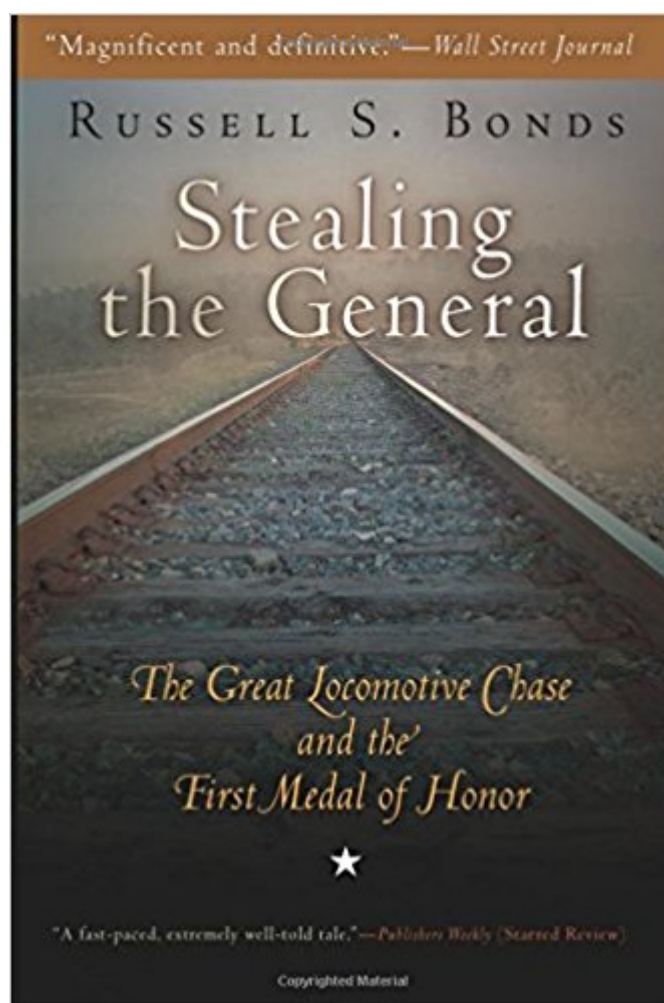


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# Stealing The General: The Great Locomotive Chase And The First Medal Of Honor



## Synopsis

Selected by Civil War Interactive as One of the Top Civil War Books of All Time "The definitive book about the Great Locomotive Chase." "Charlotte Observer" "Magnificent and definitive." "Wall Street Journal" "The Great Locomotive Chase has been the stuff of legend and the darling of Hollywood. Now we have a solid history of the Andrews Raid. Russell S. Bonds' stirring account makes clear why the raid failed and what happened to the raiders." "James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize" "In this gripping, smooth-running account, Bonds zooms effortlessly from broad-stroke overviews of Civil War strategy to minute-by-minute scrutiny of unfolding events on the ground. He sets up the story with a quick, punchy outline of the first year of the war. What follows is a fast-paced, extremely well-told tale of espionage, capture, trial and escape." "Publishers Weekly (starred review)" "Phenomenally well written, organized, and presented." "Civil War Books and Authors" "On April 12, 1862— one year to the day after Confederate guns opened on Fort Sumter and started the Civil War— a tall, mysterious smuggler and self-appointed Union spy named James J. Andrews and nineteen infantry volunteers infiltrated north Georgia and stole a steam engine called the *General*. Racing northward at speeds approaching sixty miles an hour, cutting telegraph lines and destroying track along the way, Andrews planned to open East Tennessee to the Union army, cutting off men and material from the Confederate forces in Virginia. If they succeeded, Andrews and his raiders could change the course of the war. But the *General's* young conductor, William A. Fuller, chased the stolen train first on foot, then by handcar, and finally aboard another engine, the *Texas*. He pursued the *General* until, running out of wood and water, Andrews and his men abandoned the doomed locomotive, ending the adventure that would soon be famous as *The Great Locomotive Chase*. But the ordeal of the soldiers involved was just beginning. In the days that followed, the "engine thieves" were hunted down and captured. Eight were tried and executed as spies, including Andrews. Eight others made a daring escape to freedom, including two assisted by a network of slaves and Union sympathizers. For their actions, before a personal audience with President Abraham Lincoln, six of the raiders became the first men in American history to be awarded the Medal of Honor— the nation's highest decoration for gallantry. Americans north and south, both at the time and ever since, have been astounded and fascinated by this daring raid. But until now, there has not been a complete history of the entire episode and the fates of all those involved. Based on eyewitness accounts, as well as correspondence, diaries, military records, newspaper reports, deposition testimony and other primary sources, *Stealing the General: The Great Locomotive Chase and the First Medal of Honor* by Russell S. Bonds is a blend of meticulous research and compelling narrative that is now

considered to be the definitive history of "the boldest adventure of the war."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. A spy and trader in contraband led an ill-fated commando mission during the first year of the Civil War with these words: "Now my lads, you have been chosen by your officers to perform a most important service, which if successful, will change the whole aspect of the war, and aid materially in bringing an early peace to our distracted country." The episode, which formed the basis for one of Buster Keaton's best-known films, took place in April 1862, when 20 Union soldiers crossed Confederate lines to steal a locomotive called the General and destroy a critical Confederate supply line. In this gripping, smooth-running account of the raid and its aftermath, Atlanta lawyer and Civil War historian Bonds zooms effortlessly from broad-stroke overviews of Civil War strategy to minute-by-minute scrutiny of unfolding events on the ground. He sets up the story with a quick, punchy outline of the first year of the war. What follows is a fast-paced, extremely well-told tale of espionage, capture, trial and escape. Half the team was executed; the half that escaped received the newly established Medal of Honor. With its authoritative tone and refreshing accessibility, this should find a place on the nightstand of the general reader as well as the bookshelf of the Civil War enthusiast. BOMC, History Book Club and Military Book Club selections, Borders' Original Voices selection. 20,000 first printing. (Oct. 15) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Stealing the General, by Russell S. Bonds (Westholme; \$29.95). On April 12, 1862, twenty Union soldiers in disguise boarded a train in Georgia to execute a scheme that was meant to bring a quick end to the Civil War. The plan, devised by a quinine-smuggling Union scout and an astronomer turned general, was to steal a locomotive and drive it to Chattanooga, capturing a key railroad connection whose loss would cut the Confederacy in half. The raid might have succeeded if not for the train's conductor, who pursued the hijackers on foot ("this seemed to be funny to some of the crowd," he said later, "but it wasn't so to me") and then by handcar and a series of three engines. The Union men were captured, and eight were hung as spies; some of the survivors were later the first-ever recipients of the Medal of Honor. The chase became a contemporary legend - it's now best known as the basis of a Buster Keaton film - and Bonds's account, the first major study in decades, is thoroughly worthy of an expedition that, a Union officer wrote, "had the wildness of a romance." Copyright © 2006 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I saw the Disney movie when I was young and then read the book .This book filled in all that was missing from both the movie and the other book . I was lucky to see the Texas in Atlanta and this sparked my interest in the story . I enjoy this book very much . Very fast reading .I would recommend this book to every body interested in Civil war history. As a side note I bought the movie to compare

I knew nothing of the story before reading this book beyond knowing of a steam engine called the General. My knowledge of the Civil War is also quite light but that didn't take away from me following the story. The author painted a quick yet informative back story of the Civil War up to the point where this story unfolds. There is a lot of information in here but I never felt overwhelmed or bored by reading through all the details presented. Some authors present information like a college professor's lecture but not here. It was done with a pace that kept the story moving right along while not leaving out any small bit of the story. I haven't read any other books on the subject but I can't imagine any other providing anything better than "Stealing the General". Beyond the story of the General the history of the awarding of the first Medal of Honors makes this book a great 2 in 1 story!

Excellent work by Bonds! This is a definitive treatment of a truly unique event during the American Civil War. Bonds seeks to separate fact from fiction and does so quite well by provided clear and

concise descriptions of the various accounts and provides an excellent narrative of the events that lead up to and post-chase. Would highly recommend this book to anyone - but specifically those interested in the American Civil War.

This is one of the best Civil War stories ever known. Getting the details of those involved and the actions before and after the Stealing of the General makes this book a necessary addition to anyone's library who enjoys history, espionage, Civil War history, strategy, justice, or trains - or simply wants to enjoy an exciting book. Reading this book will make you appreciate the genius of Buster Keaton's treatment of the story in his classic movie 'The General'.

The Stealing of the General is not some stodgy, boring history book. Historical yes, but a very well written book that could easily be read as a novel or action thriller. It has all the accurate and detailed historical facts woven together in a fast paced, page turner fashion. There is the train chase of course, bridge burnings, captures, escapes, trials, hangings, and finally the presentation of the very first Medals of Honor. As a somewhat distant relative of the Confederate hero, conductor W.A. Fuller (my great grandfather Judge Fuller was William A.'s brother) I never knew all the amazing details of the chase. This book brings alive the life of my relative and let's me live in this time period for a while. Russell S. Bonds has done an incredible amount of detailed research on this book not only on all that occurred before, during, and after the chase itself but also in the current events that shaped the whole story. The book stays true to the mainline story though leaving you no doubt of the bravery on both sides and what the raiders had to endure afterwards. You will take away from this book a much better knowledge of the Civil War era and some of the back drops of one of the most famous of the myriad of stories the war produced. An excellent read!

The author has read all the prior books on this subject especially all of Pettinger's books. He has distilled them into one comprehensive book that explains the contradictions from sources and which are most likely correct. He has also dug up some details that I had not read before e.g. the size of the cell that the 21 Raiders were kept in was only 13x13 feet. He also followed the Raiders who escaped and what eventually happened to all of the raiders. The Best book on the subject all in one place.

This book had great flow, was well documented, and held your attention throughout. Before reading the book I discovered that James Andrews was my great grandmother's brother so I hung on every

word that described who he was and how he lived. This is an excellent book!

You won't find a more exciting book about the American Civil War than this one. The bravery and determination shown by the men on both sides during and after the chase is epic. On one hand you have James Andrews, who is determined to disrupt rail traffic in the south by stealing a train, and on the other side you have William Fuller, a southern conductor who is determined to get his train back. This book not only explains the thrill of the chase but also describes how the captured northern men made escape attempts from their southern prison and how many of them eventually regained their freedom and returned home. This is a must read book for anyone who loves non-fiction.

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