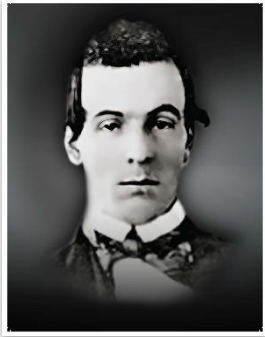




MEDAL OF HONOR: Pvt. George A. Wilson



Biography



Home: Belmont County, Ohio
Unit: Company B, 2nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment
Enlisted: Aug. 31, 1861



Born in Belmont County, Ohio, in 1830 to George and Elizabeth Wilson, Pvt. George D. Wilson became a heroic Soldier. After volunteering for the famous Andrews' Raid, he became a central figure in a high-profile mission of the Civil War known as the Great Locomotive Chase. Though Wilson tragically perished, his story remains inspiring.

Wilson was originally a tradesman who supported his family as a journeyman shoemaker. An incredibly talented craftsman, Wilson loved his work but felt the call to serve his country. He enlisted in the Union Army's Company B, 2nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment, on Aug. 31, 1861, for three years.

Knowing the risks involved, Wilson volunteered for a mission to destroy a railway that supported Confederate supply chains across the South. Posing as civilians, Wilson and others infiltrated the South in small groups, rendezvousing north of Atlanta at Marietta, Georgia. He and 21 of his fellow Andrews' Raiders commandeered a locomotive called the General and destroyed railroad tracks and telegraph wires as they made their way back north. However, the General's conductor and search parties set out in hot pursuit, forcing them to flee and abandon their mission.

After it became clear that the mission had failed, Wilson attempted to escape and evade capture but was eventually caught. On May 31, 1862, he was tried and convicted as a spy. He and six of his fellow Soldiers – who faced their fate with extraordinary courage and bravery – were executed by hanging on June 18, 1862, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Wilson died a hero and left behind an ex-wife, Martha Marple Wilson, and a child (another child died before his death). Initially buried at the site of his execution, Wilson's remains were moved to the Chattanooga National Cemetery on April 25, 1866, where he was laid to rest at last.



U.S. ARMY

I WILL ALWAYS PLACE THE MISSION FIRST * I WILL NEVER ACCEPT DEFEAT * I WILL NEVER QUIT * I WILL NEVER LEAVE A FALLEN COMRADE



MEDAL OF HONOR: The Great Locomotive Chase of 1862



Battle Narrative

In one of the earliest special operations in U.S. Army history, Union Soldiers dressed as civilians infiltrated the Confederacy, hijacked a train in Georgia and drove it north for 87 miles, destroying enemy infrastructure along the way. During what later became known as the Great Locomotive Chase, six of the Union participants became the Army's first recipients of the newly created Medal of Honor.

The plan for the Great Locomotive Chase was hatched by James J. Andrews. A Kentucky-born civilian spy and scout, he proposed that a group of volunteers penetrate the Confederacy with the aim of degrading the railway and communication lines that supported the rebel stronghold of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Andrews and 23 other men, who later became known as Andrews' Raiders, infiltrated the South in small groups, rendezvousing north of Atlanta at Marietta, Georgia. On April 12, 1862, 22 of them commandeered a locomotive known as the General and proceeded north, tearing up railroad tracks and cutting telegraph wires as they went.

The General's conductor, William Fuller, led a party in pursuit – first on foot, then by handcar and three locomotives (the Yonah, the William R. Smith and the Texas). Andrews' Raiders on the General were slowed by their sabotage efforts and by the need to permit oncoming trains to pass on the single-track railway, allowing Fuller's party gain on the Union men.

Running low on fuel, and with the Texas on their heels, Andrews' Raiders abandoned their effort just 18 miles short of Chattanooga.

Andrews was tried as a spy and saboteur, and was executed on June 7, 1862. Seven others were subsequently hanged on June 18. The remaining Raiders staged a prison escape. Although most succeeded in making it to safety, six of the Union Soldiers were recaptured.

After their release as part of a prisoner exchange in mid-March 1863, all six were awarded the Medal of Honor – the first Soldiers in U.S. Army history to earn the award – and were offered commissions as first lieutenants. Then-Pvt. Jacob Parrott, who had been extensively brutalized by Confederate interrogators, was the first to be decorated with the medal. In the following years, 13 others received it as well.

The award, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on July 12, 1862, bestowed an Army Medal of Honor "to such noncommissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action and other soldier-like qualities during the present insurrection."

Through their extraordinary heroism exhibited during the Great Locomotive Chase of 1862, these men demonstrated unyielding courage and bravery in keeping with the highest traditions of military service, reflecting great credit upon themselves and the Union.





MEDAL OF HONOR: The Great Locomotive Chase of 1862



Unit History - 2nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Initially organized April 18, 1861, in the Ohio Militia at Columbus from existing companies as a three-month regiment under Col. Lewis Wilson, the 2nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment served in the defense of Washington and the occupation of Fairfax Courthouse and fought at the Battle of Bull Run. The 2nd then reorganized from July 17 to Sept. 20, 1861, at Camp Dennison, Ohio, as a three-year volunteer regiment under Col. Leonard A. Harris.



After completing initial training, the regiment marched to Kentucky on Sept. 4, 1861, where it fought various actions in the vicinity of Olympia Springs until November, when it was attached to the 9th Brigade, 3rd Division, Army of the Ohio. Later it was attached to the 9th Brigade, 3rd Division, I Corps, Army of the Ohio, and then to the 1st Division, Center, XIV Corps, Army of the Cumberland.

The 2nd Ohio fought in the advance to Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Nashville, Tennessee, Feb. 10-25, 1862, and in the advance to Murfreesboro, and Huntsville, Alabama, Feb. 4-11, 1862. A detachment participated in the raid on the Georgia State Railroad, also known as the Great Locomotive Chase, April 7-12, 1862.

It also fought in various actions in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia, including the battles of Perryville, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, Kennesaw Mountain and the Siege of Atlanta. The veterans of the 2nd Ohio mustered out Oct. 10, 1864, and its newer recruits transferred to the 18th Regiment Infantry, Ohio Volunteers. The regiment lost 111 killed and 425 wounded.



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