

Medal of Honor: *Andrews' Raiders*

One of the 19 of 22 men (including 2 civilians) who, by direction of Gen. Mitchell (or Buell) penetrated nearly 200 miles south into enemy territory and captured a railroad train at Big Shanty, Ga., in an attempt to destroy the bridges and tracks between Chattanooga and Atlanta.

This is an example of the citation in which the Medal of Honor was awarded to nineteen of the twenty-four participants in the Great Locomotive Chase, a daring military mission breaching Confederate lines. Twenty-two of the men were military and known in history as "Andrews' Raiders." Six of the raiders were the very first to receive the Medal of Honor on March 25, 1863. The other thirteen men received the medal later for the same action. Seven raiders received their honor posthumously, some in September 1863 and others after the war.

In spring 1862, Confederate forces began the Heartland Offensive by splitting into small groups in an attempt to spread the Union opposition thin. A division from the Army of the Ohio led by Brigadier General Ormsby Mitchel was ordered to Huntsville, Alabama, to repair railroads.

In an effort to capture and control railroads deep into Georgia, black-market trader James J. Andrews developed a plan to conduct a small group of soldiers behind enemy lines. The men were to meet in Georgia, purchase tickets on a train to Chattanooga, overtake the train and destroy telegraph lines, bridges, and railroad track along the return trip north. If successful, the raid would render useless the Confederate supply lines to Chattanooga.

Andrews began his journey April 7, 1862, with volunteers from three Ohio regiments: 2nd Ohio Infantry, 21st Ohio Infantry, and 22rd Ohio Infantry. The men wore plain clothes and posed as new Confederate army recruits, traveling through military lines to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and then to Marietta, Georgia. Two men were arrested on the trip south, leaving twenty-one men to carry on with the plan.

Early on the morning of April 12, 1862, nineteen of the raiders boarded a northbound train. Two men overslept and missed their train. Upon arriving at the train station in Big Shanty to refuel, the undercover passengers disembarked for breakfast. The stop, near present-day



Marion Ross received the medal posthumously, c.1861. Ancestry.com.



Samuel Roberts, recipient of medal, c.1861. Ancestry.com.

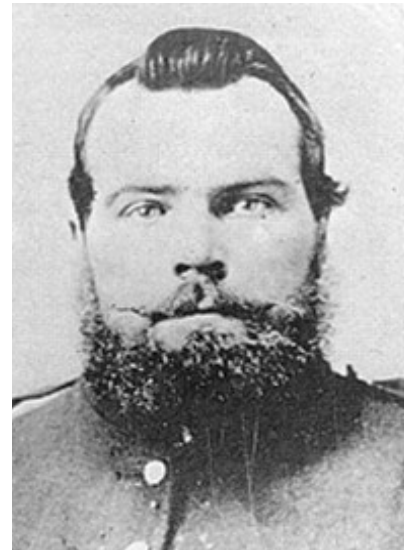
Kennesaw, had no communication lines. There, the raiders uncoupled the train cars. When the train departed northward, only the locomotive called *General*, a tender, and three empty boxcars moved forward.

Lacking a means of communication with the next station up the line, the Confederate pursuit began on foot. Three railroad men, one the train's engineer, ran after the *General* for two miles. At the next station, two of the chasers commandeered a handcar in order to continue. Eventually, the pursuers obtained a locomotive, switched to a faster one, and picked up a larger crew. Upon discovering the *Texas*, a southbound train, the pursuers released its cars and chased the *General*. There was no time to spare, so the *Texas* followed the *General* in reverse. In all, The Great Locomotive Chase lasted seven hours and traversed eighty-seven miles.

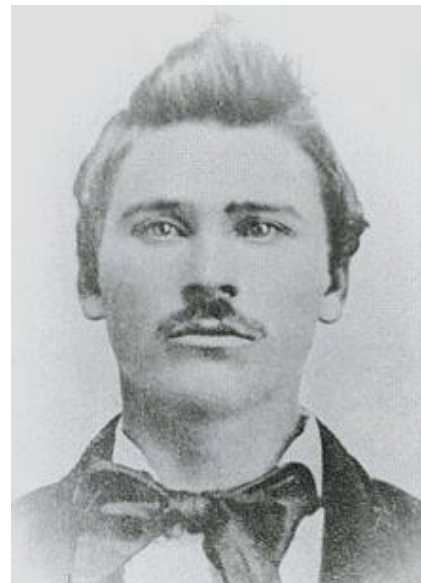
In spite of their pursuers, the raiders cut communication lines and tore up track to prevent news from spreading. Realizing that the other train was gaining on them, the raiders released two box cars to lighten their load and slow *The Texas*. Near Resaca, Georgia, the raiders attempted to burn the bridge over the Oostanaula River by igniting the final boxcar. The damp bridge did not burn. With the pursuers hot on their heels and unable to refuel, the *General* ran out of steam north of Ringgold--less than twenty miles south of Chattanooga. All raiders were captured within a week, including the two who missed the train at Marietta.

Andrews' Raid had no military effect upon the war effort. Cut communication lines and damaged track were quickly repaired. The raiders, however, suffered at the hands of the Confederates.

Eight of the twenty-one captured men were tried as spies and hanged in Atlanta. The eight included James Andrews, executed on June 7, 1862, and six U.S. soldiers and one civilian executed on June 18. The remaining captured men went to prison camps. Six of the Andrews Raiders were released from prison in a prisoner exchange; these men were awarded the Medal of Honor on March 25, 1863. The remaining raiders escaped from prison. Later, the award was given to those soldiers who escaped and five of those



Samuel Slavens, last raider to receive the medal, in 1883, c.1861. Ancestry.com.



John Scott was hanged as a spy for participating in the raid, c.1860. Ancestry.com.

hanged as spies. Neither of the two civilians, nor Private Charles Shadrach, received the honor.

All eight of the raiders who had been convicted and hanged are buried in Section H of Chattanooga National Cemetery. The Andrews' Raiders Monument, erected by the State of Ohio in 1890, is an unusual memorial installed at the center of this section. The granite base and die supports a bronze replica of the *General*, the Civil War-era wood-burning locomotive famous for its great chase of 1862.

The raiders buried in Section H of Chattanooga National Cemetery are:

- Sergeant Major Marion A. Ross
- Sergeant John M. Scott
- Sergeant Samuel Slavens
- Private Samuel Robertson
- Private Charles "Perry" Shadrach
- Private George D. Wilson
- Civilian William Campbell
- Civilian James J. Andrews

One Andrews' Raider, Lieutenant Daniel A. Dorsey, escaped from a prison in Georgia and returned to the Union lines in Kentucky. He survived the war and died January 12, 1918. He is buried at Leavenworth National Cemetery, Kansas.



Postcard image of surviving Andrews' Raiders, 1908, posing in front of the Ohio Monument erected to the men and their feat. Card mislabels Daniel A. Dorsey as "D.A. Dorset." NCA Collection.