

Private William J. Knight and the Andrews Raid

ALWAYS VERY DARING AND RECKLESS

by Jim Leeke

THE AUDIENCE SURELY BUZZED with anticipation anywhere the middle-aged veteran appeared on a stage. By 1888, the year the Grand Army of the Republic held its big national encampment at Columbus, he had lectured across Ohio and Indiana for a decade. A local GAR commander usually introduced him. Then the speaker stepped up beside his unpretentious “panorama.”

“Worthy Commander, comrades, ladies, and gentlemen,” William J. Knight began. “The story I am going to relate this evening is about something that happened a long time ago. And there are many that have never heard anything about the circumstances, and again there are many that have read about the expedition in history — histories that were written by more eminent writers than I am a speaker. And if any of you have met here this evening thinking that all of those so-called engine thieves were a set of silver-tongued orators as well as being a set of daredevils, you will probably be disappointed.”



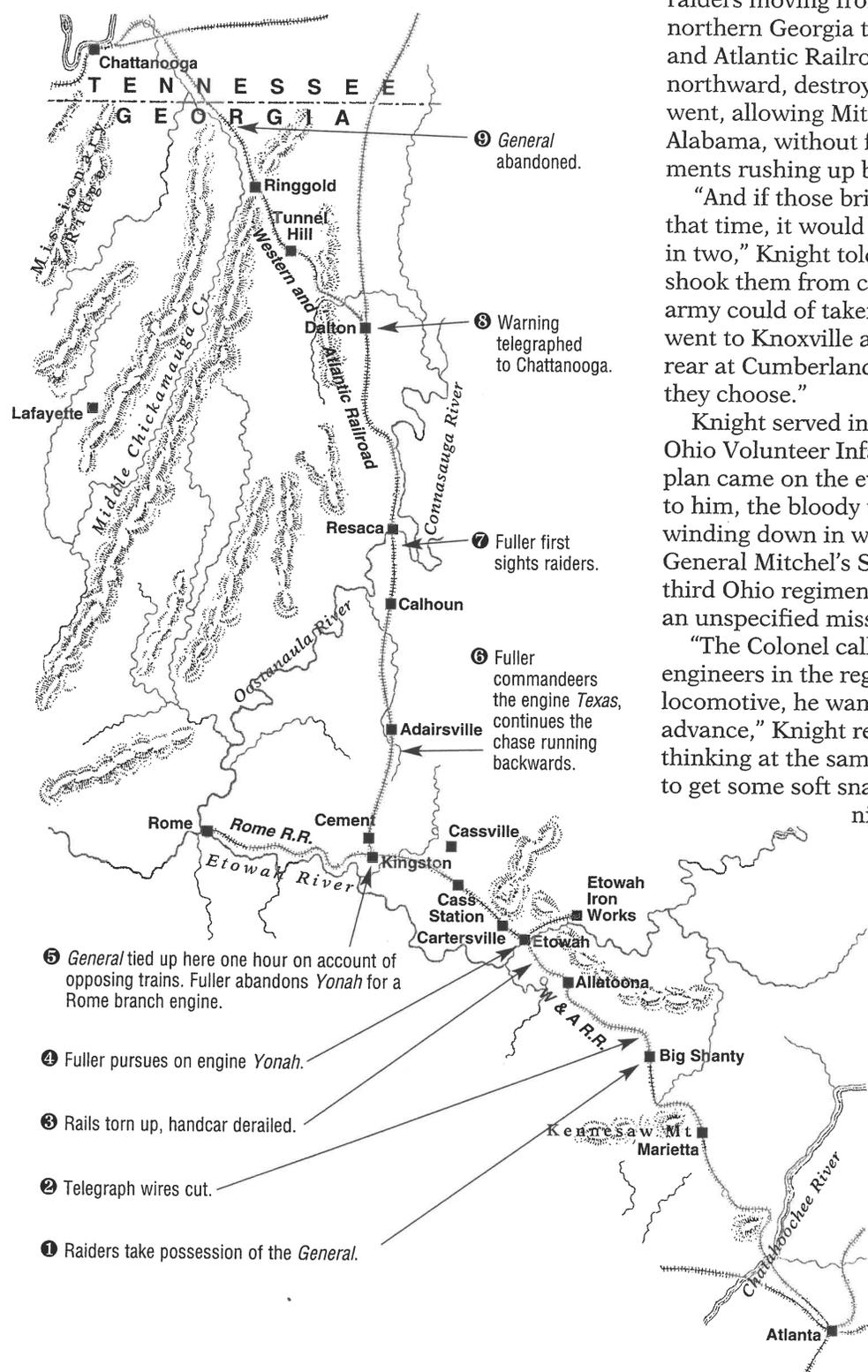
The speaker’s modesty no doubt brought smiles, for he had participated in one of the most daring exploits of the Civil War. Perhaps he wore his Medal of Honor this evening, shining against his dark lapel. Here stood one of the fabled Andrews Raiders, the intrepid

LEFT: William J. Knight wore his Medal of Honor with pride. *Williams County Public Library Photo Archives*

RIGHT: Although it contains several misspellings, this map, the first panel of the panorama, colorfully displays the entire area of the Andrews Raid. It is embellished with a scene in which the raiders near the end of their dash on the stolen locomotive *General*. *Ohio Historical Society*



As Knight delivered his presentation orally, spellings have been corrected and occasional punctuation added to his handwritten text. The manuscript and the panorama, along with some other Knight-related artifacts, are in the collections of the Ohio Historical Society.



- ① Raiders take possession of the *General*.
- ② Telegraph wires cut.
- ③ Rails torn up, handcar derailed.
- ④ Fuller pursues on engine *Yonah*.
- ⑤ *General* tied up here one hour on account of opposing trains. Fuller abandons *Yonah* for a Rome branch engine.
- ⑥ Fuller commandeers the engine *Texas*, continues the chase running backwards.
- ⑦ Fuller first sights raiders.
- ⑧ Warning telegraphed to Chattanooga.
- ⑨ *General* abandoned.

engineer of the "Great Locomotive Chase" through Dixie. Knight and his comrades were as celebrated in their day as Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle and his fliers would become for their World War II bombing of Tokyo eighty years later.

The raid was launched in April 1862 by Union Brigadier General Ormsby M. Mitchel and civilian secret agent James J. Andrews. Their plan had raiders moving from Shelbyville, Tennessee, to northern Georgia to hijack a train on the Western and Atlantic Railroad. They then would dash northward, destroying tracks and bridges as they went, allowing Mitchel to move on Huntsville, Alabama, without fear of Confederate reinforcements rushing up by rail to oppose him.

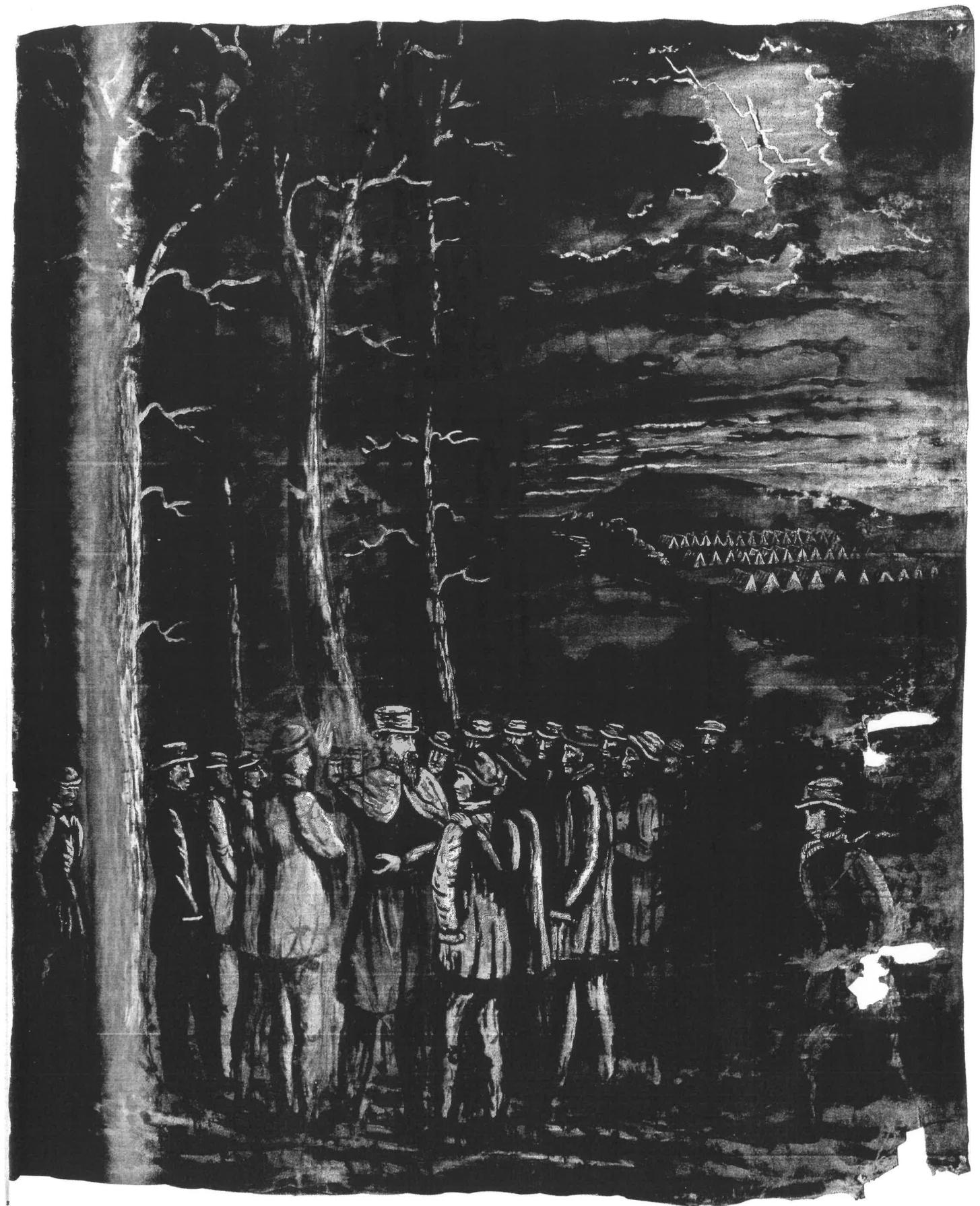
"And if those bridges could of been burned at that time, it would of cut the Southern Confederacy in two," Knight told his audiences. "It would of shook them from center to circumference. Our army could of taken Chattanooga. They could of went to Knoxville and struck the Rebel army in the rear at Cumberland Gap or Richmond or wherever they choose."

Knight served in Company E of the Twenty-first Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The first hint he got of the plan came on the evening of April 7. Unbeknownst to him, the bloody two-day battle of Shiloh was just winding down in western Tennessee. Officers from General Mitchel's Second, Twenty-first, and Thirty-third Ohio regiments asked for volunteers to go on an unspecified mission.

"The Colonel called out that if there were any engineers in the regiment capable of running a locomotive, he wanted them to step one pace in advance," Knight recalled. "And I stepped out thinking at the same time that perhaps I was going to get some soft snap" — an easy job, such as running a sawmill or gristmill. "But it turned out to be the toughest soft snap that I ever run against."

Knight was ordered immediately to head-quarters. His captain walked with him. "He said that they could not compel me to go. I said that they would not have

James J. Andrews assembled his two-dozen raiders a mile outside Shelbyville, Tennessee, to give them final instructions. Violent weather hampered their long walk to Chattanooga.



to compel me to go, that I would go anyhow. But after I got back, if there had been another expedition of the same kind got up," Knight said, "there would have been a vacant place in the ranks — as far as I was concerned, anyhow. And I think I could speak for the balance of the party."

At headquarters, Knight met Andrews, the civilian spy who was heading the mission. All the surviving raiders would remember him vividly later, if occasionally with mixed emotions.

"Andrews was a man capable of doing almost anything or going anywhere himself," Knight told his audiences. "Not saying anything against the man, but I don't think that he was intended to take charge of a lot of men in a case like that. Andrews was a man nearly six feet tall, black hair and black eyes, features a little on the Roman order. He had his maps of the country spread out on the Colonel's table, and he showed me where we were, then where we were to go, et cetera, and I can say that it looked much better on paper than I found it on land."

The two-dozen raiders were to dress in civilian clothes and make their way in twos and threes southeastward to Confederate-held Chattanooga, Tennessee, where they would board a southbound train. Later, at Marietta, Georgia, a few miles above Atlanta, they would steal another train and head north. If they were caught, all likely would be shot as Yankee spies.

"He [the colonel] said that in case that I was captured, if I could get out by enlisting in the Rebel army for me to do so. He said that any way that I could get out would be considered honorable."

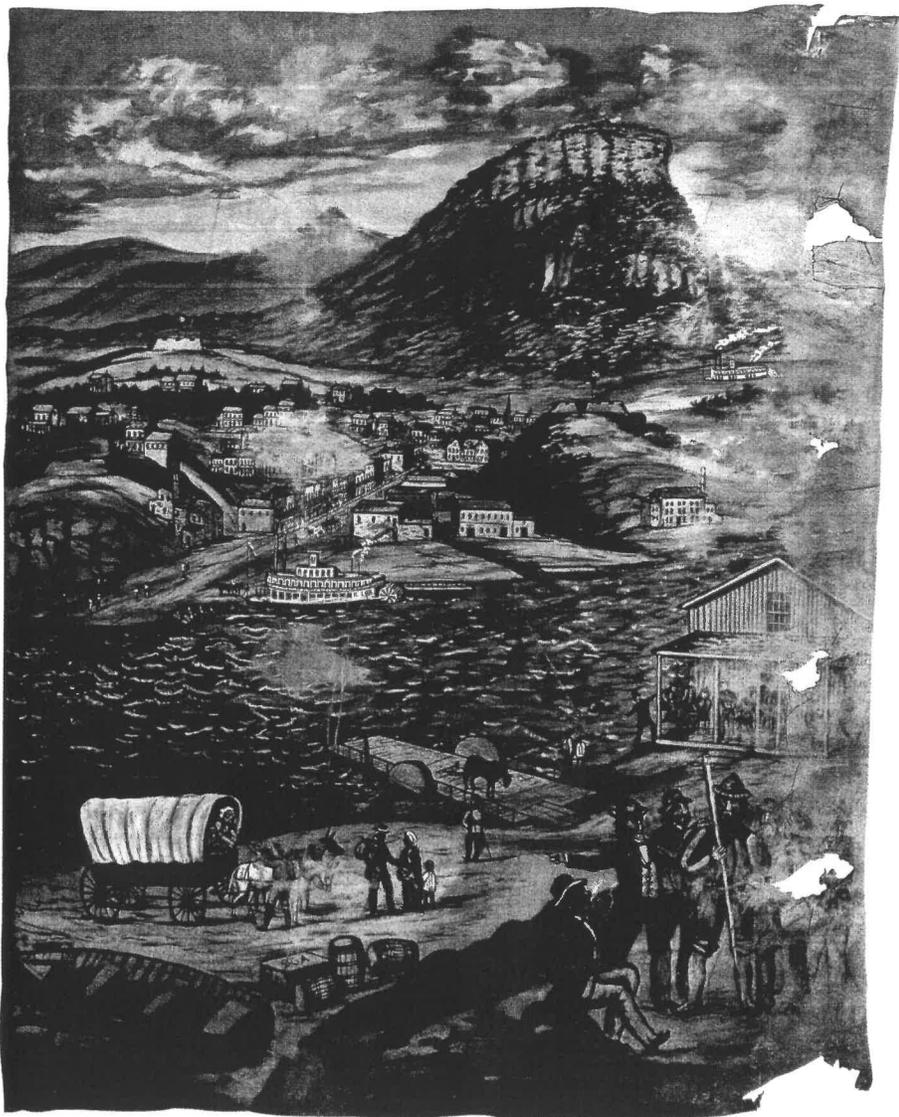
The men began the hundred-mile hike to Chattanooga later that night. The next few days were stormy, filled with thunder and lightning. "I sometimes thought that the good Lord was going to thunder us out of existence," Knight said. Two men couldn't make the rendezvous and enrolled in the Rebel army as advised. The rest arrived on April 11, the weather having delayed the plan by a day.

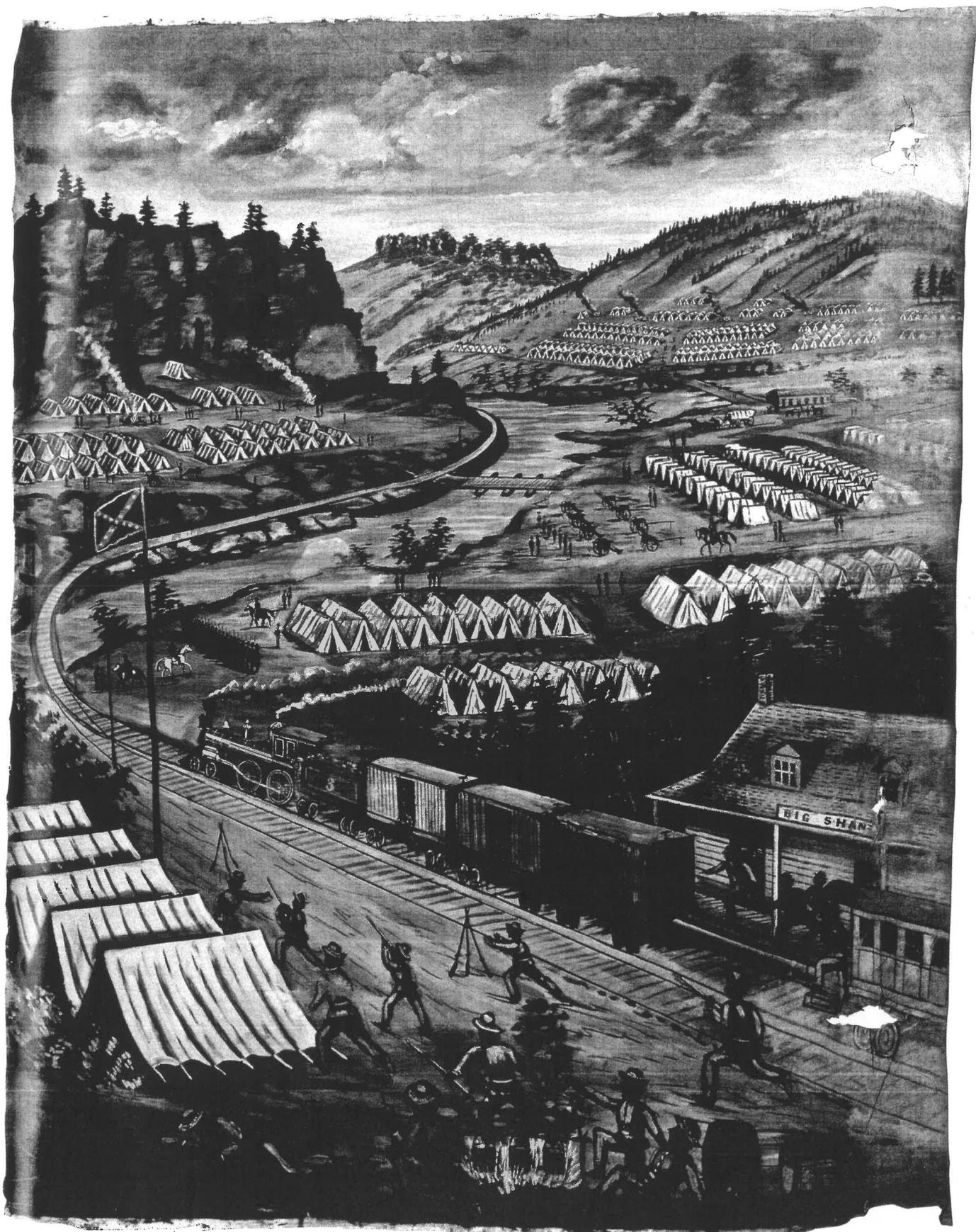
Knight and other raiders crossed the Tennessee River by ferry to reach Rebel-held Chattanooga, at the base of Lookout Mountain.

"We arrived in Chattanooga early, safe and sound, and found the town alive with Rebel soldiers. And they were a rough-looking set of soldiers, I can tell you," Knight recalled. "They were clothed in all kinds of clothing and were armed with guns of all patterns, especially all old patterns, from a pistol up to a twelve-pounder. We found out that our train did not leave until evening. So we strolled around town and took in the sights, which were many."

On the train south, "the car that we were in was full of Rebel soldiers. And they had taken on a good supply of tangle foot, and it made them quite boisterous. You would of thought to of heard them talk that there was just enough Rebels on that train to of eat every Yank there was in the Union army. Little did they know that there was a few so-called live Yanks on board with them. And it was probably just as well for us that they did not know it. At least we thought so."

The raiders spent the night in hotels in Marietta and arose early the next day. They went to the





Knight uncoupled passenger cars from the rest of the train before the raiders stole the *General* and three boxcars at Big Shanty.

depot in small groups to avoid attracting attention. A train that had begun its run that day in Atlanta left Marietta at 5 A.M. Pulling it was a locomotive called the *General*. Two raiders missed the train, which left only twenty in the party. Their plan was to seize control at a stop called Big Shanty, ten miles up the line from Marietta.

"There was many a thought passed through my mind in that ten miles," Knight recalled. "I glanced around over the car, and I could see a good many of our boys on the car. I think that they looked a little paler than common. As for myself, I don't know just how I looked. But I think I felt a little like if there had been a little ice water run down my back. And it made me think of what my grandmother told me when she took my hand to bid me goodbye when I was leaving home. Says she, 'Now, Will, you know that you have always been very daring and reckless, but don't venture too far.' I did not know but what I had got a little too far."

At Big Shanty, the passengers and crew stepped off for a quick breakfast. Thousands of enemy soldiers were camped nearby. Knight strolled along the platform with Andrews. While the leader went ahead to check the switch, Knight quietly pulled the coupling pin between the third and fourth cars, separating the passenger cars.

"Andrews soon came back and said it was all right, one of the side doors of the box cars being open. He told me to take the engine and he waved his hand to the men for them to get on. I stepped on the engine, took hold on the throttle, and from a nod from Andrews I pulled her open. And it seemed for a second that everything stood still. Then our engine leaped ahead as though she had been shot out of a cannon."

The *General* steamed north eleven miles, passing three stations, to the Etowah River. Here, the raiders made a mistake. A little, privately owned switching engine called *Yonah* sat on a sidetrack with steam up. "We should of captured it, but let her pass," Knight admitted to his audiences. "I spoke to Andrews about it, but he said that it would make no difference. But we found out before night that it made all the difference in the world."

The raiders raced on, passing station after station to the astonishment of people on the platforms. They stopped here and there to cut telegraph wires or to destroy track. At times they had to wait for trains headed south. Andrews told anyone who questioned him that his was a special ammunition train bound for the Rebel army at Corinth, Mississippi. At Adairsville, he learned another southbound train was due. Andrews was in no mood for more waiting.

"We run to the next station, nine miles, in seven and one half minutes," Knight said, "and as good luck would have it, the train was still at the station,

but was just in the act of starting. If she had been coming down, at the rate we were running, we would of run clear through them. There would have been Union and Rebel blood mixed." The southbound train was pulled by a locomotive called the *Texas*.

Still unknown to the Ohioans was the furious chase by the W&ARR trainmen they had left behind at Big Shanty. Led by conductor William A. Fuller, the determined southerners had pursued first on foot, then by handcar, next by the *Yonah*, and finally on the *Texas*, running in reverse. Their force grew at every step.

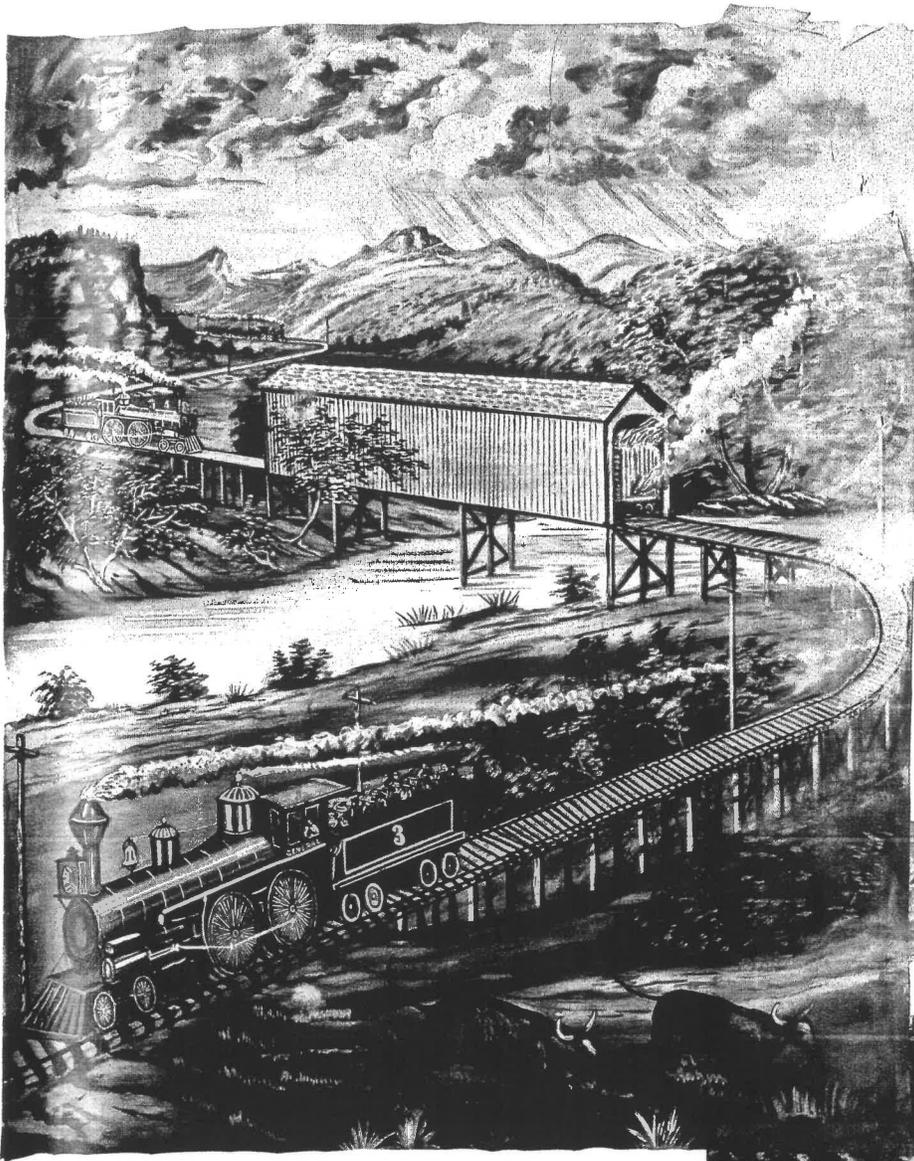
"It looked a good deal like foolishness for three men to start after a train on foot that they had just seen depart at lightning speed," Knight said with admiration. "But it saved the Confederacy....When they whistled coming into Adairsville, we were just leaving. There is where the devil-may-care race commenced."

This was the Great Locomotive Chase, later made famous by innumerable books and articles. Nearly a hundred years later, in 1956, Walt Disney would make a movie by that name — the second time the adventure appeared on the big screen. Buster Keaton starred in the silent *The General* in 1927.

"We would stop and cut the wires and undertake to take up a rail," Knight said. "But before we would

The raiders frequently stopped to tear up tracks and cut telegraph wires on their run northward. Furious pursuit by Rebel trainmen, however, made more serious disruption impossible.





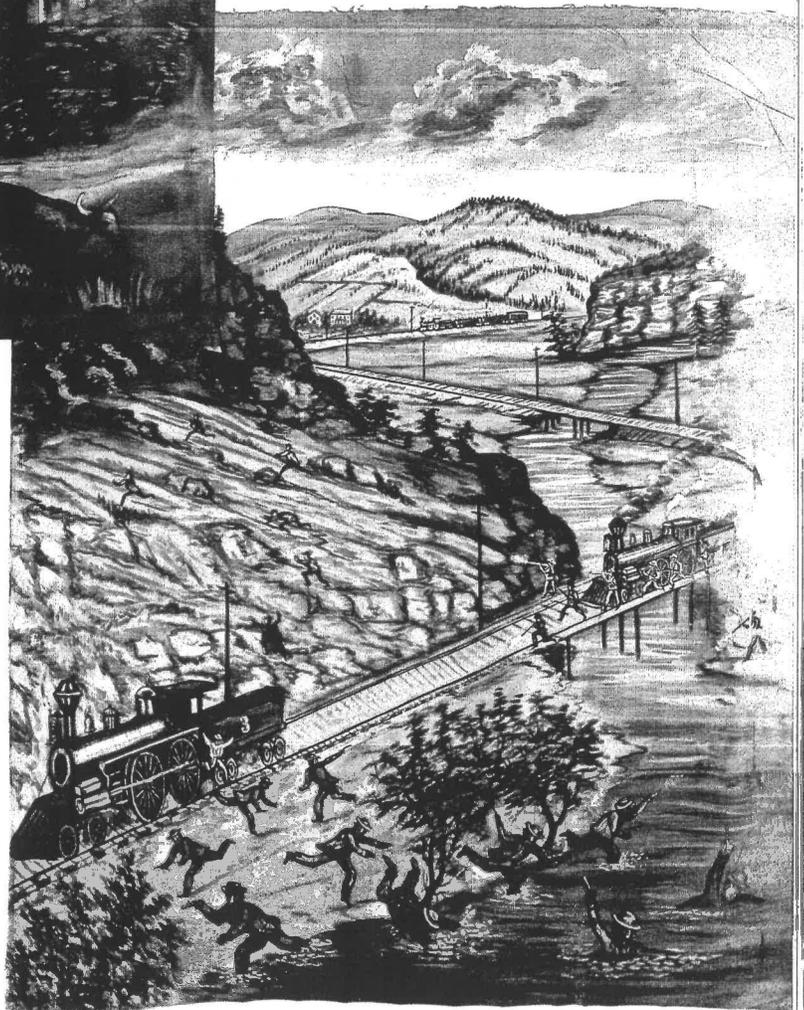
Andrews's men released the boxcars one by one and tried to set a covered bridge afire to slow the pursuing *Texas*, here inaccurately shown running forward rather than in reverse. Two other trains also chased Andrews, but neither came within sight of the *General* as depicted here.

Running out of fuel as they neared the Tennessee border, the raiders abandoned the *General* and scattered into the rugged countryside. Some fled across nearby Chickamauga Creek.

get it accomplished, they would be on us and we would jump on our train and run again. And we kept on that way the balance of the day. Whenever we would come to a straight piece of road, we could see them after us, both engines pulling down the best that they could make. We passed station after station like the wind."

As they neared the Tennessee border, the raiders were running out of luck and time. They tried to fire the boxcars and send them backward into the closing *Texas*. "We would have been successful," Knight remembered, "had it not been for the excessive rain which was falling almost in torrents.... [W]e were obliged to fly for our lives. They were armed with rifles and shotguns while we had only our pistols and we were not desirous of getting any nearer than possible.

"While all this was being done our train was tearing off miles in much less than sixty seconds.



We ran through the towns of Dalton and Tunnel Hill like a streak of lightning. After we passed Tunnel Hill, I wanted Andrews to allow us to desert the engine and either reverse it and wreck Fuller's engine, or start it forward alone and elude our pursuers. Andrews would listen to no such theory.

"We were instructed to obey orders and we did. We stuck to the engine until after we had passed Ringgold and then our fuel began to give out and we had no chance to replenish the supply. Something must be done! We had gone over one hundred miles, but were yet far from our destination with our chief resource rapidly failing. Finally we came to a secluded spot in the mountains with heavy timber on either side. I stopped the engine and tried to reverse it but it only choked down and stood still. Andrews said: 'Every man for himself.' Mr. [Private William] Bensinger and myself were the last to jump from the engine. Our enemy was in plain sight and was surely coming with a vengeance." Knight took to the woods with three other raiders.

"It seemed by nightfall there was a general muster of militiamen and citizens, as everybody now knew of the capture of Fuller's train, and they resolved to hunt us down like wild animals." Making their way toward Union lines, the four eluded capture day after day until "we saw a squad of cavalry rushing up the hill towards us. Our jig was up."

The raiders clung to a cover story that they were all Kentuckians on their way to enlist in the Confederate army. Interrogators at a Rebel headquarters in Bridgeport, Alabama, didn't believe them.

"The rope was brought out and one end thrown over a limb," Knight said. "It began to look as if we were going to stand on nothing. The colonel said: 'If you fellows don't acknowledge being engine thieves I will hang you sure as h—l.' As we had all been drinking some with our captors we had become quite independent about the matter and told the colonel if he wanted to hang men for telling the truth he could hang us and be d—d. That aroused the old warrior and he brought down his fist and swore we should

Albert Ruger's Panorama

Panorama fever swept the United States during the 1840s and 1850s, bringing to the hinterland a vivid glimpse of faraway lands and exotic adventures, revealed bit by bit on long, slowly moving rolls of painted canvas ratcheted from one spindle to another by unseen hands backstage. Simultaneously, a traveling lecturer delivered an elaborate monologue. Often, some form of musical accompaniment was provided as well.

Topics varied from the geographical (*The Mammoth Panorama of the Mississippi River*, for example) to the spiritual (*Paradise Lost*). There were at least two versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and even a 10,000-foot-long shocker called *The San Francisco Vigilantes*.

At that time, most panoramas were executed by teams of professional artists. The backgrounds were entrusted only to landscapists, and the figures were assigned to portrait painters. Eventually, the medium became less popular, and when, in the late 1870s, William Knight went looking for a good panorama artist, few were to be found.

Albert Ruger (1828–99), whose spirited images of the Andrews locomotive chase traveled with William Knight for nearly two decades, had none of the usual credentials. He was a successful topographical draftsman and publisher in Akron who specialized in bird's-eye views of Midwestern villages, towns, and cities. Because they were intended primarily for the use of real estate salesmen and civic boosters, these townscapes, while meticulously detailed, were purposely prosaic, nearly colorless, and generally lacking in visual excitement.

Why Knight selected Albert Ruger to illustrate his headlong tale of high adventure is not known, but the

unlikely collaboration had two things going for it from the outset: both were veterans of the Ohio volunteers (though they served in different regiments), and they shared the same wry sense of humor. Neither Knight nor Ruger emphasized the many gruesome trials and executions endured by the raiders. Instead, they treated their audiences to a rousing evening of surprises, suspense, and acts of bravery, designed to entertain and amuse all ages.

Ruger, working for perhaps the first time on such a large scale, made good use of his topographic skills, using linear perspective, an artistic "science" invented in the Renaissance, to give nineteenth-century audiences a sense of floating in air, safely above the fray, surveying (or spying on) events as if from the gondola of a hot-air balloon.

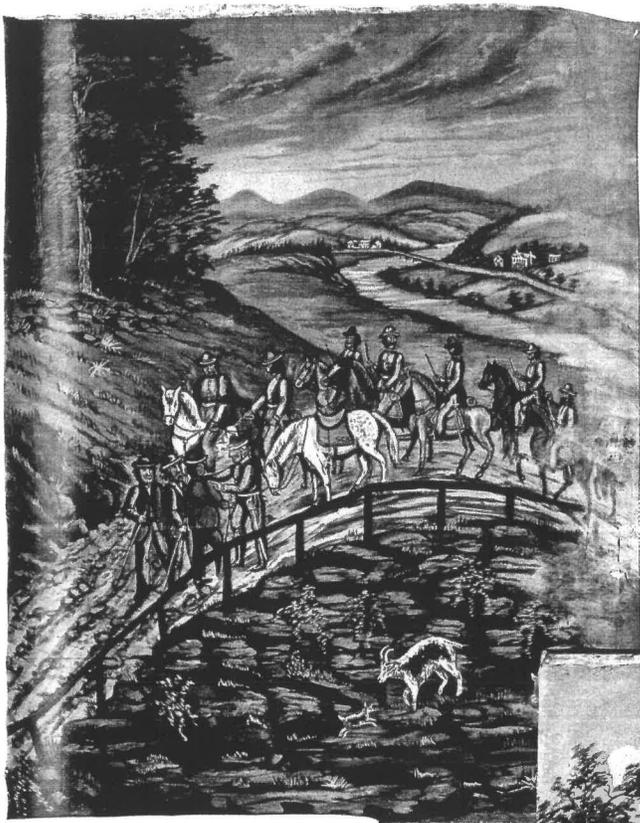
In all, he painted seventeen panels, each one approximately 7½ x 6 feet, some on unsized canvas and others on common muslin. These were loosely stitched together in vertical sequence, allowing for any last-minute additions or rearrangements in the future. Usually, Ruger's medium of choice was gouache, a fast-drying kind of opaque watercolor less likely than oil paint to crack or flake off during frequent handling.

Of all the panoramas that once brought delight to America, the vast majority have been lost to fires, floods, vandalism, and decay. The Ohio Historical Society is fortunate indeed to own one of the last existing examples of this once-popular genre.

Mary Sayre Haverstock

not be hanged. He said he respected brave men and announced that we would be taken to Chattanooga.”

Back again in the Tennessee city, the raiders were questioned separately. Knight stuck to the Kentucky



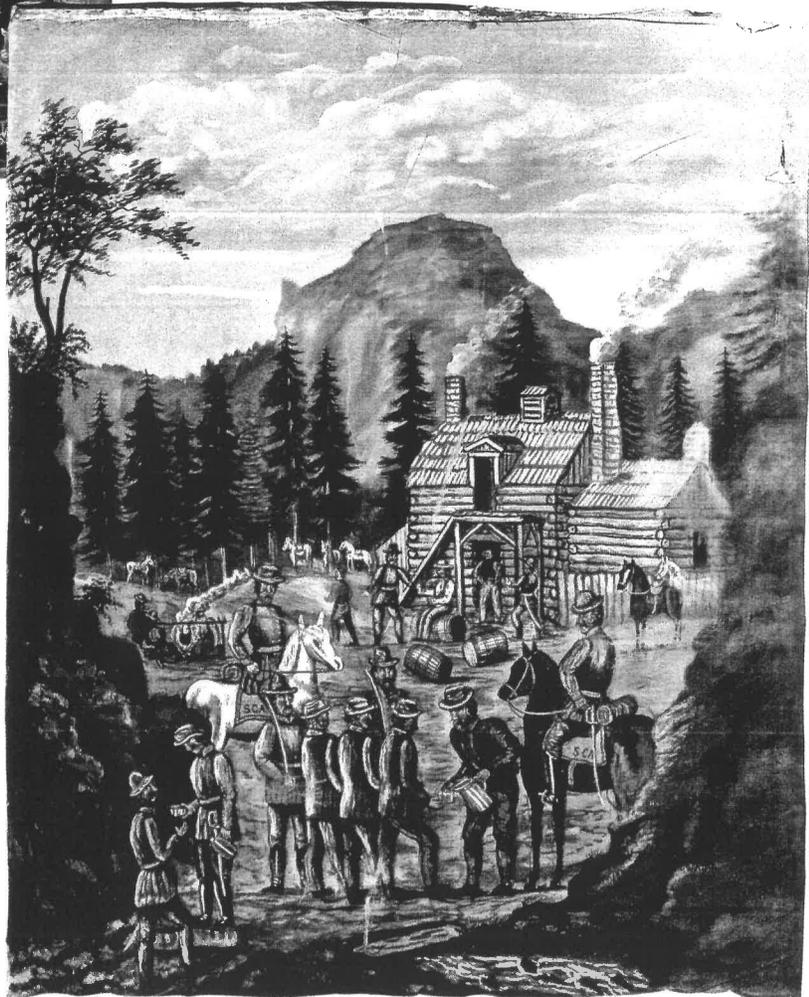
Although Rebel militia mobilized to hunt the fugitive raiders, Knight and his companions eluded capture for a week before finally being stopped by cavalrymen.

story, as did the others. The consistency of all the tales proved their downfall.

While in a room being questioned, Knight recalled, “the other officers had gone down to the prison and brought Andrews up into the hall, and when they took me out I saw him standing against the wall bound in irons. If I had been struck with seven kinds of lightning I would not have been more shocked, for it now dawned upon me that all of our party had been captured.”

Andrews later escaped from a Rebel jail, but was quickly recaptured. Chattanooga was then threatened by a Federal advance, and the captives were moved. Andrews and eight others went to Atlanta on June 7. The leader was taken out and hanged that same evening. Eleven days later, seven more raiders were suddenly taken out, too.

“The awfulness of that hour can hardly be described,” Knight said. “They were told to put on their coats and hats and prepare for death. The thoughts of dear friends at home was now enough to drive these men mad. The officers hurried them down the stairs. When they gave us good-bye I shed the first tears during my army life. [Private George



Knight and several others were taken to Bridgeport, Alabama, where a Rebel colonel doubted their story and threatened them with hanging.

D.] Wilson put his hand on my head and said, 'If we must die we will die like men. Tell our parents we died for our country.'...I was afterward told this by a man who saw the execution, and I believe he got it straight. He told me Wilson made a wonderful speech without the least tremor in his voice while death was a question of only a few moments."

Before the hangings, the prisoners had passed the long hours playing cards. "The death of our seven comrades ended our games," Knight said. "The cards

Engineer of Andrews Raid in Georgia

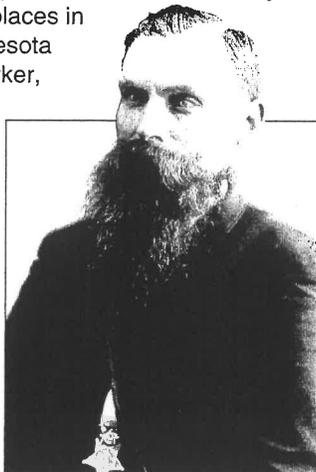
William J. Knight was born in Wayne County, Ohio, on January 24, 1837. After his parents' deaths in 1852, he farmed with his grandfather in Defiance County. His first connection with railroading was a job in the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago roundhouse at Fort Wayne, Indiana. He worked his way up to become an engineer on the Atlantic and Great Western line (not to be confused with the Western and Atlantic, from which he commandeered the *General*).

At the beginning of the Civil War, Knight served in a three-month Indiana regiment before enlisting in the three-year Twenty-first Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He was one of two engineers on the Andrews Raid. Raider William Pittenger later wrote that there was "always a little emulation" over "which was chief and which was assistant engineer. One [Wilson W. Brown] seems to have had his appointment directly from Mitchel and the other [Knight] from Andrews; but they were inseparable companions and always worked in harmony."

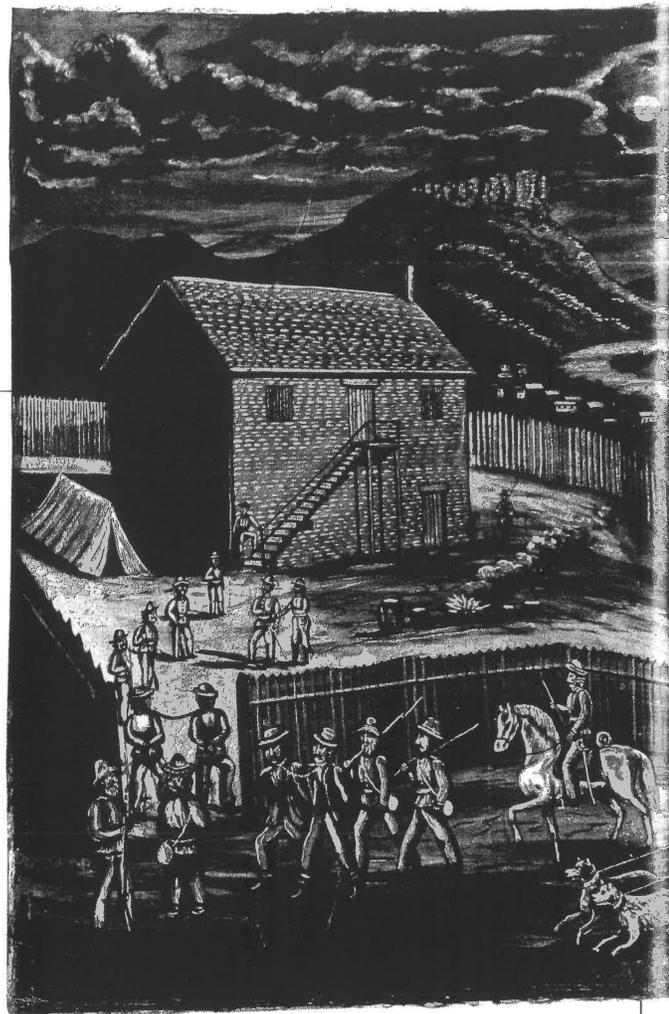
Following his escape, Knight returned to the Twenty-first Ohio, which fought in the bloody battle at Stones River, Tennessee, December 31, 1862, to January 2, 1863. He later transferred to the One Hundred Fifteenth Ohio and returned to Ohio at the end of his enlistment.

The ex-soldier traveled to California, then returned east a year later to resume work as an engineer, married in 1868, and switched from operating locomotives to stationary engines. He lived various places in Ohio, Wisconsin, and Minnesota before settling finally in Stryker, Ohio. About 1878, he began lecturing on the Andrews Raid, which he continued to do for eighteen or more years.

Knight spoke from notes handwritten in ordinary, lined school tablets. Rough spellings and lackadaisical punctuation didn't lessen his natural eloquence.



Williams County Public Library Photo Archives



He probably used two tablets, one of which survives at the Ohio Historical Society. The latter parts of his lecture (events after Adairsville) were reconstructed here from an extensive interview that he gave to the *Findlay (Ohio) Republican-Jeffersonian* in 1906. This newspaper account echoes and perhaps duplicates his original notes.

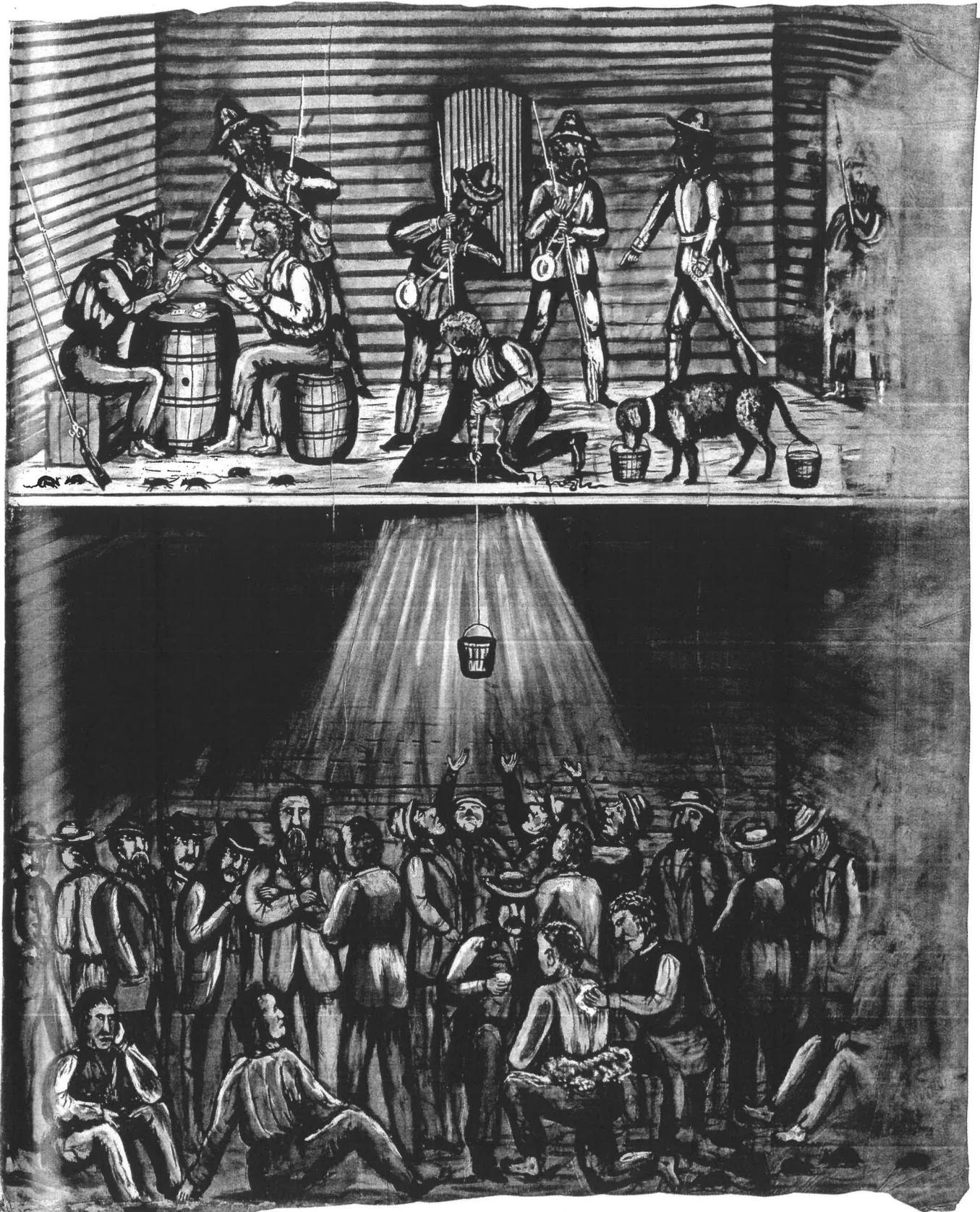
The engineer enjoyed occasional reunions with fellow raiders and at least once met the Southern railroaders who had pursued them. Conductor William Fuller, whose train the raiders had stolen, told him during the 1888 GAR encampment in Columbus that he had been "coming a merry clip...with 160 pounds of steam and with the throttle wide open." Knight affably replied, "Well, I was ahead with a fine engine and had just as much steam, and if the throttle would have been six feet in diameter, it would have been wide open just the same."

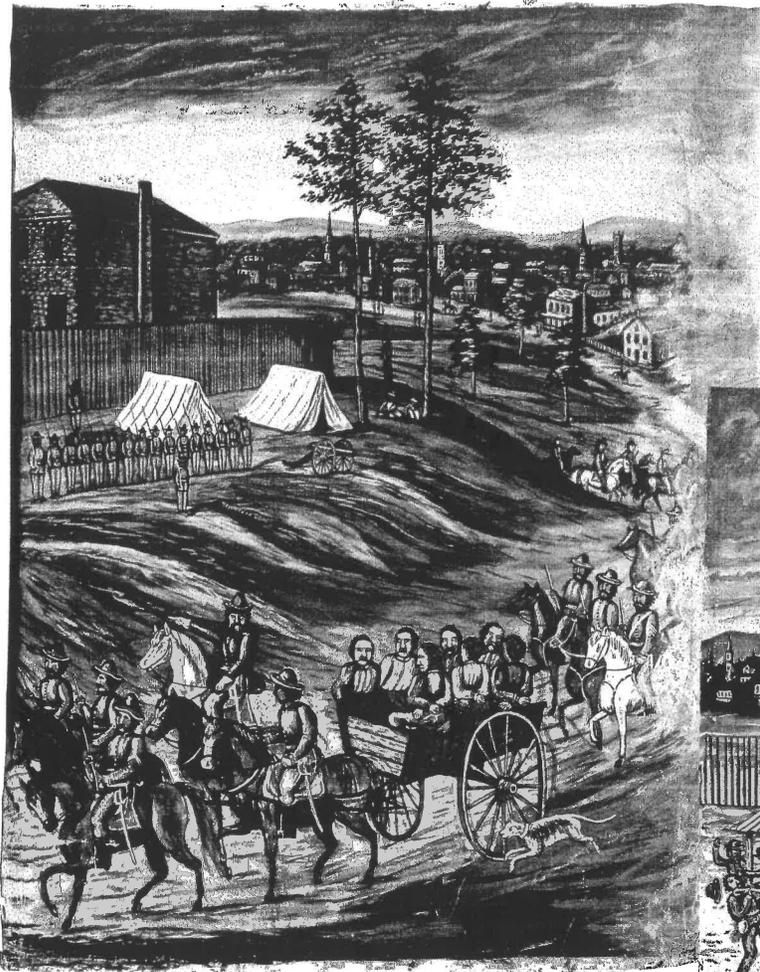
Knight died on September 26, 1916, leaving a widow, three sons, two daughters, and seven grandchildren. Old comrade-in-arms William Bensinger came to pay his last respects. Knight's marble headstone in a Stryker cemetery bears no mention of the Medal of Honor he had received in September 1863. It identifies him simply as "Engineer of Andrews Raid in Georgia, Apr 12, 1862."

Jim Leeke

LEFT: The captured raiders were sent for interrogation at a crowded Rebel jail in Chattanooga. One raider later compared the place to the Black Hole of Calcutta.

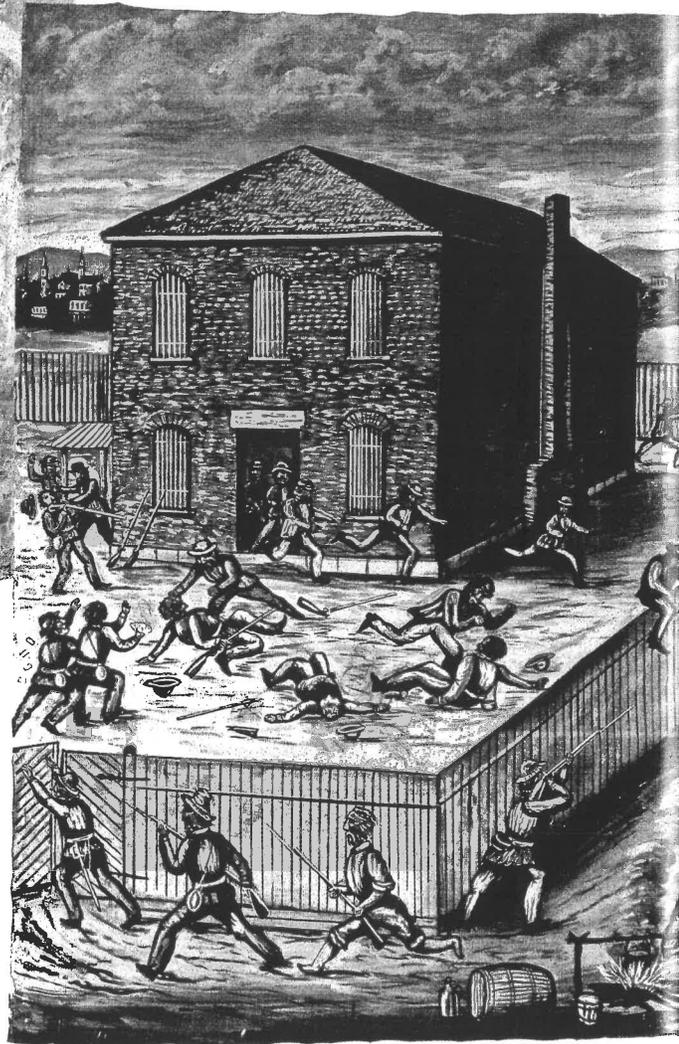
BELOW: The raiders were held in a room thirteen feet square and thirteen feet high, built partially below ground. Food, water, and prisoners all entered through a trapdoor in the floor above.





Knight was among twelve men taken to Knoxville for trial. When a Federal advance threatened Chattanooga, all the raiders were moved to Atlanta. The Fulton County jail stands behind the wall on the hill.

After months of captivity, the captives overpowered guards in a desperate break for freedom. Eight of them made it beyond the walls. One escapee, Sergeant Elihu H. Mason, soon fell ill.



were thrown out of the window. It began to look a little serious for the rest of us. We laid around on the floor, each one buried in deep thought. My own thoughts were of a revengeful spirit, as my mind was now made up that I would much rather be shot than die as my comrades had."

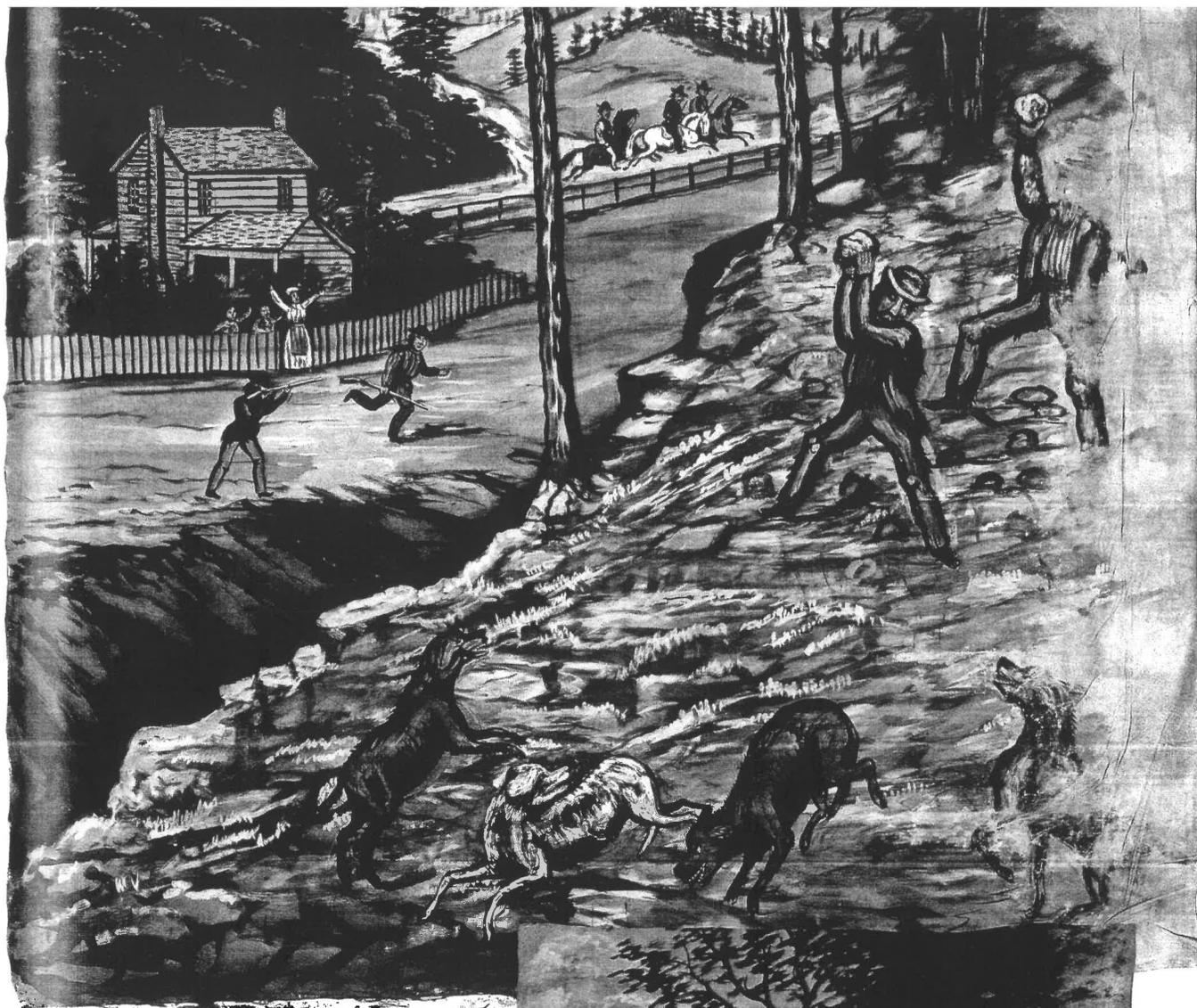
The raiders plotted with other prisoners while languishing another four months in the Fulton County jail. Gradually their jailers grew less vigilant. The captives saw an opportunity — with neither weapons nor outside help — simply to force their way to freedom.

"We had talked the matter over seriously and had learned that our army had retreated north from Nashville, which would make our trip over four hundred miles," Knight remembered. "I was to have the lead at the front door and Bensinger at the back. There was an equal number to go out of each door. The time of deliverance was set for October 16, 1862, just before sundown, when the jailer took out the pan in which our food had been given."

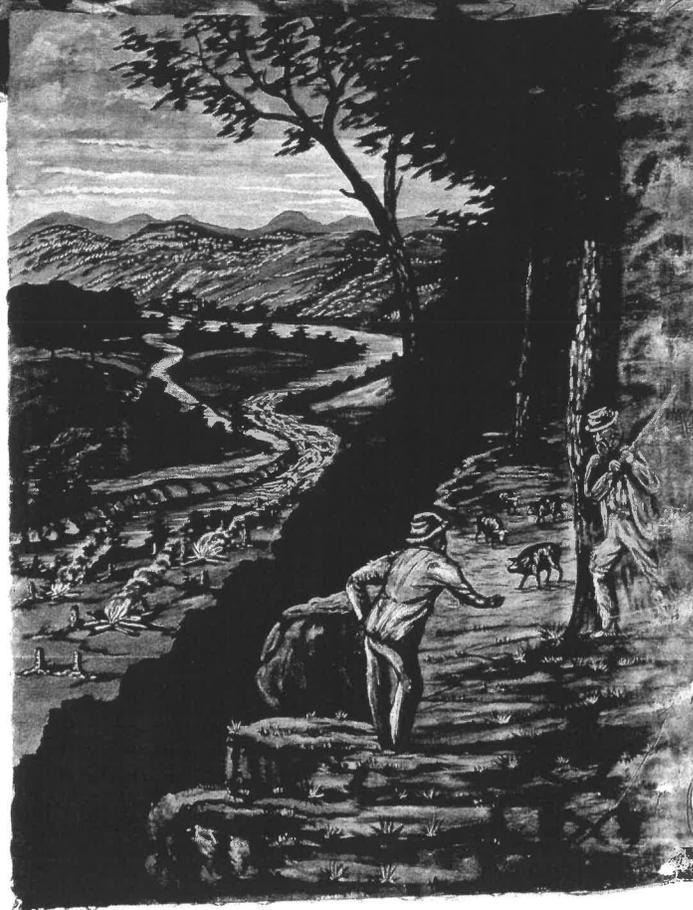
The moment arrived, and the men quickly overpowered the jailer and burst toward freedom.

"I think I could have torn the wall down just then, for everything I took hold of seemed to give to my strength," Knight said. "I reached the door and saw one guard sitting on the cross piece of the fence with his gun on the ground. I sprang at him and reached him in time to get his gun and give him a stinging belt with the club."

In the ensuing melee, Knight and seven other raiders reached the fence and escaped. "We had run scarcely three hundred yards before the court house



Mason was recaptured when Knight and Private Wilson W. Brown took him to a farmhouse for food and shelter. The Rebel landowner released his dogs on the pair, who fought them off with rocks.



After rafting across the Chattahoochee River, Knight and Brown spotted a "drove of pigs." They killed one with a makeshift club, dressed it with a knife fashioned from a shovel, and cooked it with fire taken from a field being cleared.



A farm family later befriended Knight and Brown and hid them in a cave. After resting there for five days, the pair resumed their hike northward, aided by other Union sympathizers along the way.

After crossing the Tennessee River, Knight and Brown eventually reached Federal lines at Somerset, Kentucky, near the Cumberland River. This image appears to be allegorical and originally may have been the climactic scene. In it, Knight the traveling lecturer keeps a contemplative vigil over his former self.



The Raiders and their Fates

Hanged

James J. Andrews, Kentucky
William Campbell, Kentucky
Private Samuel Robertson,* Co. G, Thirty-third Ohio
Sergeant-Major Marion A. Ross,* Second Ohio
Sergeant John M. Scott,* Co. F, Twenty-first Ohio
Private Philip G. Shadrach, Co. K, Second Ohio
Private Samuel Slavens,* Co. E, Thirty-third Ohio
Private George D. Wilson, Co. B, Second Ohio

Exchanged

Private William Bensinger,* Co. G, Twenty-first Ohio
Private Robert Buffum,* Co. H, Twenty-first Ohio
Sergeant Elihu H. Mason,* Co. K, Twenty-first Ohio
Private Jacob Parrot,* Co. K, Thirty-third Ohio
Corporal William H. Reddick,* Co. B, Thirty-third Ohio
Sergeant William Pittenger,* Co. G, Second Ohio

Escaped

Private Wilson W. Brown,* Co. F, Twenty-first Ohio
Corporal Daniel A. Dorsey,* Co. H, Thirty-third Ohio
Corporal Martin J. Hawkins,* Co. A, Thirty-third Ohio
Private William J. Knight,* Co. E, Twenty-first Ohio
Private John R. Porter,* Co. G, Twenty-first Ohio
Private John Alfred Wilson,* Co. C, Twenty-first Ohio
Private John Wollam,* Co. C, Thirty-third Ohio
Private Mark Wood,* Co. C, Twenty-first Ohio

Exchanged

Did not reach Marietta

Corporal Samuel Llewellyn, Co. I, Thirty-third Ohio
Private Ovid W. Smith,* Co. I, Second Ohio

*Medal of Honor recipient

bell began sounding the alarm," he said. "An instant later several volleys were fired at us but that only inspired us to run the faster." Bensinger and five other raiders either didn't make it or were recaptured. They would remain prisoners until the following March, when all were exchanged.

The escapees scattered in several directions. Knight and Private Wilson W. Brown, also of the Twenty-first Ohio, stuck together and headed north toward Union lines. On the fourth day, as they ate breakfast with a couple who had given them shelter, they were confronted by three Rebel officers.

"They advised us to surrender promptly," Knight said, "and Brown answered that he would never surrender, and at that instant we both sprang out of the back door and was going across the plantation in a few moments with new pursuers at our heels. Our friendly host turned his hounds loose and they gave us no end of trouble. However, we were able to stop them by throwing stones at them on short range."

On the tenth day out, Knight and Brown crossed the Chattahoochee River on a raft. They continued northward, occasionally helped by Union sympathizers who guided them from house to house, much as runaway slaves had traveled the Underground Railroad before the war.

"After forty-seven days of traveling over mountains and plantations, pursued by horsemen and dogs we

reached the Union army beyond the Tennessee River and were again among friends after an absence of nine months," Knight said.

He and Brown reached the Union lines at Somerset, Kentucky. They continued on to Louisville, then boarded a train back south to Knoxville, where they finally rejoined their regiment. Knight later told fellow raider John A. "Alf" Wilson that "the boys received us with three times three and a tiger. Thus ended our adventures."

The last half-dozen raiders received a grander reception in Washington, D.C., when exchanged the following spring. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton presented each man with the Medal of Honor, which had recently been authorized by Congress. These were the first such medals ever awarded. Knight and most of his fellow raiders soon received the recognition, too. There is some irony in the fact that Major General Don Carlos Buell, Mitchel's senior in the Army of the Cumberland, evinced little faith in their venture. In 1888, a year when Knight was telling his audiences that the raid's success would have shaken the Rebellion "from center to circumference," Buell opined that "the damage could only have been partial and temporary; and no condition...then existed upon which the obstruction could have exerted any decisive influence." 