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Quantrill's Raiders devastated the town of Lawrence, Kansas on August 21, 1863. The Confederate guerrillas were punishing Kansas for its anti-slavery stance. This image, illustrating the carnage, was published in the September 5, 1863 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. Online via Library of Congress. PD

About three months after Union-supporting militiamen nearly killed Jesse' stepfather, guerilla-inspired violence erupted in Kansas. Nearly a decade before, the Missouri Compromise had been repealed in favor of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, allowing new states to decide for themselves - through a popular vote - whether to enter the Union as "free" or "slave."

Abolitionists from New England had moved to Kansas, hoping to sway the "free" vote. "Bushwhackers" and "border ruffians" tried to <u>convince people</u> otherwise.

After <u>much bloodshed</u>, Kansas finally entered the Union as an anti-slavery state on the 29th of January, 1861. Since Nebraska had also entered as a free state, the delicate balance between "free" and "slave" states - once so carefully engineered by the Missouri Compromise - was disrupted. By that time, however, the issue was moot. Southern states had already left the Union, forming an independent country called the Confederate States of America.

In August of 1863, <u>William Quantrill</u>, and about four hundred of his Confederate raiders, decided to avenge the state's anti-slavery stance. They would attack Lawrence, Kansas, a small town just across Missouri's northwest border. Of Quantrill, noted civil-war historian, James McPherson, says this:

The son of an Ohio schoolteacher, Quantrill had drifted around the West until the war came along to give full rein to his particular talents. Without any ties to the South or to slavery, he chose the Confederacy apparently because in Missouri this allowed him to attack all symbols of authority. He attracted to his gang some of the most psychopathic killers in American history. In kaleidoscopic fashion, groups of these men would split off to form their own bands and then come together again for larger raids. (James M. McPherson, <u>Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era</u>, page 785.)

Quantrill ostensibly attacked Lawrence - where residents were still asleep the morning of August 21st, 1863 because its citizens had advocated "free" statehood. Historical accounts differ on whether Frank James was part of the attack. Whoever participated, Quantrill and his guerillas <u>destroyed the town</u> - and <u>massacred</u> about <u>150 men and boys</u> - during four hours of unbelievable brutality. As the *Leavenworth Daily Conservative* noted, two days later, Lawrence was left as "one mass of smouldering ruins and crumbling walls."

As the war dragged on, <u>Christmas of 1863</u> was not a happy time for many Americans. The raging conflict, which continued to tear the country apart, was on everyone's mind. On the mind of Jesse James, however, was something else. He wanted to be like his brother. He wanted to ride with a group of Confederate guerillas, not just be a messenger for them.

Barely past <u>age sixteen</u>, Jesse was involved in one of the most infamous episodes of America's Civil War. It started at <u>Centralia</u> (then a small Missouri town) when William ("<u>Bloody Bill</u>") Anderson and his Confederate guerillas (variously called bushwhackers and partisans) murdered a group of unarmed Union soldiers going home on leave.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ATROCITIES-in-KANSAS-Jesse-James

See Learning Tasks for this story online at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ATROCITIES-in-KANSAS-Jesse-James</u>

Media Stream









<u>"Bleeding Kansas"</u> U.S. Army image, courtesy Command and General Staff College. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/-Bleeding-Kansas-</u>

Destruction of Lawrence, Kansas Image, Library of Congress. From Harper's Weekly September 19, 1863 Image, Page 604

Information and quoted passage, Page 603 View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Destruction-of-Lawrence-Kansas

Christmas, 1863 by Thomas Nast

Image, Library of Congress. From Harper's Weekly December 26, 1863 Pages 824-25. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Christmas-1863-by-Thomas-Nast

Jesse James, Age 16 Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Jesse-James-Age-16</u>



Location of Centralia, Missouri Image online, courtesy epodunk.com website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Location-of-Centralia-Missouri



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