

RED MUNKIRS
(often spelled Munkers, Munkres, and other variants)

Red Munkirs is Hart Inlow's great uncle, oldest son of Hart's 2X great grandparents, Solomon Munkirs and Sarah Jane Ferril Munkirs

Redmond David "Red" Munkirs

Born: 26 Mar 1845, Clay County, Missouri
Died: 18 May 1867, Kearney, Clay County, Missouri
Cause of Death: shot to death on his own front porch

Spouse: Martha "Mattie" Elizabeth Martens Munkirs
Daughter: Lorene Redmond Munkirs
Born five weeks after Red's death

Son of Solomon Munkirs and Sarah Ferril

Notable life events -

Rode with Quantrill's Raiders during the Civil War
Rode with James-Younger Gang following the Civil War
Participated in the James Gang robbery of Clay County Savings Association Bank, Liberty, Missouri, on February 13, 1866. This is generally recognized as the first daylight bank robbery in U.S. history, and the first robbery committed by Jesse and Frank James Gang.

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The following was written by Phil Stewart, a Missouri historian, several years ago. I - Hart Inlow - have edited it largely for the sake of clarity and to make it more clear in places Mr. Stewart was offering speculation in ways which made them sound like facts. - November 2020

The Short and Violent Life of Red Munkirs

Redmond David Munkirs, the second son of Solomon and Sarah Ferril Munkirs, was born on March 26, 1845, at the family home three miles northeast of Liberty in Clay County, Missouri. He was named after his grandfathers, Redmond Munkirs and David L. Ferril, both of whom were well respected members of the local community. The young man soon became known simply as "Red".

There is nothing to indicate the early life and childhood of Red Munkirs was any different or more difficult than were those of other young men of Clay

County during the mid 1800s. The families were large, the work was hard and, when the opportunity presented itself, there was always school work to do. Education was important to the Munkirs family. Red's uncle, Lafayette Munkirs, had been instrumental in the formation of several country schools and had served as the county's Commissioner of Schools. During a time in rural western Missouri when much of its population remained illiterate, the Munkirs family prided themselves on the fact that not only was the family well educated for the time, but that they were passing the importance of education on to other members of the community. At least three members of the extended family were employed as teachers.

Life was anything but simple during the formative years of Red's life. Political storm clouds were building along the Missouri/Kansas border over the issues of slavery and Kansas' admittance into the unit. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had 'kicked the can down the road,' and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 hadn't helped much to clarify things. The question was simple. Would Kansas enter as a slave state or free? The answer was not nearly as simply. A full ten years before Confederate forces fired on Ft Sumter in South Carolina, armed bands of men were roaming the western border of Missouri in an attempt to sway the tide either for or against slavery. Missourians became known as "Border Ruffians" and Kansans became known as "Jayhawkers". Although there are no known records indicating that the Munkirs family were slave owners, they were of southern origin (the family migrated from Tennessee a generation earlier) and were no doubt concerned about the rising tide of emotion that was sweeping across their county. A young man of Red's age couldn't help but notice and get caught up in the excitement, even though he was still too young to fully understand the troubles yet to come.

As the years passed, the tensions along the Missouri/Kansas border grew. It can easily be argued that the opening shots of the Civil War were fired along this border, and not in South Carolina. The local newspaper, the Liberty Tribune, began printing reports of raids being conducted by supporters of both sides, and the murders that most often accompanied them. By the time the newspapers "back east" were breaking the news that the Union had been dissolved, the western border of Missouri, including Clay County, was already little short of being a war zone. Organizations were being established as early as 1860 for the "security of the population and property", with hopes that, if war came, the citizens of the county could protect themselves from both the Federal and Successionist forces. It was wishful thinking. As reports of conflicts and the formation of the Confederate States of America made their way west to Clay County, these groups who had once vowed to protect the citizens from all enemies found themselves crumbling and being transformed into pro-Union militia and pro-southern Home Guard units. War

had come to Clay County.

Red Munkirs was just sixteen years old when the war began. In 1862, the State of Missouri ordered that every able bodied male between the ages of eighteen and thirty must register for the Federal army unless they could show just cause to exclude them. Red was seventeen and among the many Missourians who had no desire to put on the blue uniform of the Union army. If he served at all, his loyalties would be with the south. He had been among the second generation of the Munkirs family to have been born on Missouri soil, but the family roots were still firmly embedded in the south.

(It should be noted that Clay County was at the time a hotbed of Confederate loyalty. It has been, all the up to the present day, a center of strong pro-South, pro-Confederate, sentiment. Clay County is directly on the Kansas-Missouri border, north of Kansas City. That is historically very important, and directly related to the violent conflicts between Confederate guerrillas and Kansas "Redlegs" which happened before, during and following the War, as noted below.)

Most of Missouri, including Clay County, had become a war zone by the spring of 1863. In addition to the various Union and Confederate armies who were fighting throughout the state, irregular forces from both sides were terrorizing the civilian population. Confederate guerrillas and Kansas Redlegs (Union) began sweeping the countryside in their efforts to identify and destroy everything and everyone disloyal to their cause...whatever cause that may be. Conditions were ripe for the birth of those who were only concerned with their own advancement and gain, and those births soon came. By 1863, Confederate guerrillas William Clarke Quantrill and William "Bloody Bill" Anderson were making their way into the local newspapers with their vicious strikes against Union forces and Federal held towns. Quantrill, the most feared leader of the various guerrilla units, would become known as "the bloodiest man in the history of Missouri." Anderson, who had the habit of instilling fear upon his enemy by tying human scalps to the bridle of his horse, was nothing less than a psychopath who often cried after a battle simply because he had no more "blue bellies" left to kill. There were other bands and guerrilla leaders, but Quantrill and Anderson set the standard.

The Confederate guerrillas were far from the only bands roaming the hills and forests of western Missouri during those years of blood. Men who wore the blue uniform of the Union were no better, and in many cases, worse. Former United States Senator Jim Lane of Kansas despised everything about Missouri. He described it as "a pit of snakes to be destroyed" and once stated that NOTHING in Missouri was loyal. He swore to "root out everything disloyal from a Shanghai rooster to a Durham cow," and promised to "lay

waste" to the entire state. He tired. After securing a commission and the rank of Brigadier General, he recruited two men to lead his Kansas troops into Missouri. These men, referred to most often simply by their last names of Jennison and Montgomery, began a rampage of murder, pillage and destruction which would ultimately result in the virtual devastation and abandonment of six Missouri border counties and parts of several others.

This was the world of Red Munkirs and the other residents of Clay County during the middle years of the Civil War.

It appears certain Red had seen enough by the early spring of 1864. He wanted to join the fight for the Confederate cause, but there was one serious problem facing him...the Confederate army under General Sterling Price had been driven from the state and was now being re-supplied in northern Arkansas. So Red, like hundreds of other young southern men, "hit the brush" and joined a band of Confederate guerrillas under the command of George Todd, a Lieutenant of William Quantrill. Red was now a member of the most feared guerrilla band of the Civil war: Quantrill's Raiders. He had just turned nineteen-years-old.

The war in Missouri was coming to a close late in 1864. Sterling Price and his Confederate army had been wiped from the state and there would be no more major battles on Missouri soil. But murders and atrocities continued at the hands of Jennison, Lane and other so-called defenders of the Union, and the guerrilla fighters became the only protectors of the pro-southern residents of western Missouri. The war along the border had been transformed to a matter of "an eye for an eye" and blood for blood. Southerners were being driven from their homes under General Ewing's order Number 11. Southern men who had never taken up arms against the United States were dragged from their homes and murdered in the presence of their families, and millions of dollars in property was plundered and found its way to storehouses in Kansas. More civilians were killed...murdered...in the state of Missouri during the Civil War than in any other state, and Clay County was supplying its share of the number.

It did not take long for the Federal authorities to acquire a fairly detailed list of men who were riding with the guerrilla leaders. The very nature of guerrilla warfare makes it difficult to track, engage and defeat such a force. The guerrillas, better known as "Bushwhackers" at the time, would pass the word to assemble, make a raid, then fade back to their homes and hiding places in the country. Frustrated with their inability to bring such actions to an end, the Federals turned their attentions to the families of known bushwhackers.

On August 24, 1864, a local Federal militia unit under the command of a Captain Richard Sloan, arrived at the home of sixty-five-year-old Judge David Ferril of rural Clay County. Judge Ferril was Red's grandfather (*and Hart Inlow's 3X great grandfather*). Ferril had never openly supported the Confederate cause, had never taken up arms against the Union and was not known to have been a threat to any man, Yank or Reb. But his grandson, Red Munkirs, was believed to be riding with the bushwhackers of William Quantrill and, to the Federals, that was enough to consider Ferril a Successionist. They removed Mr. Ferril from his home, tied his hands behind his back and – in front of his family – hanged him from a tree in his own yard. The family was warned that if the body was cut down within twenty-four hours, they would return and burn the house to the ground. The body of David Ferril would remain hanging from the tree as a warning to others who might be considering disloyal acts against the Federal government. A small group of neighbors removed the body, a coffin was found and David L. Ferril was buried at Shady Grove Cemetery during the dark hours of night.

The surrender of General Robert E. Lee in Virginia brought a quick end to the formal fighting across the entire country. Confederates, both regular and guerrilla, were laying down their arms, surrendering and returning to their homes, only to find many of them destroyed and family members murdered. To add salt to the wounds of defeat, the Missouri state government passed what became known as the Drake Constitution which prohibited, by law, all those who had supported the "rebellion" from voting, holding public office, purchasing land or acquiring loans from their local banks. They had been beaten. They were now to be oppressed. Red Munkirs returned to Clay County in the summer of 1865. He had been riding with Quantrill and the guerrillas for a year and had learned his lessons well. Those men became masters of what was termed "horse and pistol work" and simply to survive it indicated a greater than average ability at both.

Red had made some interesting friends during his year with Quantrill. Most of Quantrill's men had come from Clay County and Jackson County, just across the Missouri River to the south. Many of these men had become famous, or infamous depending upon your perspective, during the years of war, and a few would gain world-wide notoriety for their exploits in the years to come. Quantrill and "Bloody Bill" had been killed during the final months of the conflict, but their legacy lived on in such men as "Little Arch" Clements, Dave and Jim Poole, George Shepard, John Jarrett and Allen Parmer. Red had also spent the last year of his life riding with Cole Younger, and two fellow Clay Countians named Frank and Jesse James.

At 2:00 on the afternoon of February 13, 1866, nearly a dozen men rode into the town of Liberty in Clay County. It was a cold, snowy day, and there

were few people on the streets that day to notice the men as they made their way to the Clay County Savings Association Bank at the northeast corner of the square. Anyone who had been in Clay County or anywhere else along the Missouri/Kansas border during the war would have recognized them as former Confederate bushwhackers. Each was mounted on a fine, spirited horse and wore a Federal overcoat. Under these coats, each man carried at least two and as many as four Colt Navy pistols. They were indeed familiar with horse and pistol work. As the majority of the men positioned themselves in the streets, two dismounted and entered the bank. When they returned to their comrades they were carrying nearly \$62,000 in cash and government bonds in a large grain sack. The first daylight bank robbery in the United States had just been committed, and Red Munkirs was among the group who committed the act.

The robbery of the bank at Liberty has been forever enshrined as the first robbery committed by what would later become known as the James-Younger gang. The bank itself still stands in Liberty and is now the Jesse James Bank Museum. The ironic part is that there is much more evidence to indicate the identities of others who were there, including Red Munkirs, than there is to identify Jesse James as one of the perpetrators. The evidence is strong that the robbery of the bank was committed by what would later become the nucleus of the James-Younger gang, Frank James and Cole Younger included, and that Red Munkirs was there.

Old feelings and grudges died hard along the Missouri/Kansas border, especially with those who had lost so much to the cruelty of others. Red had lost his grandfather, Judge David Ferril (*also Hart Inlow's 3x great grandfather*). In September, 1866, yet another murder occurred along the lonely back roads of Clay County. Former militia Captain Richard Sloan – the man who had been responsible for Judge Ferril's death -- was riding along the road just south of Shady Grove Church when he was shot in the chest and tumbled onto the dirt of the road. Two more bullets were fired into his chest, and he died within sight of Shady Grove and the grave of David Ferril. Although the murder remained unsolved, speculation was that he was murdered out of revenge for his war time acts against the southerners of Clay County. It has also long been believed that the man who fired the shots that evening was former Quantrill man, Red Munkirs.

Predictably, Red Munkirs died as he had lived. For more than three years he had worn his pistols, and had used them to fight a war, rob a bank and more than likely kill the man who had murdered his grandfather. In the summer of 1867, Red was living with his wife, Mattie, near his family in Clay County when, on the evening of May 18, a group of men arrived at his home and called him out on the porch. Words were exchanged, words that were never

recorded in history or the press, and Redmond David Munkirs was shot to death in the front yard of his home. He was twenty-two years old. His short and violent life had come to a quick and violent end. Red's wife Mattie gave birth to a daughter, Lorene Redmond Munkirs, on June 22, 1867, just five weeks after Red was killed.

The body of Red Munkirs was buried near his grandfather, David Ferril, at Shady Grove Cemetery just a few miles from the Munkirs homestead. The Liberty Tribune newspaper editorialized the report of his murder by stating, without giving details, that such acts of retribution had to be stopped if Clay County was ever to return to a place of peace and prosperity. It sounded as if the Tribune knew more about the case than they were printing.

Time and vandals have taken their toll on Shady Grove Cemetery. Many of the stones have been turned over while others have been covered by the soil or are now unreadable. Red is out there somewhere, his exact location unknown, in the midst of his family, friends and the grandfather he probably killed for, and within one-hundred yards of the spot on which Captain Richard Sloan was killed.