

September , 1993

Vol 1. No. 10

## THE BORDER STAR

A Publication of the CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE of  
WESTERN MISSOURI 1209 Skyline Dr. Liberty, MO 64068

# GUERRILLAS ATTACK STEAMER AT SIBLEY LANDING

### TROOPS MASSACRED ON SAM GATY

by Ed Harris

The town of Sibley, located downriver east of Liberty, was a favorite target of Kansas "redlegs" and bushwackers from the surrounding counties. On one occasion all the warehouses, stores, and many dwellings were burned to the ground by the Union Army of occupation.

Early in the spring of 1863, Quantrill and approximately 300 of his followers had returned to the Missouri river valley after wintering in Texas. These men were well mounted and heavily armed with three or four Colt revolvers each. Their immediate intentions were to attack detachments of Federal troops or to capture lightly guarded supply trains.

On March 27, Capt. W.H. Gregg overheard citizens in Napoleon, Lafayette county, discussing the fact that the steamboat Sam Gaty was coming up river and due to pass upstream that night, laden with supplies from St. Louis destined for Fort Leavenworth. Gregg instantly determined to capture the boat and destroy it. He sent summons to his men, scattered around the countryside, to meet him in Napoleon. At nightfall, seven men rode into town only to discover that the Sam Gaty had passed by an hour before. It was unusual for boats to move at night, the current being swift and many snags making navigation difficult. The owner, John Baldwin, was aboard and fearing an attack by guerrillas, he had decided to press on.

Captain Gregg had not arrived in Napoleon but the seven guerrillas, not wanting to miss such a big prize, headed off down the road to Sibley, about 15 miles away. A grist mill stood on the bank of the Missouri at Sibley. The current forced boats to pass within 20 feet of the bank.

The seven guerrillas hid in the mill and waited. As the Sam Gaty appeared, slowly and noisily making its way upstream, Capt. Gregg and another man arrived on foaming steeds, fearful of missing the action. At 2:00 a.m. the boat was hailed twice by the heavily armed men and the pilot steered the boat towards shore. They ordered the captain ashore and then rushed aboard, robbing the passengers of their money and valuables.

On board were several Federal soldiers under command of the hated Colonel William R. Penick, and nine free black men, destined for Kansas. The soldiers and the "contrabands" were taken ashore and shot, their bodies dumped in the river.

The passengers and crew were compelled to throw overboard 300 sacks of flour, 48 wagon beds, bacon, and considerable private property. The guerrillas intended to burn the Sam Gaty but the owner pleaded with them to spare his boat. He stated that while the cargo belonged to the government the boat was his own private property. The guerrillas, including Todd, Yeager, and Younger (according to a report in a Kansas City newspaper dated March 29), assented to this reasonable request and the Sam Gaty was allowed to proceed.

Scattering into the county, the guerrillas crossed the river at Blue Mills and went into hiding with friends in Clay county.

The first word of the attack was telegraphed to Brig. General Benjamin Loan, commander of the Missouri State Militia, by Col. William R. Penick:

*Independence, March 28, 1863. Gaty robbed today by Guerrillas. Meyers and Henry of Company E, killed; others escaped. Twenty negroes killed.*

The next day, Brig. Gen. Benjamin Loan wrote to Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis, Commander, St. Louis.

*"I write this now to say that there can no longer be any question but that the contest for supremacy in this state must be made a war of extermination...It is utterly impossible for both parties longer to dwell together. The guerrillas...are waging a relentless, cruel, and bloody war upon our unarmed and defenseless citizens, and are determined to continue it until the last loyal citizen is murdered, or is driven from his home to escape being murdered. The loyal citizens look to us for protection...and it is the imperative duty of the government...to give them protection. ...I feel some hesitancy in*

(continued on page 2)



(continued from page 1)

resorting to any stringent policy without first having your sanction. If ordered "to compel peace in my district," in 40 days an honest man can ride from one end of it to the other without question or being harmed...

Major Gen. Curtis reported to his superior, Maj. Gen. H.W. Halleck on April 3:

*A band of guerillas took steamer Sam Gaty and murdered several soldiers and 9 contrabands. Gen. Loan telegraphs that Col. King, in pursuit, had two fights yesterday with the guerrillas, totally routing them, mortally wounding their chief.*

Curtis responded to Loan on April 3;

*...I hope your troops have avenged that infernal slaughter on the Sam Gaty. I suppose the people of Sibley and the officers of the boat may not be culpable. Still, the people of Lexington-some of them-must have known the matter was going on. Gen. Vaughn said to me he heard such talk, but did not heed it. It would be well now to find out who in Lexington engaged in such talk and the nature of the talk, for it seems to be admitted the guerrillas followed the boat a long distance, and some of them may have gone from Lexington. That place is far from being void of secession...*

The Liberty Tribune editorialised on April 3:

*"For one, we would like to know what good such acts accomplish for any party? For the life of us we can't see the point, outside the stealings. Such acts only tend to fill the country with soldiers, and cause more rigorous measures to be pursued with the people. We care not how orderly an army may be, its occupation of a country is destruction to it, and under this view of matters, how important is it that the people remain quiet and keep out all the lawless parties, calculated to bring troops into their midst? The presence of guerrillas and the like, is desolation, as all past experience in this war proves. Citizens of Clay county beware, and not ruin yourselves before you know it."*

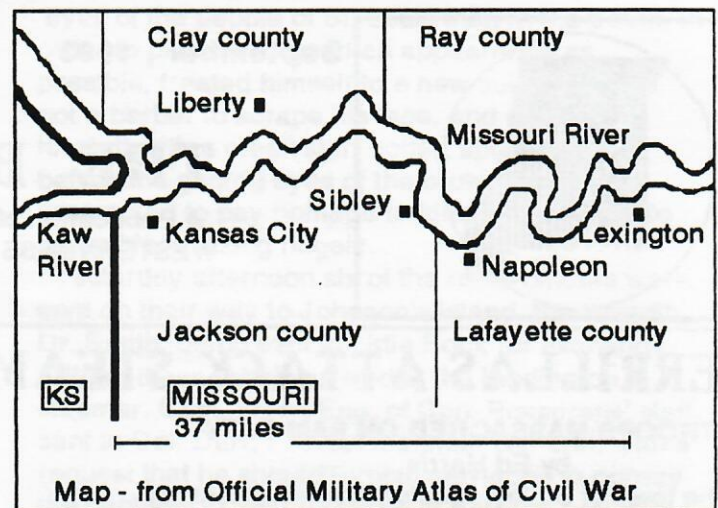
NOTE: The boat was named in honor of Sam Gaty, a prominent businessman of St. Louis. The name was originally spelled Getty. The family came from Germany and settled in Pennsylvania. The Gettys founded the town of Gettysburg. The Sam Gaty survived the war but on June 27, 1867, near Arrow Rock, she struck a bluff bank, knocked her boilers down, caught fire and sank.

Sources used for this article:

The War of the Rebellion - Official records of the Union and Confederate Armies.

The Liberty Tribune April 3, 1863.

The Kansas City Star July 13, 1919.



### BOOK REVIEW

#### **EMBRACE AN ANGRY WIND, The Confederacy's Last Hurrah: Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville.**

Written by Wiley Sword. Available at KC Public Library.

This book is a must for Civil War buffs. Sword is an historian who thoroughly knows his subject. He has the knowledge and ability to put you there in the mud and blood and to feel the pain and fear. This is an epic story with charges rivaling Pickett's, slaughters rivaling the Bloody Angle, marching and fighting over frozen ground, and bare feet that exceeds Valley Forge.

More than just a recitation of a campaign, this book gives an understanding of the commanders, their flaws, strengths, background, and the effects of politics and prejudice. Sword cuts through the self serving statements and excuses and tells it like it was. This is narrative history at it's best.

Reviewed by Paul Johnstone

### THIS MONTHS TRIVIA

- 1.) What did Confederate soldiers call "gallinippers"?
- 2.) What two Confederate generals engaged in a fatal duel on Sep. 6, 1863, in Little Rock, Arkansas?
- 3.) When and where was the first emancipation proclamation issued and who authorized it?
- 4.) At what battle, fought in northern Mississippi did Gen. W.S. Rosecrans defeat Gen. Sterling Price?

### Answers to last month's trivia

- 1.) sorrel. 2.) Battle of Oak Hills. 3.) Gen. Thomas Ewing, author of the infamous "Order #11" and Gen. John McNeil, commander responsible for the Palmyra massacre. 4.) Simon Bolivar Buckner, installed as commander to replace Kirby Smith, who had been deposed by other Confederate Generals because he intended to surrender his army. Source: Gen. Jo Shelby, Undeclared Rebel, by Daniel O'Flaherty 1954.



# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

**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)**

## **Board of Directors**

President - Sonny Wells  
1st Vice Pres. Fred George  
Co-2nd Vice Pres. Sue Valentine  
and Connie McQuain  
Interim Sec - Karen Wells  
Interim Treas - Fred George  
Historian - Steven Gage  
Dr. Gerald Anderson - Ed  
Harris - Robert Benson - Tim Cox  
Harold Blackburn - Paul  
Johnstone - Steve Gage - Gaylen  
Goldsberry - Troy Chrisman.

## **Newsletter Staff**

Editor - Ed Harris  
Contributors - Fred George - Sonny  
Wells - Paul Johnstone.

## **Membership**

Total Membership - 81!

## **Annual Dues**

Individual membership -- \$15  
Family membership -- \$22.50  
Student membership -- \$5

The newsletter staff  
welcomes suggestions and  
contributions of material to  
the newsletter.

## **CLASSIFIEDS**

The items in this section should  
deal with pertinent historical  
subjects such as books,  
re-enactment attire, research  
assistance, metal detecting,  
genealogy, etc. The prices are as  
follows: \$3 for 15 words for  
members, \$5 for 15 words for  
non-members. Deadline is the  
20th of each month.

Have you read an excellent book  
recently on The Civil War? (Or a  
really bad one?) Let the news-  
letter staff know.

These past few weeks have been an up and down time. Finding the total destruction of the trench site at William Jewell, far beyond what we had been told, and the disappearance of the Civil War monument, was a big downer. I realize now that William Jewell College was just playing us along and I feel that the group, which met at the site, was obviously and intentionally deceived.

The Medal of Honor ceremony at Iola was a big upper. The ceremony went well and a nice crowd was in attendance despite the 101 degree heat. Steven Gage and Gaylen Goldsberry dressed out and participated in the ceremony. Steven, dressed as a military academy cadet, escorted Karen to the M.O.H. memorial during the floral tribute and Gaylen escorted the ladies from the Daughters of Union Veterans, Wichita Chapt., who placed a flag at the grave. This was the first time that Steven and Gaylen had participated in a M.O.H. ceremony. Karen was on the front page of Monday's Iola Register.

All the recent fussing over the site of Smith Cemetery has stirred up a bunch of folks. I think the site of this old cemetery will forever be a source of dispute. Some say one place, others another place. I think that, if one looks at the written historical data and plat books of the area, one site becomes evident. Very visible grave-like depressions in the area add credibility to this site. This is what makes history interesting. You can put five historians in a room and ask a question. You will most likely get four answers of varying content and one "I don't know."

**FOR SALE: 16X20 WATERCOLOR PRINTS OF JESSE JAMES  
FARM NEAR KEARNEY, MO. RENDERED BY JIM HAMIL.  
SIGNED AND NUMBERED: \$25. UNSIGNED: \$15.  
NOTECARDS: \$3. ALL PROCEEDS GO TO JAMES PLAY  
FOUNDATION. CALL JEANNE RALSTON AT 816-781-0920  
OR WRITE: JAMES PLAY FOUNDATION, BOX 101,  
LIBERTY, MO 64068.**

## **\* \* \* ANNOUNCEMENTS \* \* \***

The September general meeting will be at the Truman High School Library, 3301 S. Noland Road, Sept. 8, at 7:00p.m. This meeting will be an open forum. Members are encouraged to speak briefly on a topic of their own choice. The last open meeting generated some interesting and lively discussions so try not to miss this one. Call Fred at 363-4072 if interested in participating or just sign in at the meeting.

The October meeting, Wed. Oct. 13, will feature Dr. Douglas Scott, Head of Archaeological Research, Western Region, National Park Service. Dr. Scott's program will be about new evidence uncovered at The Little Big Horn National Battlefield. More in next month's newsletter.

The CWRTWM would like to thank Sister Elda Mae Billing and the folks at the LDS Visitors Center for the use of their meeting room last month on such short notice.



Fort Scott, October 27, 1864

To Major General Rosecrans:

I attacked General Price yesterday on the Osage, and captured Major General Marmaduke, Brigadier General Cabell, ten pieces of artillery, four Colonels, and about 1000 men. Price burned over two hundred wagons, and blew up his ammunition train. His army is disorganized. Several thousand stand of arms have been picked up.

They are fleeing to Arkansas.

Price's force was 25,000 men. (8000 ed.) Mine was between five and six thousand. I marched ninety two miles in two days, and fought for the last two miles.

Escaped prisoners state that Price's army is routed. General Fagan is reported killed.

A. Pleasanton, Major General.

LIBERTY TRIBUNE

November 11, 1864

(from the ST. LOUIS DEMOCRAT)

DEPARTURE OF MARMADUKE, CABELL, & CO

-Major General Marmaduke and the other captive rebel officers who arrived here on Wednesday afternoon, were visited at Barnum's by numerous rebel friends and admirers. Marmaduke, finding that he was a more important personage in the

eyes of the people of St. Louis than in the South, in order to present as good an appearance as possible, treated himself to a new suit of clothes, got a barber to scrape his face, and decorated himself with a clean shirt collar, spread himself before the gaping eyes of the crowd who assembled to pay homage to him, and seemed to enjoy his lionizing hugely.

Yesterday afternoon six of the rebel officers were sent on their way to Johnson's Island, the seventh, Dr. Smith, being sent to Little Rock for exchange.

When these rebels arrived at the landing on a steamer, Capt. Frank Eno, of Gen. Rosecrans' staff, sent to Col. Darr, Provost Marshall General, with a request that he should furnish carriages to convey the captives to their lodgings at Barnum's Hotel. Col. Darr, whose military education was received in a different school from that of the Assistant Adjutant, sent word to him that he had no vehicles for any such purpose, and that the only "lodgings" he could furnish the rebel prisoners were those in the Gratiot Street Prison! Notwithstanding this blunt answer, the chivalric rebs were escorted in state to Barnum's, and feasted like princes.

The rebel officers appeared to be well supplied with greenbacks, and made the most of their time while permitted to remain as guests of the best hotel in the West.

CWRTWM  
1269 SKYLINE DR.  
LIBERTY, MO 64068

R. Sue Valentine  
572 Fifth Main  
Independence, MO 64050