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# THE BORDER STAR

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WESTERN MISSOURI 1209 Skyline Dr. Liberty, MO 64068

## Bushwhacker Tales

by Fred George

*(This is the text of remarks given by Fred George to the "Bushwacker Picnic", held by the Friends of the Jackson County archives at Stephenson's apple orchard on October 1, 1994. ed)*

If it weren't for the "Bushwhackers", we wouldn't be having a picnic on this spot today. The history of the Bushwhackers has not been recorded in the same manner or detail as the histories of the armies of the Union and the Confederacy even though their history was a dramatic and important part of the Civil War. Bushwhackers were guerrillas, and the very nature of guerilla warfare requires stealth and secrecy. As a result, many different versions of the same stories have survived, but the details of each varies with the story teller!

### WHO WERE THE BUSHWHACKERS AND WHY DID THEY BECOME GUERRILLAS?

One of history's most "famous" Bushwhackers, Cole Younger, felt that the only way to right a wrong was to take up arms. This credo describes the motivation of many of these fierce and resourceful fighters. Men became Bushwhackers for various reasons:

- A. "Bloody" Bill Anderson and others lost family members and were seeking revenge;
- B. Others believed strongly in the southern cause;
- C. Some felt that the Union troops were an army of occupation;
- D. Many joined the Bushwhackers in a backlash to Ewing's infamous Order No. 11. under which Civil liberties were ignored and a pledge allegiance to the Union was required to save your home from the torch or your property from confiscation; and
- E. Then there were the few who saw these times of disorder as a golden opportunity to plunder and pillage.

But for the most part the bushwhackers were young men who took to the saddle and the gun to avenge family losses incurred at the hands of the Union Army and its supporters

### BUSHWHACKER TALES

Not far from here, on the north side of the intersection at Truman East hospital, was the old Grinter farm. On July 6, 1864, C Company, of the notorious 2nd Colorado, chased four men right into an ambush of over a hundred Bushwhackers. Bushwhackers had this little trick of setting out decoys. When the eager Yankees chased the decoys, invariably what looked like easy prey turned in to an ambush. What is amazing is that this simple little tactic was used time after time and was rarely detected until it was too late. Oliver Wallace mentions in the 2nd Colorado newsletter **A Soldier's Letter** that "Captain Wagoner was unconscious of the presence of so large a body of the foe until they rushed forth from the dense thicket with a savage yell..." and poured a volley into the surprised scouts.

During hand to hand combat the "gallant Wagoner fell mortally wounded... dragging himself to one side he gave a farewell shot that sent an enemy reeling to the ground. He shouted " Give them death, boys" and breathed his last. C Company retreated under the onslaught returning the next day with a large force to retrieve the bodies of their fallen comrades. These men were buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, and one of the earliest markers of the Civil War was erected in their honor by the officers of the 2nd Colorado. Near here off

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safety. Another version of the story has Cole escaping dressed as a woman, but he was so big and rawboned that he would have been too ugly of a sight for even sore eyes to have let past. After the war, Cole and his relatives lived in the house for a couple of years. The house stood until a couple of years ago and there is still a family cemetery north and west of the old homestead. The cemetery has been heavily vandalized in recent years. In fact, the tombstone of Henry W. Younger, Cole's uncle, was seen leaning against a door in one of the local Haunted Houses that spring up every year at Halloween.

The Stonestreet orchard located behind the James A Reed Wildlife area was described as a place where you could hide and not see your own horse if you forgot where it was tied. Even today, the place is so thick you wonder how a man and a horse could penetrate it. Bushwhackers used it as a hiding spot because it was close to the old military mail run road which went from Independence, through Pink Hill, then past the cluster of farms that became Lee's Summit, through Pleasant Hill, and on to Harrisonville. Michael Tierney was a stage driver on the military road who was stopped by Cole Younger and forced to give up his newspapers. This may sound like a strange way to pick up the paper, but the few telegraphs in the area were controlled by the Union army and out of town newspapers were sometimes the only means of getting information. Younger told Tierney if he wanted to continue making the run unmolested he better bring

extra copies of the paper. Once Younger stopped the stage at the railroad bend within sight of the Pleasant Hill courthouse. When Tierney was questioned during the war, he denied supplying the rebels with the newspapers, but on his deathbed he confessed to the truth.

A little known story is of John Noland a free black man who rode with Quantrill as his hostler. Union troops had dragged his father, a free black man, from his home and executed him. John Noland sought revenge for the death of his father and tried to join Quantrill. He was rebuffed time after time but Noland followed the Bushwhackers for several days setting up camp close by. As it happens, he was the first to see a Union force approaching Quantrill's camp in the Sni Hills. He rode into camp yelling and firing his gun to alerted the rebels of the impending raid. His act of bravery saved the day and a grateful George Todd asked that he be accepted as a member of the group. When he died in this century it was said by his old comrades that he was a "Man among Men". [all white pall bearers]The original Nolan farm was close to the present day I-470 and Raytown Road, and the Noland family cemetery is still visible there.

#### SUMMARY

One hundred and thirty years ago this site was in the center of the area of Bushwhacker activity. We know that this was the scene of a raid by Yankee troops on a camp of Confederate sympathizers. The union men were on patrol from Independence discovered the camp and charged. The guerrillas were given very little warning by the sentries before the camp was quickly overrun. Stories tell of only one casualty, a man whose name is debated to this day. Story has it that he lies in one of the graves on the hill that overlooks this spot; however, those graves are the resting places for two young girls killed in a cabin fire a few years after the war. All agree however that he was buried in a unmarked grave where he fell here in the orchard.

After the war, the bushwhackers suffered for their southern leanings. Loyalty oaths were required and most were denied voting rights for years. The men remained loyal to each other and had reunions of Quantrill's men into the 1920's.

Many of their descendants still live in the area and their family stories are worth seeking out. One of the best sources on the guerrillas is *Branded as Rebels* by Joanne Eakin and Don Hale.



## THE PRESIDENTS CORNER

by Sonny Wells

The Civil War Round  
Table of Western  
Missouri, 1209 Skyline  
Dr., Liberty, MO 64068  
(816) 781-7322 (Sonny)  
(816) 363-4072 (Fred)  
(913) 345-1853 (Ed)

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The newsletter staff  
welcomes suggestions and  
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Please address all  
inquiries for newsletter  
to:

Ed Harris

11508 W. 113th Street

Overland Park,

KS 66210.

For information about  
programs write or call:

Fred George

5442 Tracy

KCMO 64110

(816) 363-4072

The year is winding down and as I look back I remember such things as black walnut cookies, cider & donuts, . . . now cut it out, you all know I'm not supposed to indulge in those items (maybe that is why I remember them so fondly.)

I recall tours of battle sites and trail crossings, unexpected large turnouts at I meetings and the fun of sharing history and research with others. I think its been a good year.

Many of you read the July 8 article in the KC Star on Medal of Honor winner "bad boy" John Kile (Kyle) in which I stated **"No Ceremony for this guy, absolutely not!"** Well, you can change the tune on this one. His MOH memorial has arrived and will be dedicated on Sat. November 12 at 10 am at the Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery. Because of the national attention involved in this, what was planned as a small private memorial dedication may in fact become a media event. The public is now invited to attend.

Likewise, on Sunday November 6, in Lincoln, Nebraska, a soldier who was personally breveted to Brigadier General by President Lincoln 3 days before he was assassinated will get his medal of honor.

Victor Vifquain is the only Belgian born national to receive the Medal of Honor. He was with the 53rd NY Volunteers before transferring to the 97th Illinois in 1862. He was awarded the Medal on June 8, 1865 for capturing the enemy colors at Fort Blakely, Alabama, on April 9, 1865.

I heard several comments on Ed's story about the Sultana. Great story Ed! Bob Mannshein has a book on the incident which is of recent publication. Bob says it is very interesting reading. Try your local library or contact Bob for info on where he found it.

Fred tells me that the Christmas Party Committee has secured the use of the Upper Level of the Loose Park Garden Center for the December 10 party. *(this is upstairs from last year's party and is wheel chair accessible.)* Set up is noon to 1 and the party will last until 5. Potluck or your favorite dessert will be welcomed. A ham or meat trays will be provided by the committee. A DOUBLE batch of "slush" is being prepared. Anyone wishing to help should contact Fred George or Bob Benson. Door prizes will include a Battle of Wesport belt buckle (one of only six remaining), a book on Civil War Battlefields and a tape of Civil War music. Drawing is at 4pm. (just after the Virginia Reel dance lessons.)

### MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The November meeting will be Wednesday, Nov. 9, at 7pm at the Truman High School Library, 3301 S. Noland Road in Independence. Fred George and Ed Harris will present a program of the "War Experiences of General Blunt". Elections for officers and some members of the board will also be held. Remember, this is YOUR group and this is the time when we will choose those members who will lead us in 1995. As outlined in our by-laws, the nominating committee will present a slate of recommendations and nominations for all elected positions will be received from the floor.