

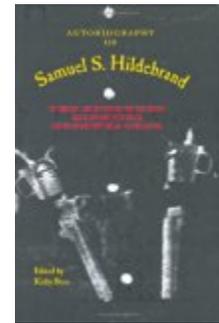
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Kirby Ross, ed. *Autobiography of Samuel S. Hildebrand: The Renowned Missouri Bushwhacker*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005. 280 pp. \$24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-55728-799-1.

Reviewed by Scott Stratton (Department of History, Arizona State University)
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Bushwhackers, Rebels and Guerilla Warfare

The autobiography of Missouri bushwhacker Samuel S. Hildebrand serves as a vital Civil War-era primary source for historians to gauge the different views of men who took part in guerilla warfare for the Confederacy. Hildebrand's story, dictated to journalists James Evans and A. Wendell Keith, was originally published in 1870. Editor Kirby Ross makes a significant scholarly contribution by annotating the autobiography for contemporary study. In doing so, Ross utilizes extensive research and provides significant detail in the "Notes" section, which includes a multitude of primary and secondary sources, to analyze the historical context and events surrounding the publication of and public reaction to Hildebrand's firsthand account.

Hildebrand, William Clarke Quantrill, and "Bloody" Bill Anderson were the major figures of the guerilla war waged by the Confederacy in an attempt to disrupt Union supply lines and troop movements. Men like Hildebrand exacted other, more personal means of revenge. The Confederate guerillas desperately wanted to strike back at the Union Army and its constituents for what they perceived as years of abuse and bloodshed. Hildebrand, Quantrill, and Anderson held in special contempt the U.S. Army troops nicknamed the Kansas Redlegs, who, even before the war and during the conflict itself, had staged numerous raids into Missouri and burned family farms and other holdings. Ross specifically identifies and analyzes the Redlegs in pursuit of Hildebrand as the Seventh Kansas Volunteer Cavalry and the Tenth Kansas Volunteer Infantry. Ross disputes some of Hildebrand's state-

ments by emphasizing that the Kansas Volunteer Infantry had been combined with several other cavalry regiments from the Union First Missouri Cavalry in a concerted effort to track down the vigilantes basing their raids from Arkansas into Missouri.

In retrospect, President Harry S. Truman, a native of Missouri, had no more respect for the Redlegs than did the bushwhackers in the Civil War. Many different types of people, such as Truman, Quantrill, and Hildebrand, exhibited widespread discontent to the Northern states' intrusion and interference in Missourians' activities and way of life. Truman grew up hearing lurid tales from older relatives about the toll that the Redlegs had exacted on their property and Southern lifestyle. Truman did not blame Missouri natives for resorting to guerilla warfare tactics as a means of protection. On four separate occasions, Union troops had confiscated his ancestor's livestock and other property, and burned the family home. In fact, Truman's relatives had been the victims of Union Order No. 11, the controversial proclamation enabling Northern troops to "cleanse" the land (e.g., Missouri property holdings) in almost any way they saw fit. This harsh edict was the Union's way of punishing the people of Missouri for harboring outlaw guerilla leaders and their bands. More specifically, the concerted widespread assault on Missouri was a direct result of Quantrill's much-publicized raid on Lawrence, Kansas, in 1863, when his outlaw contingent massacred 160 African American and white males. Truman once emphatically stated that for the rest of their lives, his older family

members harbored a great “hatred for Abraham Lincoln, blue uniforms, and Kansans.”[1] Truman’s mother and grandmother were members of the Daughters of the Confederacy and helped in serving picnic lunches at the annual reunions of Quantrill’s surviving guerilla outfit in the 1890s. A number of these reunions spanning several decades took place in Independence, Missouri. After he was chased out of Missouri, Hildebrand took up and employed the same manner of tactical revenge from his new base of operations in Arkansas. By the latter stages of the war, all of these bushwhackers were on the run from federal authorities and were spread out all over Southern states.

Unlike Quantrill and Anderson, Hildebrand had his views on the war recorded by Evans and Ross, two journalists for the *St. Louis Republican*. Also, unlike his two more famous bushwhacker contemporaries, Hildebrand lasted seven years after the end of the Civil War, until he was shot down by a sheriff’s deputy in Pinchneyville, Illinois, in May 1872. How and why Hildebrand survived that long after the end of the sectional conflict is exactly where the strength of Ross’s editorial skill is shown, especially in a revealing and accurate analysis of Hildebrand’s mindset and ambitions. The careful placement of extensive informational endnotes provides a convenient aid for Civil War scholars to understand Hildebrand’s attitudes and actions in one comprehensive volume. In addition, Ross’s organizational framework maintains Hildebrand’s first person narrative by inserting endnotes unobtrusively in the text without disrupting the literary flow of the account.

Hildebrand’s chronological narrative records the guerilla leader’s life from his birth until near the end of his life. In Hildebrand’s own words, he was born in 1836 in the southeastern Missouri county of Saint Francois near Big River on the homestead his father built in 1832. In his autobiographical account, he recounted his wartime experiences and, for good measure, gave his opinion of the detachment led by Saint Louis Police Commissioner William D. Bowen, who was determined to bring Hildebrand to justice by any means possible. This campaign ultimately resulted in Hildebrand’s death in 1872. In chapter 1, Hildebrand immediately started to rationalize his guerilla involvement by claiming that his family would never have taken part in the war if the federal government had not disrupted the lives of simple folk wanting to be left alone. However, he did not mention that some of these same “folks” had subjugated African American people for generations through the abusive system of Southern slaveholding.

In the narrative, as well in several other sections of the book, Ross pays close attention to Hildebrand’s post-war attitudes and guerilla endeavors by sparring with him on virtually every point, using the historical record of events and the skillful integration of primary and secondary sources. To his credit, Ross relies on a great number of recorded military histories, general military and police reports, regional and county histories, archival collections of papers, county and census records, and secondary sources. The editor’s compilation of Civil War data in the endnotes is impressive as he pinpoints most of Hildebrand’s quotes and assumptions and exposes them to scholarly examination and comparison with the scholarly record. It is apparent, however, that there are different levels of editorial reaction to Hildebrand’s conflicting statements. A good example of Hildebrand’s use of semantics in his own defense can be found in the opening paragraph of the book: “This anxiety to obtain the history of an individual so humble as myself, may be attributed to the fact, that never perhaps since the world began, have such efforts been put forth by a government for the suppression of one man alone, as have been for my capture, both during the war and since its termination. The extensive military operations carried on by the Federal government in Southeast Missouri, were in great measure designed for my special destruction” (p. 1).

One of the most interesting aspects of this volume is the description of his brother, William Hildebrand. William “joined the Union army and fought until the close of the war” (p. 26). Ross insightfully points out that “William did not enroll in the Eightieth EMM (Eastern Missouri Militia) until 9 Aug. 1862—nearly a year and a half into the war. Significantly, his enrollment appears to have been an act of self-preservation” (p. 182). His case is noteworthy as it represents the dual nature of many families who had members fighting for both sides of the conflict in the border state region.

It is obvious that the two journalists, Evans and Keith, who recorded the interview and backed publication of the book in 1870, took great liberties in paraphrasing Hildebrand’s words to make him sound much more sophisticated than his sparse educational record would suggest. Ross’s training as both a journalist and a historian becomes apparent here in the temperate editorial evaluation. He notes that “while his characterization is vastly overstated, Hildebrand’s underlying thesis is essentially correct: although he generally operated either by himself or with just a few men, at times whole battalions of Federal Troops were detailed to hunt him down” (p. 173). Hildebrand’s rationalizations throughout his autobiogra-

phy are a classic example of the “Lost Cause” mindset, in which of one of the most dangerous wartime outlaw leaders used the unrepentant collective Southern memory in the years after the Civil War. Ross’s labors as the editor are a valuable scholarly addition to the growing legacy in Civil War literature on the nature of guerilla warfare and its regional impact.

Note

[1]. Alonzo Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 2.

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