

0. ATROCITIES in MISSOURI - Story Preface

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During America's Civil War, "Bushwhackers" like William Anderson tried to aid the Confederate Army. Their actions, however, caused terror among civilians as well as Union soldiers. This image, which was published in the September 5, 1863 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, depicts a rebel attack in Lawrence, Kansas. Online via the Library of Congress.

During August of 1864, William Anderson (and other guerilla leaders) had orders to cause trouble north of the Missouri River, thereby allowing Confederate commanders to more easily move their troops into the southeastern part of the state.

If the partisans could keep Federal soldiers busy north of the river, the invading Confederate troops could proceed, largely unhindered, south of it. Their plan was to capture St. Louis or, if that seemed unattainable, Jefferson City (the state's capital).

The *Official Records* of the war indicate the Confederate strategy - supported by so many people north of the Missouri River - was working. By late September, 1864, Union commanders were gravely concerned not only about Confederate guerillas ("bushwhackers") but also about the local population:

- *A large force of guerrillas crossed from Jackson to Clay County last night and are this morning threatening Liberty* [a Missouri town]. . . *Guerrillas swarming in every brush patch.* (Official Records: Series 1, Vol 41, Part 3, page 453.)
- *Our movements, though made as secretly as possible, are discovered by the bushwhackers' friends and revealed from one to another. The citizens at home are our secret and most dangerous foes, and in no spot of all our disturbed territory [i.e., where fighting takes place] has the rebellion more earnest friends than in the Missouri River counties of this district ... How shall these guilty people be brought to repentance and good works? . . . Depopulation and devastation are extreme measures, but if this infernal warfare continues it will be humane and economic of human life to adopt and vigorously enforce such measures wherever the bushwhackers have more friends than the [Federal] Government.* (Official Records: Series 1, Vol 41, Part 3, page 454.)
- *Commanding officer at Liberty advises us of an invasion [of Confederate partisans] in Clay County and asks two companies for re-enforcements . . . The whole force of bushwhackers are supposed to be on this side of the Missouri River.* (Official Records: Series 1, Vol 41, Part 3, page 455.)

In late September, Anderson - and the majority of eighty guerillas under his command - rode to the rail-side town of Centralia. While there, they heard the whistle of a train en route from St. Louis with 125 passengers (including twenty-two* home-bound soldiers who had fought with General Sherman in Atlanta).

Anderson (who had not known the train was expected when he rode into town) ordered his partisans (some of whom were disguised in Northern uniforms) to block the track.

When the train made its forced stop, Anderson's men (a teen-aged Jesse James among them) ordered everyone to get off. The Union soldiers were separated from the rest of the passengers. After making the Yankees give up their uniforms, Anderson and his band killed all but one. Some of the defenseless men were scalped.

The first notice of this incident, as documented in the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, was telegraphed from Brig. Gen. Clinton Fisk to General Douglass:

GENERAL: Anderson and his friends captured the train from Saint Louis to-day at Centralia Station, killed 21 soldiers who were on the train, robbed the passengers, and burned the cars.
(Official Records: Series 1, Vol 41, Part 3, page 423.)

A later follow-up, sent at midnight the next day, provides more details:

...my telegrams have advised you of the disasters at Centralia, the capture of the railway train, the inhuman slaughter of the defenseless soldiers thereon, the robbery of the passengers, the burning of the moving train, and the indignities visited upon helpless women must be regarded as one of the chief barbarisms of the war. (Official Records: Series 1, Vol 41, Part 3, page 453.)

Within hours of the massacre, Major A.V.E. Johnston - the leader of about 155 relatively inexperienced men from the 39th Missouri Infantry Volunteers - chased down Anderson and his men. But victory on that day - September 27, 1864 - would not be for the North. Luring Johnston and about 125 of his men into an ambush, with no means of escape, Anderson lived up to his nickname.

* Some accounts say there were twenty-four Union soldiers on the train, but that is inconsistent with the *Official Records* of the war.

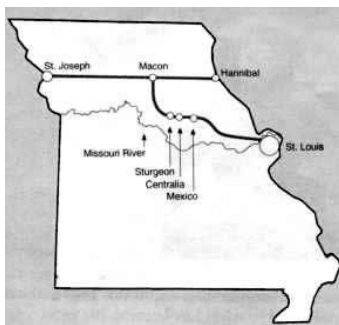
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ATROCITIES-in-MISSOURI-Jesse-James>

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Media Stream



Confederate Partisan Map, September 1864

Map, courtesy Centralia.org

Quoted passage from Series 1, Vol 41, Part 3, page 453 (Official Records - *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Confederate-Partisan-Map-September-1864>



Jefferson City, Missouri During the Civil War

Image, Library of Congress.

From *Harper's Weekly*

July 6, 1861

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Jefferson-City-Missouri-During-the-Civil-War>



William Tecumseh Sherman

Image, U.S. Library of Congress.

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General Sherman in Atlanta

Image, Library of Congress from September, 1864 issue of *Harper's Weekly*.

Harper's Weekly

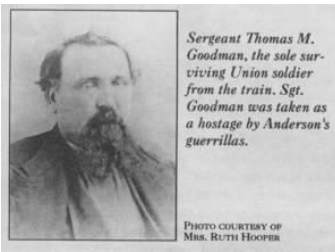
September 24, 1864

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First linked image, from the Library of Congress, depicts Union troops destroying railroad lines in Atlanta during Sherman's march to the sea. Photo by George N. Barnard (1819-1902) in 1864.

Second linked image, maintained by the Library of Congress, is "Sherman's march to the sea," by Felix Octavius Carr (1822-1895), the artist, and Alexander Hay Ritchie (1822-1895), the engraver. Date Created/Published: c. 1868.

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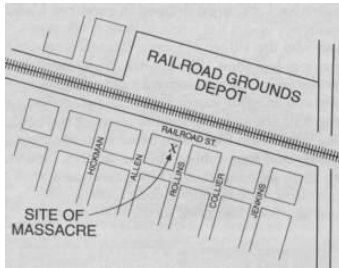


Thomas Goodman, Sole Survivor of Centralia Massacre

Photo of Sgt. Goodman, courtesy Centralia.org

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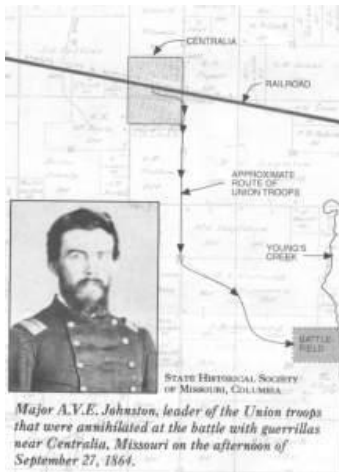
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Site of the Centralia Massacre

Drawing, courtesy Centralia.org

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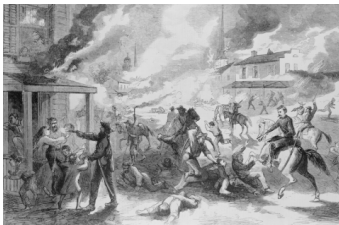


Major A.V.E. Johnston and the 39th Missouri

Image, Missouri State Historical Society.

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