The Great Locomotive Chase

On the night of April 11, 1862, a group of Union spies, now known as Andrews’ Raiders, were staying at the Kennesaw House. The raiders were planning to steal the locomotive named General the next morning and destroy the railroad between Marietta and Chattanooga. On the morning of April 12, 1862, 18 Union soldiers and two civilians climbed aboard the train along with the other passengers in Marietta.

As the train made its way north on the Western & Atlantic railroad, the men began to make their move. At Big Shanty (now known as Kennesaw,) just north of Marietta, the train stopped for breakfast and the twenty men kidnapped the train while everyone ate at the nearby depot. The spies made their way up the line trying to burn the tracks behind them.

The engineer of the General, William Fuller, saw the spies steal the train and chased after the spies on foot until he found an engine that would help him follow the spies. Finally, Fuller found the engine named Texas, and he chased Andrews’ Raiders in it in reverse because the train was headed south on the tracks when he boarded it.

Andrews’ Raiders continued north, trying to burn the railroad bridges. The men had not planned on rain, however, and because the wooden bridges were wet, they would not burn. After eight hours, the chase ended when the General ran out of fuel.

The men abandoned the engine and fled into the countryside when the Texas and Fuller closed in on them. Eventually, all the raiders were captured; eight were executed; eight escaped prison and the rest remained in prison until they were exchanged for Confederate soldiers in 1863.

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The Texas

The General