Register of the Dorsey (Daniel A.) Civil War Scrapbook & Memorabilia, 1862; 1881-1908

Collection number: Mss199

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Biography
Daniel A. Dorsey was a member of Andrews' Chattanooga Railroad Expedition of 1862, a Union Civil War raid. Brig. General Ormsby M. Mitchell, ordered Union spy, James J. Andrews, to take some men, capture a train, and isolate Chattanooga by destroying telegraph lines and burning bridges on the northern section of the Georgia State Railroad and the East Tennessee Railroad near the Georgia state line. Andrews put together an expedition of 24 (some sources say 22 men) Union Army volunteers from the Ohio Volunteer Infantry. On April 12, 1862, disguised as Southerners, they made their way in small groups to Marietta, Georgia. The men planned to board the train at Marietta and ride to Big Shanty (now Kennesaw), Georgia, a meal stop without telegraph communications. Heavy rains delayed them, but they gathered as planned. At Big Shanty passengers went into the station for breakfast except Andrews and his men, who left the train from the side opposite the station, dashed to the engine called “General,” uncoupled it, its tender, and three boxcars and drove off. Wilson W. Brown, acted as engineer, William Knight as Assistant, Alfred Wilson as fireman, others served as brakemen on top of the cars, while others were along to blow up bridges and to supply cover fire under attack.
Unknown to Andrews, the Confederates had established a camp at Big Shanty and the job was now complicated by the presence of hundreds of Confederate soldiers. Because of Mitchell’s success in battle at Pittsburg Landing, the Confederates were running unscheduled trains south. The raiders were held up at Kingsville an hour waiting for several trains to pass. Meanwhile, William A. Fuller, conductor, and Anthony Murphy foreman of the railway shop at Atlanta, realized that the engine had been stolen and started in pursuit—first on foot, then in a handcar, and finally obtaining an engine.

Andrews discovered that bridges soaked by rain did not take fire easily and under pursuit the best his men could do was to cut telegraph lines and throw obstacles on the track. Fuller and Murphy were gaining rapidly, even running through a small section of track that had been destroyed. Andrews’ raiders finally out of fuel 18 miles south of Chattanooga abandoned the train and took to the woods.

According to William Pittenger a member of the expedition who wrote Capturing a Locomotive, Andrews used poor judgement in separating his men in the escape rather than fighting it out or setting off together. Andrews was used to acting as a spy rather than as a military leader. All were captured within a week. The men were taken to a Knoxville prison where they were placed in chains, starved and tortured. Divided into two groups, within two months of the raid, J.J. Andrews and seven of his men were tried and executed in Atlanta, Andrews on June 7th and the others on June 18, 1862. The other group remained in jail for months awaiting execution. Finally, they tried to escape, and nine succeeded, but the rest were held as prisoners of war until they were exchanged through a special arrangement with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. Dorsey was in the group that escaped. He travelled with Hawkins and proceeded to the Union lines at Somerset, Kentucky. His account is to be found in Pittenger’s book.

After the War Dorsey gave many lectures about his experiences in various cities including Washington, D.C. and Chicago. He kept a scrapbook (1881-1908) of the Great Locomotive Chase and related topics, including: the Congressional Act granting pensions of $20 a month to the survivors of the expedition; Jefferson Davis; and the Civil War. During his final years, Dorsey lived in Kearney, Nebraska.

Scope and Content
The collection consists of Daniel A. Dorsey’s scrapbook, photographs and his personal annotated copy of William Pittenger’s published account of the Great Chattanooga Locomotive Chase (1862).

BOX 1: DANIEL A. DORSEY COLLECTION
1.1---DANIEL A. DORSEY SCRAPBOOK, 1881-1908 [44 pp. of newspaper clippings pertaining to Great Chattanooga Locomotive Chase (1862) and subsequent public lectures on topic by Daniel A. Dorsey; also incl. family clippings & items of interest to Daniel A. Dorsey]
1.2---PITTENGER, WILLIAM. CAPTURING A LOCOMOTIVE; a history of Secret Service in the Late War. Washington: The National Tribune, 1905. [Pittenger was a member of Andrews raiders. He interviewed other members of the party including Dorsey. Book is signed by D.A. Dorsey, May 10, 1912 on page 61, holograph notes by Dorsey throughout, especially in the quoted accounts of Dorsey’s capture (pp. 155-161) and escape (p. 267)]
1.3---PHOTOGRAPHS
  -Mitchell’s Raiders identifying JR Porter, WK Knight, Wm Bensinger, and WW Brown on postcard.
  -another view [notes identifying individuals; damaged]
  -another view [incl. a child]
  -two children on a mule [postcard, cut, signed “Clarence and David,” 8/20/09]
  -two men and two boys
  -Photograph and negative of document in scrapbook inquiring as to whether Dorsey was executed