Commissioned by and dedicated to the 1999–2000 Tapp Middle School (GA) Symphonic Band, Erin Cole, Director

# THE GREAT LOCOMOTIVE CHASE

ROBERT W. SMITH (ASCAP)



- 2 B<sup>↓</sup> Tuba Treble Clef
- 2 E<sup>↓</sup> Tuba Treble Clef

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The map above highlights the events of the April 1862 raid. Perhaps the most detailed account was recorded by the Rev. William Fittenger of lite 2nd Ohio Volunteers. Rev Pittenger had the unique perspective of the chase based upon his role as one of Andrews ridders. Itils account of the chase is included below.

In the early years of the Civil War, Georgia was largely protected from military hostilities, leaving it free to ship arms and munitions, food, and supplies to Confederate troops on the battlefields to the northeast. It was the importance of the extensive rail system to the Confederates that prompted James Andrews, a Union spy from Kentucky, to attempt a daring effort to disrupt the 138-mile rail line connecting Atlanta and Chaltanooga.

Along with 19 Union soliders dressed as civilians, Andrews arrived at Marietta April 12, 1862. Here, they boarded a northbound train pulled by the General, a wood-burning locomotive built in 1855. At Big Shanty, the train stopped so the passengers and crew could eat breakfast. Andrews used the break to uncouple the engine, wood tender, and three box cars from the passenger cars. They then sped off with the goal of damaging as many WeA tracks and rait bidges as possible. Hearing the General steam out, conductor William Fuller and two WeA employees ran out of the hotel dining room and pursued the stolen train by foot for several miles. Utimately, Fuller would commandeer the locomotive Texas and, joined by Confederate soldiers, imally catch Andrews' Raiders—a race. Joel Chandler Harris later characterized as "the bolest adventure of the war."

This composition for concert band is based upon this fascinating event in American history. It was composed in the fall of 1999 for the Tapp Middle School Concert Band under the direction of Erin Cole. The work is dedicated to the Tapp Middle School Band in commemoration of their performance at the University of Georgia in December of the same year.

### The Great Locomotive Chase in Georgia by The Rev. William Pittenger, 2nd Ohio Volunteers,

## (One of the Raiders)

The railroad raid in Georgia in the spring of 1862 has always been considered to rank high among the striking and novel events of the civit war. At that time General O. M. Mitchel, under whose authority it was organized, commanded Union forces in Middle Tennessee, consisting of a division of Duell's Army. The Confederates were concentrating at Corinth, Mississippi, and Grant and Buell were advancing by different routes toward that point. Mitchel's orders required him to protect Mashville and the country around bert allowed him latitude in the disposition of his division, which, with detachments and garrisons, numbered nearly seventeen thousand men. Itis attention had long been

turned toward the liberation of East Tennessee, which he knew President Lincoln also earnestly desired, and which would, if achieved, strike a most damaging blow at the resources of the Rebellion. A Union army once in possession of East Tennessee would have the inestimable advantage, found nowhere else in the South, of operating in the midst of a friendly population and having at hand abundant supplies of all kinds. Mitchel had no reason to believe that Corinth would detain the Union armies much longer than Fort Donelson had done and was satisfied that as soon as it had been captured, the next movement would be eastward toward Chattanooga, thus throwing his own division in advance. He determined, therefore, to press into the heart of the enemy's country as far as possible, occupying strategical points before they were adequately defended.

On the 8th of April, 1862, the day after the battle of Pittsburg Landing—of which Mitchel had received no intelligence—he marched swiftly southward from Shelbyville and seized Huntsville, in Alabama, on the 11th of April, and then sent a detachment westward over the

story to which he adhered throughout the run, namely, that he was an agent of General Beauregard running an impressed powder train through to that officer at Corinth. We had no good instruments for track-raising, as we had intended rather to depend upon fire; but the amount of time spent in taking up a rail was not material at this stage of our journey, as we easir, kept on the time of our captured train. There the depot, he encountered no hindrance, and it was now a fair race. We was a wonderful exhilaration in passing swiftly by towns and stations through the heart of an enemy's country in this manner. It possessed just enough of the spice of danger-in this part of the run-to render it thoroughly enjoyable. The slightest accident to our engine, however, or a miscarriage in any part of our programme, would have completely changed the conditions

At Etowah Station we found the Yonah, an old locomotive owned by an iron company, standing with steam up; but not wishing to alarm the enemy till the local freight had been safely met, we left it unharmed. Kingston, thirty miles from the starting point, was safely reached. A train from Rome, Georgia, on a branch road, had just arrived and was waiting for the morning mail-our train. We learned that the local freight would soon come also, and taking the sidetrack, waited for it. When it arrived, however, Andrews saw to his surprise and chagrin that it bore a red flag, indicating another train not far behind. Stepping to the conductor, he boldly asked, "What does it mean that the road is blocked in this manner when I have orders to take this powder to Beauregard without a minute's delay?" The answer was interesting but not reassuring: "Mitchel has captured Huntsville and is said to be coming to Chattanooga, and we are getting everything out of there." He was asked by Andrews to pull his train a long way down the track out of the before the conductor would consent to "pull up" in order to let us out. way, and promptly obeyed.

It seemed an exceedingly long time before the expected "extra" arrived: and when it did come it bore another red flag! The reason given was that the "local," being too great for one engine, had been made up in a short time. This was terribly vexatious; yet there seemed nothing to do but. wait. To start out between the sections of an extra train would be to court destruction. There were already three trains around us, and their many passengers, and others, were growing curious about the mysterious train which had arrived on the time of the morning mail, manned by strangers. For an hour and five minutes from the time of arrival at Kingston, we remained in this most critical position. The sixteen of us who were shut up tightly in a box car, impersonating Beauregard's ammunition-hearing sounds outside but unable to distinguish words-had perhaps the most trying position. Andrews sent us, by one of the engineers, a cautious warning to be ready to fight in case the uneasiness of the crowd around led them to make any investigation, while he kept himself near the station to prevent the sending off of any alarming telegram. So intolerable was our suspense that the order for a deadly conflict would have been felt as a relief. But the assurance of Andrews quieted the crowd until the whistle of the expected train from the north was heard; then, as it glided up to the depot, past the end of our sidetrack, we were off without more words.

But unexpected danger had arisen behind us. Out of the panic at Big Shanty, two men emerged, determined, if possible, to foil the unknown captors of their train. There was no telegraph station and no locomotive at hand with which to follow; but the conductor of the train, W. A. Fuller, and Anthony Murphy, foreman of the Atlanta railway machine shops, who happened to be onboard Fuller's train, started on foot after us as hard as they could run! Finding a handcar, they mounted it and pushed forward till they neared Etcwah, where they ran on the break we had made in the road and were precipitated down the embankment into the ditch. Continuing with more caution, they reached Etowah and found the Yonah, which was at once pressed into service, loaded with soldiers who were at hand, and hurried with flying wheels toward Kingston. Fuller prepared to fight at that point, for he knew of the tangle of extra trains, and of the lateness of the regular trains, and did not think we would be able to pass. We had been gone only four minutes when he arrived and found himself stopped by three long, heavy trains pause. This was the first failure in the work assigned us,

of cars headed in the wrong direction. To move them out of the way so as to pass would cause a delay he was little inclined to afford. So, abandoning his engine, he, with Murphy, ran across to the Rome train, and, uncoupling the engine and one car, pushed forward with about forty armed men. As the Rome branch connected with the main road above were not many minutes ahead

Four miles from Kingston we again stopped and cut the telegraph. While trying to take up a rail at this point, we were greatly startled. One end of the rail was loosened and eight of us were pulling at it, when distant, but distinct, we heard the whistle of a pursuing engine! With a frantic pull we broke the rail and all tumbled over the embankment with the effort. We moved on, and at Adairsville we found a mixed train (freight and passenger) waiting, but there was an express on the road that had not yet arrived. We could afford no more delay and set out for the next station, Calhoun, at terrible speed, hoping to reach that point. before the express, which was behind time, should arrive. The nine miles which we had to travel were left behind in less than the same number of minutes! The express was just pulling out, but, hearing our whistle, backed before us until we were able to take the sidetrack; it stopped, however, in such a manner as completely to close up the other end of the switch. The two trains, side by side, almost touched each other, and our precipitous arrival caused natural suspicion. Many searching questions were asked which had to be answered before we could get the opportunity of proceeding. We, in the box car, could hear the altercation and were almost sure that a fight would be necessary Here again, our position was most critical, for the pursuers were rapid-

#### ly approaching. Fuller and Murphy saw the obstruction of the broken rail, in time to prevent a wreck, by reversing their engine; but the hindrance was for the present insuperable. Leaving all their men behind, they started for a second foot race. Before they had gone far, they met the train we had

passed at Adairsville and turned it back after us. At Adairsville they dropped the cars, and with locomotive and tender loaded with armed men, they drove forward at the highest speed possible. They knew that we were not many minutes ahead, and trusted to overhaul us before the express train could be safely passed.

But Andrews had told the powder story again, with all his skill, and had added a direct request in peremptory form to have the way opened before him, which the Confederate conductor did not see fit to resist: and just before the pursuers arrived at Calhoun, we were again under way. Stopping once more to cut wires and tear up the track, we felt a thrill of exhilaration to which we had long been strangers. The track was now clear before us to Chattanooga; and even west of that city we had good reason to believe that we would find no other train in the way till we had reached Mitchel's lines. If one rail could now be lifted, we would be in a few minutes at Oostenaula bridge, and with that burned, the rest of the task would be little more than simple manual labor, with the enemy absolutely powerless. We worked with a will.

But in a moment the lables were turned! Not far behind we heard the scream of a locomotive bearing down upon us at lightning speed! The men on board were in plain sight and well armed! Two minutes, perhaps one would have removed the rail at which we were toiling, then the game would have been in our own hands, for there was no other locomotive beyond that could be turned back after us. But the most desperate efforts were in vain. The rail was simply bent, and we hurried to our engine and darted away, while remorselessly after us thundered the enemy.

Now the contestants were in clear view, and a most exciting race followed. Wishing to gain a little time for the burning of the Oostenaula bridge, we dropped one car, and shortly after another; but they were "picked up" and pushed ahead to Resaca station. We were obliged to run over the high trestles and covered bridge at that point without a

Memphis and Charleston railroad to open railway communication with Confederate camp. To succeed in our enterprise it would be necessary the Union army at Pittsburg Landing.

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Another detachment, commanded by Mitchel in person, advanced on the same day 70 miles by rail directly into the enemy's territory arriving unchecked within 30 miles of Chattanooga. In two hours time he could have reached that point, the most important position in the West, with 2,000 men. Why did he not go? The story of the railroad raid is the answer

The night before breaking camp at Shelbyville, Mitchel sent an expedition secretly into the heart of Georgia to cut the railroad communications of Chattanooga to the south and east. The fortune of this attempt and purchased tickets for different stations along the line in the direchad a most important bearing upon his movements, and will now be narrated.

In the employ of General Buell was a spy, named James J. Andrews, who had rendered valuable services in the first year of the war and had secured the confidence of the Union commanders. In March 1862, Buell had sent him secretly with eight men to burn the bridges west of Chattanooga: but the failure of expected cooperation defeated the plan. and Andrews, after visiting Atlanta, and inspecting the whole of the enemy's lines in that vicinity and northward, had returned, ambitious to make another attempt. His plans for the second raid were submitted to Mitchel, and on the eve of the movement form Shelbyville to Huntsville, the latter authorized him to take twenty-four men, secretly enter the enemy's territory, and, by means of capturing a train, burn the bridges on the northern part of the Georgia State railroad as well as one on the East Tennessee railroad where it approaches the Georgia State line, thus completely isolating Chattanooga, which was then virtually ungarrisoned.

The soldiers for this expedition, of whom the writer was one, were selected from three Ohio regiments belonging to General J. W. Sills' bridade, being simply told that they were wanted for secret and very dangerous service. So far as known not a man chosen declined the perilous honor. Our uniforms were exchanged for ordinary Southern dress. and all arms, except revolvers, were left in camp. On the 7th of April, by the roadside about a mile east of Shelbyville, in the late twilight, we met our leader. Taking us a little way from the road, he quietly placed before us the outlines of the romantic and adventurous plan, which was to break into small detachments of three or four, journey eastward into the mountains, and then work southward, traveling by rail after we were well within the Confederate lines, and finally meet Andrews at Marietta. Georgia, more than 200 miles away, the evening of the third day after the start. When questioned, we were to profess ourselves Kentuckians going to join the Southern army.

On the journey we were a good deal annoved by the swollen streams and the muddy roads consequent on three days of almost ceaseless rain Andrews was led to believe that Mitchel's column would be inevitably delayed, and as we were expected to destroy the bridges the very day that Huntsville was entered, he took the resposibility of sending word to our different groups that our attempt would be postponed one dayfrom Friday to Saturday, April 12th. This was a natural but a most lamentable error of judgment.

One of the men was belated and did not join us at all. Two others were very soon captured by the enemy, and though their true character was not detected, they were forced into the Southern army, and two, who reached Marietta, failed to report at the rendezvous. Thus, when we assembled, very early in the morning, in Andrews' room at the Marietta Hotel for final consultation before the blow was struck, we were but twenty, including our leader. All preliminary difficulties had been easily overcome, and we were in good spirits. But some serious obstacles had been revealed on our ride from Chattanooga to Marietta the previous evening. The railroad was found to be crowded with trains, and many soldiers were among the passengers. Then the station-Big Shantyat which the capture was to be effected, had recently been made a

first to capture the engine in a guarded camp, with soldiers standing around as spectators, and then to run it from 100 to 200 miles through the enemy's country and to deceive or overpower all trains that would be met-a large contract for twenty men! Some of our party thought the chances of success so slight, under existing circumstances, that they urged the abandonment of the whole enterprise. But Andrews declared his purpose to succeed or die, offering to each man, however, the privilege of withdrawing from the attempt—an offer no one was in the least disposed to accept. Final instructions were then given, and we hurried to the ticket office in time for the northward bound mail train tion of Chattanooga.

Our ride as passengers was but eight miles. We swept swiftly around the base of Kenesaw Mountain and soon saw the tents of the forces camped at Big Shanty (now Kenesaw Station) gleam white in the morning mist. Here we were to stop for breakfast and attempt the seizure of the train. The morning was raw and gloomy, and a rain, which fell all day, had already begun. It was a painfully thrilling moment! We were but twenty with an army about us and a long and difficult road before us crowded with enemies. In an instant we were to throw off the disquise which had been our only protection and trust our leader's genius and our own efforts for safety and success. Fortunately we had not time for giving way to reflections and conjectures which could only unfit us for the stern task ahead. When we stopped, the conductor, engineer, and many of the passengers hurried to breakfast, leaving the train unquarded. Now was the moment of action! Ascertaining that there was nothing to prevent a rapid start, Andrews, our two engineers. Brown and Knight, and the fireman hurried forward, uncoupling a section of the train consisting of three empty baggage or box cars, the locomotive, and tender. The engineers and fireman sprang into the cab of the engine, while Andrews, with hand on the rail and foot on the step, waited to see that the remainder of the band had gained entrance into the rear box car. This seemed difficult and slow, though it really consumed but a few seconds, for the car stood on a considerable bank, and the first who came were pitched in by their comrades, while these, in turn, dragged in the others, and the door was instantly closed. A Sentinel, with musket in hand, stood not a dozen feet from the engine watching the whole proceeding, but before he or any of the soldiers and guards around could make up their minds to interfere, all was done, and Andrews, with a nod to his engineer, stepped on board. The valve was pulled wide open, and for a moment the wheels of the General slipped around ineffectively; then, with a bound that jerked the soldiers in the box car from their feet, the little train darted away, leaving the camp and station in the wildest uproar and confusion. The first step of the enterprise was triumphantly accomplished.

According to the timetable, of which Andrews had secured a copy, there were two trains to be met. These presented no serious hindrance to our attaining high speed, for we could tell just where to expect them. There was also a local freight not down on the timetable, but which could not be far distant. Any danger of collision with it could be avoided by ranning according to the schedule of the captured train until it was passed; then, at the highest possible speed, we could run to the Oostenaula and Chickamauga bridges, lay them in ashes, and pass on through Chattanooga to Mitchel, at Huntsville, or wherever eastward of that point he might be found, arriving long before the close of the day. It was a brilliant prospect, and, so far as human estimates can determine, it would have been realized had the day been friday instead of Saturday. On Friday every train had been on time, the day dry, and the road in perfect order. Now the road was in disorder, every train far behind time, and two "extras" were approaching us. But of these unfavorable conditions we knew nothing, and pressed confidently forward.

We stopped frequently, at one point tore up the track, cut telegraph wires, and loaded on cross-ties to be used in bridge burning. Wood and water were taken without difficulty, Andrews telling, very coully, the

The Confederates could not overtake and stop us on the road, but their aim was to keep close behind so that we might not be able to damage the road or take in water. In the former they succeeded, but not the latter. Both engines were put at the highest rate of speed. We were obliged to cut the wire after every station passed, in order that an alarm might not be sent ahead, and we constantly strove to throw our pursuer off the track or to obstruct the road permanently in some way so that we might be able to burn the Chickamauga bridges, still ahead. The chances seemed good that Fuller and Murphy would be wrecked. We broke out the end of our last box car and dropped cross-ties on the track as we ran, thus checking their progress and getting far enough ahead to take in wood and water at two separate stations. Several times we almost lifted a rail, but each time the coming of the Confederates, within rifle range, compelled us to desist and speed on. Our worst hindrance was the rain. The previous day (Friday) had been clear, with a high wind, and on such a day fire would have been easily and tremendously effective. But today a bridge could be burned only with abundance of fuel and careful nursing.

. . . .

Thus we sped on, mile after mile, in this fearful chase, around curves and past stations in seemingly endless perspective. Whenever we lost sight of the enemy beyond a curve, we hoped that some of our obstructions had been effective in throwing him from the track and that we would see him no more; but at each long reach backward the smoke was again seen, and the shrill whistle was like the scream of a bird of prey. The time could not have been so very long, for the terrible speed was rapidly devouring the distance, but with our nerves strained to the highest tension, each minute seemed an hour. On several occasions the escape of the enemy from being wrecked seemed little less than miraculous. At one point a rail was placed across the track so skillfully on a curve that it was not seen till the train ran upon it at full speed. Fuller says that they were terribly jolted, and seemed to bounce altogether from the track, but lighted on the rails in safety. Some of the Confederates wished to leave a train which was driven at such a reckless rate, but their wishes were not gratified

Before reaching Dalton, we urged Andrews to turn and attack the enemy, laying an ambush so as to get into close quarters that our revolvers might be on equal terms with their guns. I have little doubt that if this had been carried out, it would have succeeded. But Andrews, whether because he thought the chance of wrecking or obstructing the enemy still good, or feared that the country ahead had been alarmed by a telegram around the Confederacy by the way of Richmond, merely gave the plan his sanction without making any attempt to carry it into execution.

Dalton was passed without difficulty, and beyond we stopped again to cut wires and obstruct the track. It happened that a regiment was encamped not a hundred yards away, but they did not molest us. Fuller had written a dispatch to Chattanooga and dropped a man with orders to have it forwarded instantly while he pushed on to save the bridges. Part of the message got through and created a wild panic in Chattanooga, although tidd not materially influence our fortunes. Our supply of fuel was now very short, and without getting rid of our pursuer long enough to take in more, it was evident that we could not run, as far as Chattanooga.

While cutting the wire, we made an attempt to get up another rail, but the enemy, as usual, was too quick for us. We had no tool for this purpose except a wedge-pointed iron bar. Two or three bent iron claws for pulling out spikes would have given us such superiority that, down to almost the last of our run, we would have been able to escape and to burn all the Chickamauga bridges. But it had not been our intention to rely on this mode of obstruction—an emergency only rendered necessary by our unexpected delay and the pouring rain.

We made no attempt to damage the long tunnel north of Dalton, as our enemies had greatly dreaded. The last hope of the raid was now staked upon an effort of a different kind. A few more obstructions were dropped on the track and our speed was increased so that we soon forged a considerable distance ahead. The side and end boards of the last car were torn into shreds, all available fuel was piled upon it, and blazing brands were brought back from the engine. By the time we approached a long covered bridge, the fire in the car was fairly started. We uncoupled it in the middle of the bridge and with painful suspense awaited the issue. Oh, for a few minutes till the work of conflagration was fairly begun! There was still steam-pressure enough in our boiler to carry us to the next wood yard, where we could have replenished our fuel, by force if necessary so as to run as near to Chattanooga as was deemed prudent. We did not know of the telegraphed message which the pursuers had sent ahead. But alas, the minutes were not given. Before the bridge was extensively fired, the enemy was upon us. They pushed right into the smoke and drove the burning car before them to the next sidetrack.

With no car left, and no fuel, the last scrap having been thrown into the engine or upon the burning car, and with no obstruction to drop on the track, our situation was indeed desperate.

But it might still be possible to save ourselves if we left the train in a body and took a direct course toward Union lines. Confederate pursuers with whom I have since conversed have agreed on two points—that we could have escaped in the manner here pointed out; and that an attack on the pursuing train would likely have been successful. But Andrews thought otherwise, at least in relation to the former plan, and ordered us to jump from the locomotive, and dispersing in the woods, each endeavor to save himself.

The question is often asked, "Why did you not reverse your engine and thus wreck the one following?" Wanton injury not part of our plan, and we could not afford to throw away our engine till the last extremity. When the raiders were jumping off, however, the engine was reversed and driven back, but by that time the steam was so nearly exhausted that the Confederate engine had no difficulty in reversing and receiving the shock without injury. Both were soon at a standstill, and the Confederates, reinforced by a party from a train which soon arrived on the scene—the express passenger, which had not been turned back at Calhoun—continued the chase on foot.

It is easy now to understand why Mitchel paused thirty miles west of Chattanooga. The Andrews raiders had been forced to stop eighteen miles south of the same town, and no flying train met Mitchel with tidings that all the railroad communications of Chattanooga were destroyed and that the town was in a panic and undefended.

A few words will give the sequel to this remarkable enterprise. The hunt for the fugitive raiders was prompt, energetic, and successful. Several were captured the same day, and all but two within a week. Even these two were overfaken and brought back when they supposed that they were virtually out of danger. Two who had reached Marietta, but failed to board the train (J. R. Porter, Co. C, 21st Ohio, and Martin J. Hawkins. Co. A, 33rd Ohio), were identified and added to the band of prisoners. Now follows the saddest part of the story. Being in citizens' dress within an enemy's lines, the whole party was held as spies. A court-martial was convened, and the leader and seven out of the remaining twentyone were condemned and executed. The others were never brought to trial, probably because of the advance of Union forces and the consequent confusion into which the affairs of the Departments of Fast Tennessee and Georgia were thrown. Of the remaining fourteen, eight succeeded, by a bold effort-attacking their guard in broad daylightin making their escape from Atlanta, Georgia, and ultimately in reaching the North. The other six, who shared in this effort, but were recaptured, remained prisoners until the latter part of March 1863, when they were exchanged through a special arrangement made by Secretary Stanton. All the survivors of this expedition received medals and promotion. The pursuers also received expressions of gratitude from their fellow Confederates, notably from the Governor and Legislature of Georgia





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