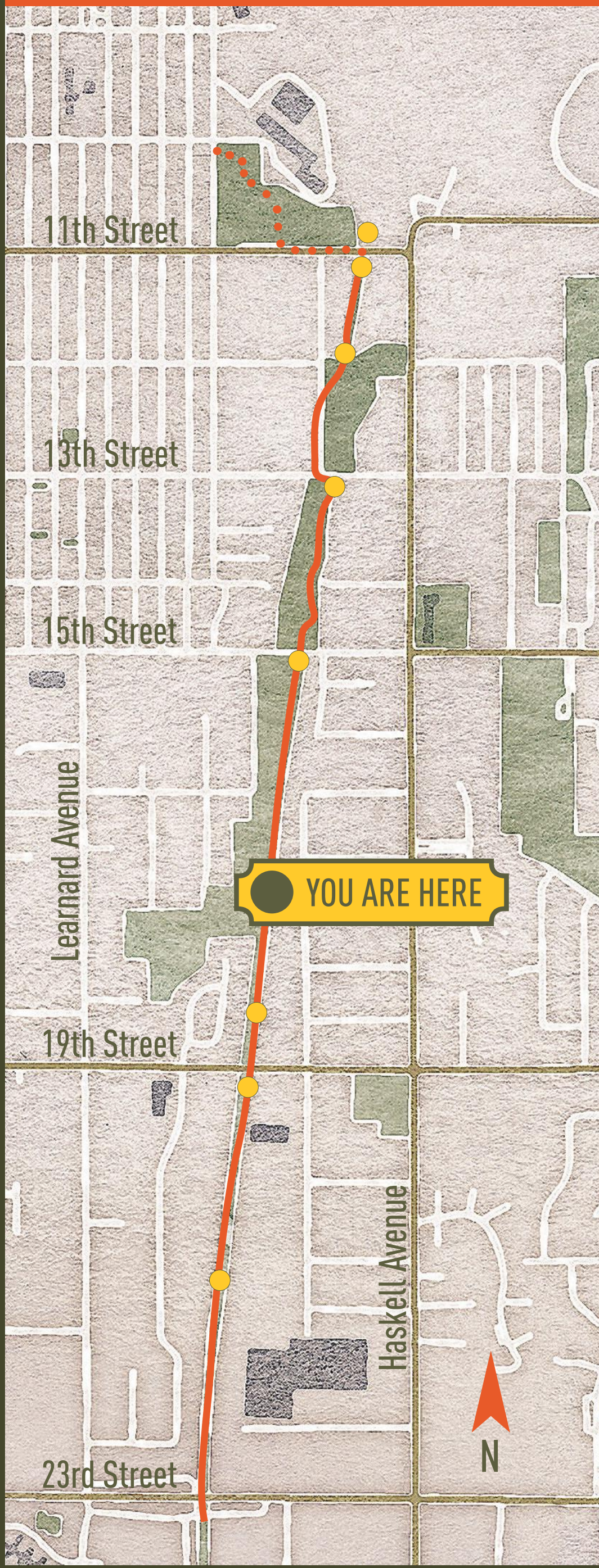


QUANTRILL'S CROSSING

BURROUGHS CREEK TRAIL & LINEAR PARK



Around 5 a.m. on August 21, 1863, some 400 pro-Confederate guerrillas on horseback led by William Clarke Quantrill passed near this point on their way to “burn every house and kill every man” in Lawrence

Lawrence had long aroused the ire of pro-slavery sympathizers. During the territorial period in the 1850s, this Kansas free-state citadel founded by abolitionists and anti-slavery adherents had been sacked once by Missouri-based “border ruffians” and threatened on several other occasions.

As such, when the Civil War began in 1861, Lawrence had much cause for alarm. Located little more than 40 miles from Kansas City, Lawrence was well within range of attack by the pro-Southern irregulars or “bushwhackers” that roamed western Missouri.

Indeed, during fall of 1862, guerillas under Quantrill’s command had raided two locations in Johnson County, Kansas. In the months leading up to the attack, Lawrence residents had begun to make defensive preparations, but these would prove inadequate.

Quantrill and his followers may have justified their assault on Lawrence as a means of furthering Confederate war aims. But there were other motivations as well, ranging from looting and plunder to revenge for outrages perpetrated by Union forces against secession-leaning Missourians.

Quantrill himself may have developed some personal animosity toward Lawrence during his short tenure in the city just prior to the outbreak of the war. Additionally, the accidental collapse of a Kansas City jail in mid-August 1863 that killed several women prisoners with familial and romantic ties to some of Quantrill’s gang members may have further provoked a desire by Quantrill and his men to seek vengeance.

On August 18, 1863, approximately 290 of Quantrill’s followers gathered near Columbus, Missouri. This cadre

grew to over 400 by the time the raiders reached the Kansas-Missouri border on the evening of August 20. Quantrill eluded most of the Union posts and patrols in the area. The raiders’ trek occurred under a half-moon. To ensure they moved as efficiently as possible, Quantrill’s men would question local residents – and then kill them once they had supplied the necessary information.

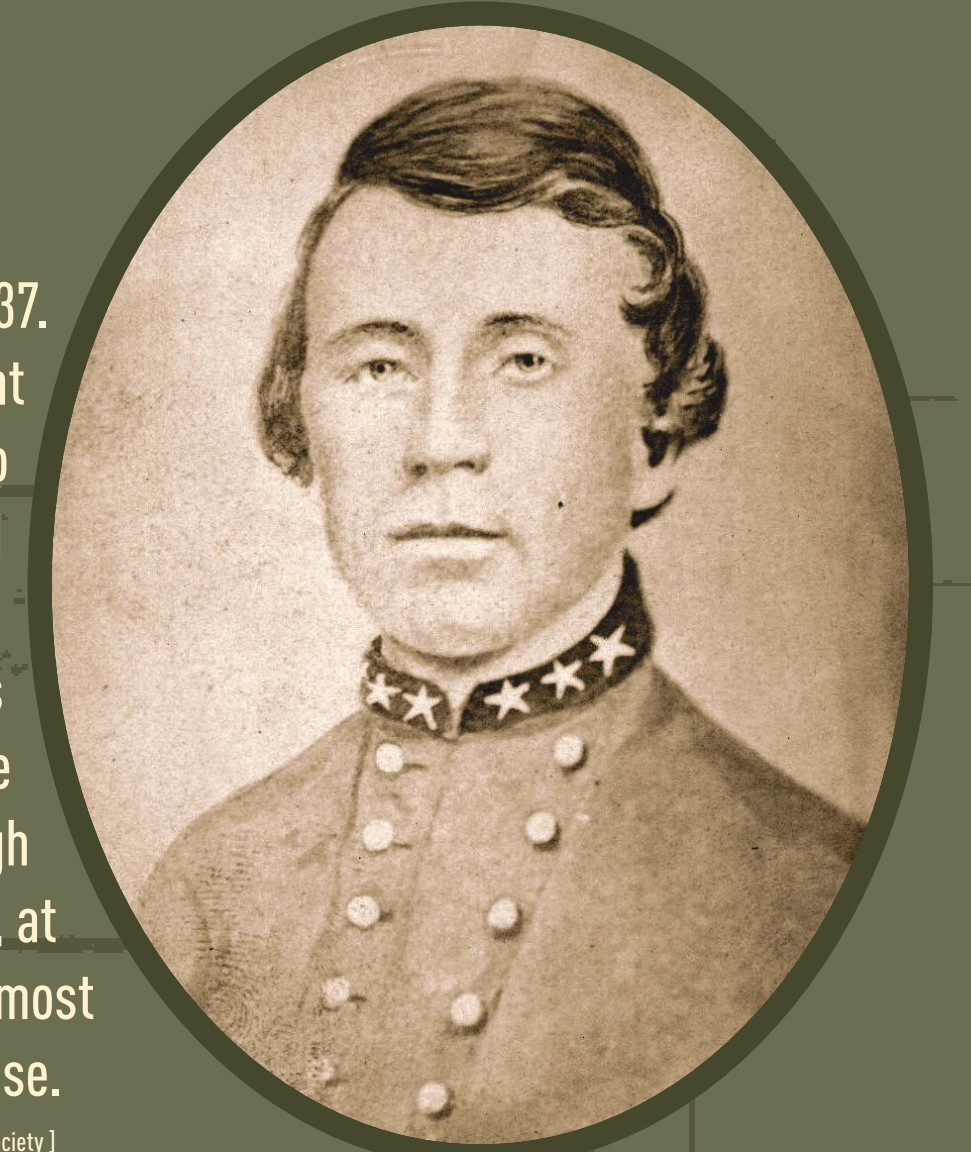
Achieving complete surprise, Quantrill’s men approached Lawrence just before dawn. They paused at present-day South Park and then unleashed their assault. By the time they departed some four hours later, the raiders had reduced the town to ruins while murdering between 143 and 200 men and boys, including a contingent of Army recruits who were largely untrained and unarmed. The incident ranks as one of the worst atrocities of the Civil War.



Banner of Death. Flags provide focus and meaning to those who employ them. Quantrill’s followers were no different. This particular flag, which measures only seven by 13 inches, signified the group’s loyalty to the southern cause. It apparently belonged to one of the raiders under Quantrill’s command that attacked Olathe, Kansas, in September 1862, and was left behind in the town square. The red and white bars and blue field in the upper left hand corner are similar to many other Confederate flags. The difference resides in the symbol in the blue portion. While no one knows for sure what it represents, it is possibly a mailed fist or a palmetto tree. Both possibilities represent strength. The word “Quant” (short for Quantrill) appears on the symbol signifying its connection to the notorious guerilla.



“Unheard-of barbarism.” This illustration depicting the chaos, mayhem, and murder associated with Quantrill’s raid appeared in a September 1863 issue of *Harper’s Weekly*. Notable citizens killed in the raid included Lawrence Mayor George Collamore, Reverend S.S. Snyder, and John Speer, Jr. But both former Kansas governor Charles Robinson and US Senator James Lane remained alive when the raiders departed, with Lane later leading a detachment that pursued the marauders toward Baldwin City and Paola, albeit without much success. In addition to the death toll, the raiders destroyed up to 200 businesses and 85 private homes in or near downtown Lawrence, racking up an estimated \$1.5-\$2 million in property damages.



Not Exactly an Officer or a Gentleman. William Clarke Quantrill was born in Canal Dover, Ohio, in 1837. By 1857, he was earning a living as a schoolteacher in Franklin County, Kansas Territory. After a stint as a teamster with the US Army and an unsuccessful attempt to get rich in Colorado, he returned to Kansas, eventually settling in Lawrence in 1860. He assumed the alias of Charley Hart and orchestrated an ambush of Quaker abolitionists that were intent on freeing some slaves in Missouri. Although this portrait portrays a serene and youthful Quantrill in a Confederate colonel’s uniform, he never held this rank. He most likely served as a captain under the Confederate Partisan Ranger Act of 1862. Following the Lawrence raid, Quantrill’s gang dispersed back into Missouri and disintegrated into smaller groups, though he continued his guerilla operations for the rest of the war. He died in Louisville, Kentucky, in June 1865, at the age of 27 from wounds suffered in an ambush by pro-Union guerillas in May. His death occurred almost two months after Robert E. Lee had surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House.



Down, But Not Out, Again. The raiders left Lawrence’s Eldridge House (corner of 7th and Massachusetts streets) in ruins, in part because it symbolized unyielding resistance to the pro-slavery cause. The Eldridge had risen from the rubble of the former Free State Hotel, which itself had been destroyed by Missouri “border ruffians” under the command of Sheriff Samuel Jones during the Sack of Lawrence in 1856. Demonstrating unshakable resolve, proprietor Shalor Eldridge rebuilt the hotel again in 1865. The present-day Eldridge Hotel stands on the same location as the original three.



Raid and Remembrance. Both the survivors and the perpetrators of Quantrill’s raid held periodic reunions to commemorate the event. The first reunion of survivors occurred on August 21, 1891. The reunion for the 50th anniversary in 1913 was one of the largest held. This photograph captures the attendees at the 1925 reunion in front of Strong Hall on the campus of the University of Kansas. Students from the KU School of Journalism and the *Lawrence Journal-World* sponsored the event. Most of the attendees were children during the raid. The first reunion of Quantrill’s followers occurred in Blue Springs, Missouri. They held reunions until 1929.



Ad Astra Per Aspera, and Then Some. Quantrill’s burning of Lawrence, albeit devastating, did not destroy the spirit of the community. Instead, it marked a new beginning and a rejuvenation that Quantrill likely did not expect. The classic symbol of the mythical phoenix rising from the ruins on various versions of the city’s seal captured the resilience of those who survived the raid and stayed to rebuild the town and their shattered lives.



The Union Strikes Back. Four days after the raid, Union General Thomas Ewing, Jr., Commander of the District of the Border, issued General Order No. 11 that mandated the forced removal of most of the rural residents of four Missouri counties along the Kansas border. By emptying the region of suspected Southern sympathizers, Ewing hoped to deny the guerillas the capability to sustain their operations. The order helped placate angry Kansans, and reduced the level of guerilla activity along the border. But the forcible relocation of the guilty and the innocent alike also left a negative legacy that compelled Missouri painter George Caleb Bingham to capture the injustice on canvas in 1870. The unfortunate destruction that accompanied the removal further alienated neutral and loyal citizens. Vengeful soldiers ruined crops and set fire to homes, creating the “Burnt District” that left the region littered with chimneys. Ewing issued General Order No. 20 in November 1863, allowing the return of residents who could prove their loyalty. Debate on whether Ewing’s action was “a justified act of military necessity or an unjustified deed of military tyranny” continues to this day.



Martyrs’ Memoriam. In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, the corpses of 55 or so of the victims were buried, mostly in a mass grave, in Oread Cemetery (now known as Old Pioneer Cemetery, and located on the West Campus of the University of Kansas). But in the year that followed, there were calls for a new public burial ground to honor those who perished in the raid. “There ought to be some measures taken to perpetuate the identity of the resting place of each martyr,” editorialized the *Kansas Tribune*. The result was the opening of Oak Hill Cemetery (entrance on Oak Hill Avenue just east of Elmwood Street). Between 1865 and 1872, Lawrence re-interred all but six of the Quantrill Raid victims from Oread to Oak Hill. On May 30, 1895 – then known as Decoration Day and a time for placing flowers and wreaths on the graves of Civil War dead – the citizens of Lawrence dedicated this sarcophagus to the memory of the citizens who died because of the “inhuman ferocity” of Quantrill’s guerillas.



Hollywood Versions. The story of Quantrill’s raid on Lawrence has been a celluloid staple since the silent era. No fewer than eleven movies – ranging from *Quantrell’s Son* (1914) to *Ride with the Devil* (1999) – have portrayed the pillage or referenced Quantrill in some fashion, often wildly inaccurately. Such was the case with *Dark Command*. Released in 1940, it starred John Wayne as the fictional Bob Seton and Walter Pidgeon as a Quantrill-like character named Will Cantrell, both of whom were competing for the position of town marshal, as well as the hand of Mary McCloud, played by Claire Trevor. Cantrell lost on both counts, leading him to launch an assault on Lawrence with armed men that resulted in his death. *Dark Command* had its world premiere at Lawrence’s Granada and Dickinson theaters, an event that attracted Wayne, Roy Rogers and Gene Autry, plus some 70,000 spectators.