



# **Bloody Bill Anderson: The Short, Savage Life of a Civil War Guerrilla**

*Albert E. Castel, Thomas Goodrich*

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Nowhere was the Civil War as savage as it was in Missouri and nowhere did it produce a killer more savage than William Anderson. For a brief but dramatic period, "Bloody Bill" played the leading role in the most violent arena of the entire war and did so with a vicious abandon that spread fear throughout the land.

A name associated with William Quantrill and Jesse James, Bloody Bill Anderson was known for never taking prisoners. A former horse thief turned bushwhacker, he became the scourge of Kansas and Missouri with a reputation for unspeakable atrocities. Sometimes he left the bodies of dead Federal soldiers scalped, skinned, and castrated. Sometimes he decapitated them and rearranged their heads. Wherever Bloody Bill rode, the Grim Reaper rode alongside.

In telling this story of bitter bloodshed, historians Castel and Goodrich track Bloody Bill's reign of terror over increasingly violent raids. He rode with Quantrill in the infamous sack of Lawrence and killed more victims than any other raider. Then he led the brutal Centralia Massacre, a blood-soaked nightmare recounted here hour-by-hour from firsthand accounts.

More than compiling a chronicle of horrors, Castel and Goodrich have produced the first full-fledged account of Anderson's career. They examine his prewar life, explain how he became a guerrilla, then describe the war that he and his men waged against Union soldiers and defenseless civilians alike. The authors' disagreements on many aspects of Anderson's gruesome career add a fascinating dimension to the book.

Only 26 when he was killed charging an ambush, Bloody Bill Anderson had already become a legend. This book takes readers behind the legend and provides a closer look at the man and at the face of terror.

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