cheers, waving their hats, and giving full approvals, honors and recognition to this 20 year old Missouri girl who had risked her life to make this gift. The men attached the flag to an eight foot hickory pole, attached with twelve nails. The flag was carried into many battles and riddle with many bullets. During the Lawrence raid guerrilla Jack Swartz became the color bearer.

Now with the discovery and acquisition of Annie's recent photograph by noted collector Emory Cantey, Annie's story can be given historical provenance. Also adding to the provenance of the story is the additional photograph of guerrilla Jack Swartz, also in the Cantey-Myers Collection, holding the Black Flag of Lawrence. Swartz is also noted in Augustus Myer's photographic journal as being the flag bearer during the Lawrence raid. Swartz's own story attests to the fact that he rode with Quantrill during the raid when he was only sixteen years old and that he carried a Black Flag. After the Civil War

Swartz lived in El Paso, Texas. Upon his death Swartz specified that he be buried wrapped in the flag he carried at Lawrence. Those committed with carrying out his last wishes ignored his request. The flag then came into the possession of Lawrence, Kansas native, S. H. Sutherland where its subsequent location has become unknown.

With the recent acquisitions of photographs of Ann E. Fickle and Jack Swartz with their accompanying written documentation the legend of the Black Flag being carried at Lawrence is no longer a mere possibility but a historical fact.

References: *Quantrill at Lawrence*, Paul R. Petersen, Cumberland House Publishing, 2003.
The Border Outlaws, J. W. Buel, Historical Publishing Co. 1881.
Independence Examiner, November 2, 1923.
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