

Jeff Kurtz

The following paper was prepared under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Dickey at Kennesaw State University for an Introduction to Public History course.

“The Andrews Raid” historical marker, located in historic downtown Kennesaw, Georgia, is dedicated to a daring US army mission, intended to sabotage the Confederate supply lines during the American Civil War. The plan was conceived by a civilian from Kentucky named James Andrews. After previously being denied by General Don Carlos Buell, commander of the Army of the Ohio, Andrews’s plan was approved by General Ormsby MacKnight Mitchell, commander of the Third Division. Andrews approached General Mitchell near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and was able to convince him that the mission would require minimal investment of personnel and money. 22 soldiers, along with Andrews and one other civilian, set out on foot, disguised in civilian clothing to make their way as best as they could in small groups to Marietta, just north of Atlanta.¹

Of the 24 men, twenty remained and were on the train when it arrived at the Big Shanty Depot on April 12, 1862, in what is now Kennesaw, Georgia. Two US soldiers were forced to enlist in the Confederate Army along the way to avoid suspicion and capture. Two more soldiers made it to Marietta but did not awaken in time to board the train to Big Shanty. When the train stopped at Big Shanty, the passengers and crew exited to eat breakfast in the Lacy Hotel. While they were eating, the twenty raiders unhooked all but the first three cars and sped away with the locomotive, the *General*. This was a rather daring move because not only did the US soldiers steal the locomotive and three cars within sight of the hotel, it was done right under the noses of

¹ Russell S. Bonds, *Stealing the General: The Great Locomotive Chase and the First Medal of Honor* (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2008) 52-54.

thousands of Confederate soldiers who were rousing and preparing their morning coffee at Camp McDonald directly across the tracks from the depot and the Lacy Hotel.²

As the locomotive *General* steamed north, cutting telegraph wire and pulling up sections of track, the train's conductor, William Fuller, along with engineer Jeff Cain and Western & Atlantic Railroad foreman Anthony Murphy, gave chase on foot. The three came across a handcar just a couple miles up the track and used that until they came upon and were able to commandeer a succession of locomotives and enlist the help of extra men along the way. Andrews and his team were unable to obtain enough wood and water to keep the *General* running all the way to their objective, which was Chattanooga, Tennessee. They were eventually overtaken by their pursuers. All the US raiders were captured, and James Andrews's grand scheme ended in failure.³

Although the Andrews Raid ultimately failed and caused no quantifiable disruption to the Confederate supply chain, it was sensationalized and resulted in tall tales of flaming boxcars and locomotives jumping tracks.⁴ The event and the legends surrounding it have been greatly remembered and memorialized throughout the century and a half since it took place. *Daring and Suffering*, written by William Pittenger, who was among the twenty Andrews Raiders, would be reprinted several times. More than 60 years later, Buster Keaton made the first motion picture

² Ibid., 124-137; Lieut. William Pittenger, *Daring and Suffering: A History of the Great Railroad Adventure* (Philadelphia: Daughaday, 1864) 57-60, Google Books; "Startling Intelligence," *Southern Confederacy*, Reprinted in *Rome Courier*, April 15, 1862, accessed via Galileo.usg.edu on October 10, 2018.

³ Bonds, *Stealing the General*, 134-226; Pittenger, *Daring and Suffering*, 60-114; "Startling Intelligence."

⁴ Bonds, *Stealing the General*, 194-196.

based on the event, *The General*.⁵ Then in 1956, Walt Disney released the full-length live action film, *The Great Locomotive Chase*, based on Pittenger's book.⁶

The historical marker titled "The Andrews Raid" was erected in 1956, two years prior to the Disney film's release. It was commissioned by the Georgia Historical Commission. The marker is located alongside the tracks in front of the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History that houses the very locomotive, the *General*, that made history there over 150 years ago. The *General* is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁷ In fact, it is the only moveable object, which is not an actual location or structure, which is currently listed.

⁵ *The General*, Directed by Clyde Bruckman and Buster Keaton, Hollywood, Buster Keaton Productions, 1926.

⁶ *The Great Locomotive Chase*, Directed by Francis D. Lyon, Hollywood, Walt Disney Productions, 1956.

⁷ National Register of Historic Places, The General, Kennesaw, Cobb County, GA, National Register #73000617, Web. Retrieved from the Digital Archive on NPGallery, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=765ed990-2e07-46ab-88ce-407cfac43cc0>, (Accessed February 28, 2018).

Bibliography

Bonds, Russell S. *Stealing the General: The Great Locomotive Chase and the First Medal of Honor*. Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2008.

Pittenger, Lieut. William. *Daring and Suffering: A History of the Great Railroad Adventure*. Philadelphia: Daughaday, 1864.