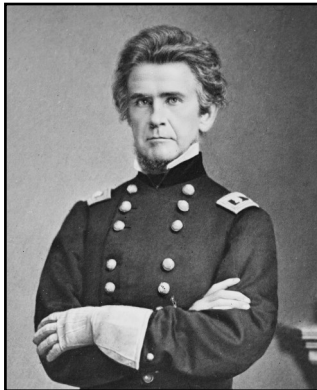


The Great Locomotive Chase A Day Late and Mile Short

Jim 'Ski' Schiaffino

Some of us grizzled old folks might remember some songs on the radio about trains or locomotives and I don't mean 'The Little Engine That Could.' How about 'The Rock Island Line,' 'The Orange Blossom Special,' 'The City of New Orleans' or the Grateful Dead's 'Casey Jones'? Well, there is one locomotive story that will probably never be rendered in song. It involved four trains and it occurred during the Civil War,

For the start of the war, historians seem to remember only the Battle at Bull Run or Manassas, depending on which side you were on. (The North tended to name battles after rivers and streams, while the South usually named battles for nearby towns, communities, or railroad junctions.) In actuality, during the first years of the war, the Northern armies were busy capturing bunches of Southern towns. Chattanooga was one of them they were trying to take and therein lies a tale.



General Ormsby
"Old Stars" Mitchell



James J. Andrews

After capturing Nashville and Huntsville, Union General Ormsby "Old Stars" Mitchell was planning an attack on Chattanooga. A Union spy, James Andrews, conceived the idea of stealing a train and go "raise a little hell" by cutting telegraph lines, burning bridges, tearing up track and generally disrupting Southern communications, transport and supply lines.

In March he pitched the idea to General Mitchell who gave him the okay to plan and execute the operation. Andrews' Raiders were recruited for Mitchell's regiment. To avoid suspicion, one by one they drifted away in civilian dress. They were given the cover story that they were heading to volunteer for service in the Confederacy on the slim chance they might be discovered.

Their plan called for them to seize and sever the Memphis & Charleston Railroad between Memphis and Chattanooga, the only railway link between the Mississippi river and the east. They were supposed to meet a Southern engineer in Atlanta who was willing

to defect to the Union with his train if Andrews could supply a volunteer train crew to assist running by the train, tearing up track, and burning bridges, et. cetera.

It didn't go quite as planned. When they arrived in Atlanta, Andrews discovered the engineer had been pressed into service elsewhere. He asked if any of the raiders knew how to operate a locomotive; when none did, he called the raid off. On their way back to Union lines, two raiders were also confronted by Confederate soldiers while trying to cut the telegraph lines, but successfully pretended to be overworked wiremen.

Undaunted, James Andrews planned a second raid. His new proposal was a combined operation; General Mitchel would first lay siege to Chattanooga; simultaneously Andrews' Raiders would steal a locomotive, head northward and destroy the telegraph lines and the rail line between Chattanooga and Atlanta. The raiders would then cross through the Federal siege lines on the outskirts of Chattanooga and rejoin Mitchel's army. Those essentially simultaneous actions would bring about the capture of Chattanooga. Andrews' raid was intended to deprive the Confederates the use of the railways and their interior lines of communication to respond to a Union advance. (None of the original raiders volunteered for the second raid. One stated that "he felt all the time he was in the enemy's country as though he had a rope around his neck.")

This time he recruited 23 men from three Ohio regiments and one civilian, making certain that a few of the raiders were familiar with railroad locomotives. Following the same departing procedures, he instructed the men to arrive in Marietta, Georgia by midnight of 10 April. Only 22 of the raiders arrived at the rendezvous point at the appointed time. Two, Samuel Llewellyn and James Smith, perchance met a few Southern locals and were dutifully marched off to join a Confederate artillery unit.

As 'Rabbie' Burns wrote, "*The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley.*" On the day of departure, it was raining heavily turning the countryside to mud. This obviously played havoc with their plans. Andrews received word (erroneous) that Mitchell's troops would be delayed by one day. Andrews postponed his raid for a day from 11 April to 12 April. No one realized the cataclysmic difference twenty-four hours would make.

Unbeknownst to Andrews, General Mitchell launched his strike on 11 April. Meanwhile, the Andrews Raiders waited patiently in Marietta to start their raid 12 April. The raiders chose Big Shanty, Georgia as the starting point because they thought it lacked a telegraph station to send out an alarm about a stolen train. When the morning passenger train, pulled by the 4-4-0 type locomotive 'The General', stopped for breakfast at

the Lacy Hotel in Big Shanty, they took the ‘General’ and the train’s three boxcars which were between the tender and the passenger cars, leaving the passenger cars at the station. Because they traveled in civilian attire it was decided that they shouldn’t carry R&R tools with them. They were however able to obtain a single crowbar at Big Shanty.



The ‘General’ used by Andrew’s Raiders

While he was eating his breakfast, William Allen Fuller, the train’s conductor, casually looked out of the window to see his train leaving the station. This made him madder than a wet hen. He and fellow crewman, Anthony Murphy, bless their hearts, took after the stolen train on foot. After a few miles they chanced upon a siding with a work crew and appropriated their handcar. Now you might think that two men pumping a handcar had little chance of catching a locomotive. But



at that time locomotives normally averaged 15 miles per hour, with short bursts of speed of about 20 miles per hour. As Andrews intended to stop periodically to perform acts of sabotage, a determined pursuer, even on foot, could conceivably have caught up with the train before it reached Chattanooga.

To avoid suspicion the raiders kept to the train’s timetable. Here is where the 24-hour delay began to affect the raid. They reached the siding of the town of Kingston ahead of schedule and had to wait there until a scheduled southbound train passed them before they could continue north. When the train had passed, Andrews noticed that it had a red flag on the back. He asked the station master why this train was carrying a red marker flag on its rear car. The railway official informed him that Confederate Army officials said Union General Mitchel was approaching Chattanooga intending to either capture or lay siege to the city and as a result, the Confederate Military Railways had ordered the Special Freight movements of armaments. The red train marker flag on the southbound train meant that there was at least one additional train behind the one which Andrews had just encountered, and that Andrews had no “authority for movement” until the last train of that sectional movement had passed him. It was here that the wheels really began to fall off the wagon.

Meanwhile, Fuller and Murphy’s hand car uncere-

moniously fell into a wayside ditch as it rattled over some rails that had been sprung by the Raiders.



The ‘Yonah’

Now, Dame Fortune smiled on the two men. Continuing their pursuit again on foot they literally stumbled upon the ‘Yonah’, an old locomotive that was serving out its few remaining years with an old iron mine. They shouted their wild story to a band of confused and disbelieving Confederate commandos guarding the engine. You can understand their confusion. Here were two wild eyed, sweating and disheveled civilians riding a handcar with some cockamamory story about a stolen train. The commandos eventually believed them and Fuller and Murphy were able to continue their pursuit on more even terms. This time on a locomotive with the accompaniment of the commandos.

Over an hour further ahead, the raiders were on a siding at Kingston awaiting the arrival of the next southbound train. Had this been a Friday, they would have been delayed by one train, but now on a Saturday the was delayed by three southbound trains all carrying munitions for Chattanooga. Not only was his plan starting to fail, the delay gave Fuller all the time he needed to close the distance.

Meanwhile, a crowd of curious bystanders began to form around the ‘General’. (In the pre-Civil War era, locomotives were given names instead of numbers) The men in the boxcars began to grow restless with the slow passage of time. According to one of the men, Rev. William Pittenger, “So intolerable was our suspense that the order for a deadly conflict would have been felt as a relief.” Finally, the last ammunition train passed and the ‘General’ was off again.

Several miles later the ‘General’ stopped again to cut telegraph lines and pull up more rails. Suddenly, the peaceful serenity of the air was pierced by the distant shrill of a train whistle. Quickly completing their tasks, the raiders immediately boarded the boxcars and once again the ‘General’ “sped” northward.

Now it was time for Fuller and Murphy to be surprised. A few minutes later the men aboard the ‘Yonah’ came upon the uprooted track and they slammed on the brakes in the nick of time to avoid disaster. Following a brief discussion they decided they didn’t have enough time to repair the track, so once again they were to continue their chase on foot. Their

commando compatriots decided to return to their previous assignment rather than continue the chase on foot. A short distance up the track they stumbled upon yet another handcar and away they pumped.

Dame Fortune can be a real tease. Checking the schedule Andrews saw that yet another train, this time it was a southbound express, would be ahead of them. Word had it that it was behind schedule. Realizing that there was some form of pursuit behind them and already being in enemy territory, Andrews decided to take a gamble and order full steam ahead, hoping to arrive before the Express.

The gamble paid off. The express was just leaving the fueling siding when the 'General' arrived whistling like a banshee. The Express stopped, allowing just enough space for the 'General' to pass by with inches to spare. There was now nothing but open rail between the raiders and the safety of the Federal lines. Now, only one more stop was needed to burn the Oostanaula Bridge.



Further back, Fuller and Murphy just happened upon yet another locomotive, 'William R. Smith' which was on a siding leading west to the town of Rome, Georgia. The 'William R. Smith' was an older, slower train but still faster than a handcar. So once again they were on even terms with the Yankee Raiders. *Let it not be said that Dame Fortune doesn't possess a sense of humor.* Two miles south of Adairsville, the pursuers were stopped by the broken track. Once again Fuller and Murphy continued the hunt on foot.

The General had been able to stop to take on more wood and water it needed to reach Federal lines. Now most of the track ran up a few steep inclines. These slowed the 'General's' progress in addition to burning more precious fuel.

Had this been a silent era Keystone Cops movie, no one would have been surprised by what happened next. Now breathing heavily, Fuller and Murphy, arriving just south of Calhoun, came upon a southbound train idling on a siding. Earlier, Andrews, with all the aplomb of a used car salesman, had persuaded the train to stop and allow the 'General' to pass. That train was the 'Texas.' Following a lengthy discussion, the conductor of the 'Texas' agreed to uncouple the train's boxcars and passenger cars and they continued their quest. Unable to turn the engine around, 'Texas' was now running backwards. At Calhoun, Fuller picked up eleven hitchhikers, more Confederate soldiers.

The 'Texas' eventually encountered the 'General' as the raiders were attempting to uproot more track. With their pursuers now almost within rifle range Andrews' men hastily climbed back aboard. Andrews

hoped to buy enough time to burn the bridge. To slow the followers, Andrews raiders uncoupled a boxcar to block the 'Texas' path. Disbelievably, he watched as the 'Texas' crashed into the boxcar and pushed it back the way it had come, eventually leaving it on a siding.

The Confederates would not be able to catch the 'General', but the raiders could slow it down further. Every so often they could throw a R&R cross-tie onto the tracks. The 'Texas' would have to stop to clear the track. Then, the 'Texas' would have to build up steam and slowly regain its top speed. At a very sharp curve the raiders threw down a cross-tie knowing the following train wouldn't see it in time to slow down. Sure enough, the 'Texas' hit it square on. Fuller later admitted that it caused quite a jolt and that the engine actually popped into the air before settling back on the track.

Finally, Andrew's men reached the bridge and discovered that the wood was too wet to burn. So they uncoupled their last boxcar and set it ablaze right smack dab in the center of the bridge. Once again, the 'Texas' pushed the flaming car to the next siding and continued the chase. By now the 'General' was running low on both wood and water. Andrew decided to put The General in reverse and crash it into the 'Texas'.

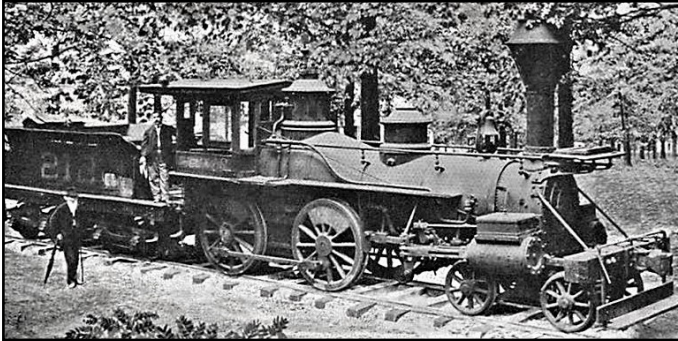
The Raiders jumped from the train and made off on foot toward friendly lines. The 'General' dutifully retraced its path. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough steam left in the boiler to crash and explode. The 'General' was barely moving when the two locomotives met. "The Great Locomotive Chase" was now over and the raiders were doomed.

All in all they were pursued by Confederate forces for 87 miles. All raiders were captured and were tried in military courts. They were found guilty of "acts of unlawful belligerency." Andrews was hanged, as were seven others. The rest were taken to the Knoxville prison. Fearing the same fate as their peerless leader, Rev. Parrott and the remaining raiders made a daring escape. Eight succeeded, traveling for hundreds of miles in pairs. They all made it back safely to Union lines, including two who were aided by slaves and Union sympathizers and two who floated down the Chattahoochee River until they were rescued by the Union blockade vessel *USS Somerset* in the Gulf of Mexico. Rev. Parrott and five others did not. He was held as a prisoner of war, Parrott was beaten more than 100 times in an effort to get him to divulge more information about the raiders' intentions and each time he refused. The POWs were eventually released in a prisoner exchange.

The twenty of the raiders were awarded the first medals of honor. The six surviving raiders were offered commissions as 1st Lts. After the ceremony the six raiders were taken to the White House to meet President Lincoln. This became a tradition for all Medal of Honor recipients. Later, all of the other soldiers who had participated in the raid also received the Medal of Honor, posthumously. As civilians, James J. Andrews and William Hunter Campbell were not eligible.

Both the 'General' and the 'Texas' survived the war

and have been preserved in museums. The ‘General’ is located at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History, in Kennesaw, Georgia. The ‘Yonah’ was converted into a stationary boiler for the railroad’s shop facilities and was scrapped in 1873. The ‘William R. Smith’ was destroyed by a Union cavalry raid in Columbus.



The ‘Texas’ can be found at the Atlanta History Center.



Andrews Raiders Monument
at Chattanooga National Cemetery

**MEMORIALIZATION AND APPRECIATION
WAR AND PEACE, LOSS AND GRIEF**
Weeden Nichols MAL

Recently I read a column by a local columnist that was thought-provoking (not that it is uncommon for newspaper columns to be thought-provoking). The point of the piece was that memorialization of wars, battles, victories, and (perhaps) military leaders or national leadership, relative to war, is over-done to the point of glorifying war. The point was that negotiations, agreements, treaties, and other alternatives to war should be memorialized at least equally.

It is difficult to memorialize something that did not happen equally to things that did happen. Successful negotiations, agreements, and treaties cause something to not happen. (No need to beat that idea to death.) I thought the columnist should have looked upon such memorials as only a seeming glorification of wars, The memorial, perhaps, should invoke sorrow and grief for those who had to fight those wars, for those who have died and those who have suffered, and for the damage to nations, societies, infrastructure, and subsequent relationships, all incidental to war.

Personally, I lost close relatives and friends in many wars – the American War of Independence, the American Civil War, World War II, and Vietnam. I know I lost more than those of whom I am aware, but here are those of whom I am aware:

My 4th Great Grandfather, Moses Thomas, was killed, scalped, and further mutilated, by Joseph Brant’s band of Mohawks and Anglo-American Tories at the American War of Independence Battle of Minisink in 1779. (Mohawk chief Joseph Brant was a brilliant leader about whom much has been said and written – both in praise and condemnation.)

In the American Civil War, my great-grand-uncle Miles Rockwell, a corporal of New York Light Artillery, died in 1864 at the age of nineteen in the Confederate Military Prison at Andersonville. In that same war, I lost two first cousins in Confederate service (first cousins three times removed, of mine, and immediate first cousins to each other), both of them also nineteen years old: Kenneth McLeod, “on the breastworks at the Battle of Nashville” in 1864; and Ralston LaFayette Avera, in the Siege of Vicksburg, 28 June 1863.

My dear first cousin (also nineteen years old), Private First Class Robert Nichols Blume, died in Luxembourg in 1944, heroically saving his entire rifle platoon.

My very good friend, Donald J. Shang, died at Ban Me Thuot in the highlands of Vietnam, due to pilot error, in December 1968, only days before I arrived at Cam Ranh Bay. My first task (though unofficial) was, at the request of Don’s wife, to investigate the circumstances of Don’s death, which I did. (Ironically, Don’s wife subsequently married the young Army captain who informed her of Don’s death.) I have visited Don’s panel of “The Vietnam Wall” in Washington, D.C., fourteen times. That memorial is sad and solemn, in no way glorifying war, and perhaps all memorials that have to do with wars and battles should be sad and solemn.

But, I do agree with the local columnist who inspired me to write this essay. I do think that we all should reflect on wars, battles, and deaths that did not happen, as a result of successful negotiations, agreements or treaties, and give thanks for that which did not happen. And give thanks also for skilled and sincere negotiators who successfully accomplish agreements and treaties.

