

*A photo dated 1903 depicts the Empire Mill, a corn-grinding operation on the banks of Pumpkinvine Creek in rural Bartow County, Ga., near Emerson.; the men who worked there, and the NC&StL spur that served it. The locomotive idling on the far right is the Texas, of Great Locomotive Chase fame; at the time, it was known as the "Cincinnati." **McCoy Family collection.***

Memories of a Beloved Locomotive, From the Last Man Who Drove It

By David Ibata

Most students of "The Great Locomotive Chase" know how one of the engines from that Civil War episode was found in the early 20th Century working a spur to a corn mill in rural North Georgia. What most don't know is the little 4-4-0 also may have burned down the mill.

That's the story told by Doug Biddy of Acworth, Ga., grandson of Ensley Stevenson McCoy, possibly the last regular engine-drivers of the locomotive Texas.

"My grandfather told me how the old mill burned," Biddy said. "One Sunday morning, somebody fired up the

old engine. They suspect some sparks came out of the smokestack and landed on some really dry corn silks, which were everywhere, and set the place on fire. It had a wood-shingled roof; if you so much as threw a match on it, it would have gone up in flames."

Biddy's family has a pre-fire photo of the mill dated May 1903. The business had several names – Moore's Mill, Willerford Mill, and possibly others – but is mostly remembered as the Empire Mill.

The photo shows a big wooden building two stories tall, with an overhang large enough for a railroad boxcar to fit underneath. There's a single-

story warehouse, and freight cars marked "NC&StL" with doors open for loading on two sidings. Ten men in workers' clothing stand next to a mule-drawn wagon; over to the right, in a horse-drawn surrey, sits a well-dressed couple, possibly the mill owner and his wife.

And way off to the right is a little steam locomotive, idling, its fire built up for the day's work, judging from the smoke drifting out of its stack. It's the Texas.

"They used this engine to pull the grain and meal between the main line (of the Western & Atlantic) in down-

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town Emerson and Pumpkinvine Creek, where the mill was; it was water-powered," Biddy said. "My grandfather was the foreman who ran the mill. He also drove the engine; I'm sure some of the others did, too."

As previously recounted in these pages, the W&A purchased a fleet of 4-4-0s prior to the Civil War for its 137-mile mainline between Chattanooga and Atlanta. All were wood-burners built to a 5-foot gauge. Two survive: The General, an 1855 product of Rogers, Ketchum & Grosvenor, and the Texas, constructed in 1856 by Danforth, Cook.

After the outbreak of hostilities between North and South, in April 1862, Federal soldiers in civilian clothes led by Union spy James J. Andrews stole the General and its train from Big Shanty, Ga. (today's Kennesaw). Their mission was to sabotage the W&A and cut off Confederate forces in Chattanooga. But conductor William A. Fuller pursued on foot, by pole-car, aboard a series of steam engines and, finally, on the Texas, and ran the thieves to ground. (For details, see the 1956 Walt Disney feature film, "The Great Locomotive Chase.")

After the war, the General was a guest of honor at soldiers' reunions and was rebuilt in 1892 by the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Ry., which had leased the W&A from the state of Georgia. The NC&StL made



After locating the Texas working a corn mill near Emerson, Ga., in 1903, artist-historian Wilbur G. Kurtz hired a local photographer to document the locomotive. This is one of the last images of the Texas under steam. Atlanta History Center.

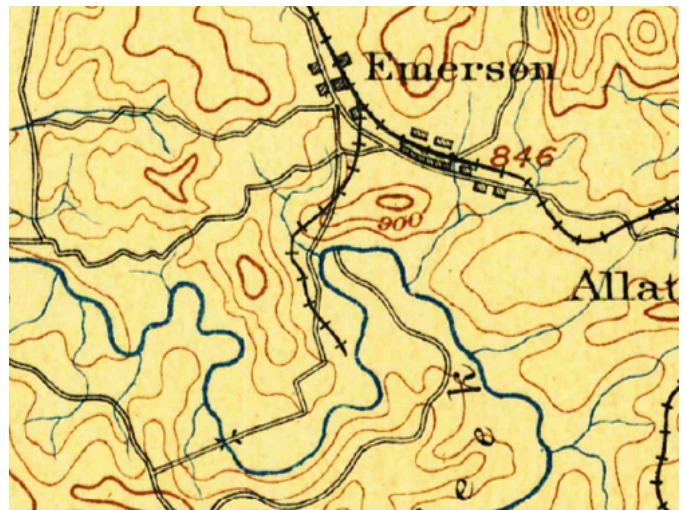
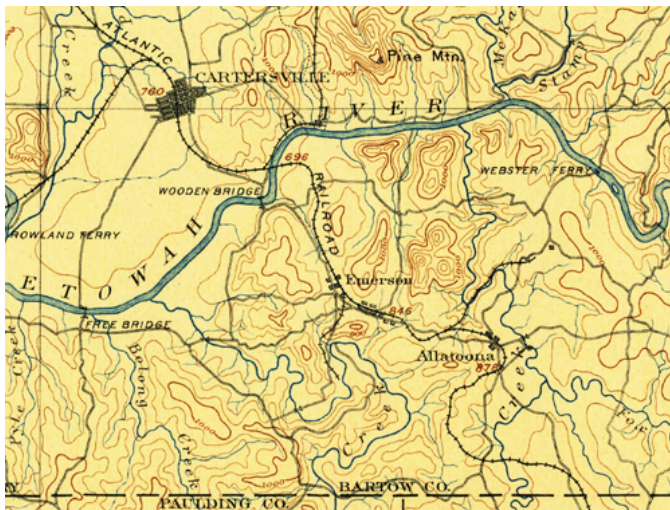
the locomotive its roving ambassador, taking it to world's fairs, exhibitions and other events when it wasn't on permanent display in Chattanooga. NC successor Louisville & Nashville restored the General to steam in 1962 and had it tour the country for the Civil War Centennial. It's now on static display at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in Kennesaw.

The Texas, meanwhile, toiled away

in obscurity. It was converted from a wood-burner to a coal-burner about 1870, and its gauge was narrowed to 4 feet 8½ inches when Southern railroads converted to standard gauge in 1886. Chances are, it's had multiple cabs and boilers over the years, and the tender it's attached to today is not the original.

By the 20th Century, the Texas looked nothing like a Civil War engine.

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A U.S. Geological Survey topographical map from 1896 shows Bartow County, Ga., in the vicinity of Cartersville (left), the NC&StL/W&A tracks cutting diagonally across it from northwest to southeast, and Emerson and Allatoona south of the Etowah River. Detail of the map (right) depicts the railroad spur leading to Pumpkinvine Creek, site of the Empire Mill.

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Its balloon stack was gone, replaced by a diamond stack more suitable for burning coal. The elaborate "cow catcher" of its early years had vanished, as had all vestiges of a colorful mid-century paint scheme; flat black was the order of the day. At some point, it had exchanged its 5-foot-diameter driving wheels for wheels 4 feet 10 inches across, and for reasons unknown, its name was changed from Texas to Cincinnati.

Obsolete in the face of newer, larger, more powerful locomotives, the Texas/Cincinnati was no longer suitable for mainline service. It served the last years of its working life on a mill branch in rural Bartow County, Ga., 43 railroad miles northwest of Atlanta, shuttling cars to and from the W&A main in Emerson.

That's where Wilbur G. Kurtz found it in September, 1903. The young art student from Chicago – who later married Fuller's daughter Annie Laurie, moved to Atlanta and became one of the region's foremost historians – hired a photographer to document the engine. It's the last known photo of the Texas under steam.

Kurtz likely met McCoy, grandfather of Biddy and his cousins Durand McCoy, also of Acworth, and Murl McCoy of Dallas, Ga. The kinfolk gathered around Biddy's kitchen table recently to share photos and stories. Biddy and Murl McCoy were guests of the NC&StL Ry. Preservation Society at its Reunion May 18-19 in Kennesaw, Ga., where they talked about their grandfather and the Texas as part of the Friday evening program.

Ensley McCoy was the grandson of Andrew Jackson McCoy. The patriarch had moved from New York to Bartow, settling at the foothills of the Allatoona mountains, sometime between 1837 and 1840. He married Martha Lunsford McCoy, and they had six boys and one girl.

About 1862, Murl McCoy said, Andrew "had left home and met a man he knew on the road. He told the man he was going to join the (Confederate) Army. He gave the man his pocket knife and his wallet to give to Martha. She never saw Andrew again."

Andrew McCoy boarded a train in Allatoona and ended up in camp in Richmond, Va.

"He wasn't there very long before



*Ensley McCoy (center), his wife Mallissie Angeline White McCoy and eight of their children — the couple eventually had 12 — sit for a family photo in the early 20th Century. Ensley McCoy bought 100 acres near Acworth, where he farmed and had a blacksmith's shop and corn mill. **McCoy Family Collection.***

he became ill," Murl McCoy said. "He wrote back home for his oldest son to come take his place and the Army would let him come home. When his son got there, Andrew was unconscious. The sergeant told him not to sign up until he saw whether his father lived or died. Andrew died a few days later and was buried in a Confederate cemetery in Richmond, and the son returned home."

Martha outlived her husband by 36 years. She died Dec. 27, 1898.

Ensley was born in 1879 in Bartow County. He and his wife Mallissie Angeline White McCoy both grew up in what's called the Glade in Bartow County, near New Hope Church between the Acworth and Allatoona stations on the Western & Atlantic. Ensley was 19 and Mallissie was 17 when they married.

"He was walking along the road with some friends when she saw her hoeing in the garden," Murl said. "He told those boys, I'm going to marry that woman out there because she'll work."

The couple had 12 children – seven boys and five girls.

Ensley was skilled with his hands and found employment at the corn mill. The family believes he soon taught himself how to run the steam locomotive that worked it.

Biddy told of the day the Texas jumped the tracks. Rather than call on

the NC&StL for help, Grandpa McCoy made a bet with a co-worker that he could re-rail the engine in 12 hours using his men, some tools and his ingenuity.

"With the use of cross ties and levers and timbers, shovels of dirt and digging and the power of the engine itself, they worked that whole 12 hours and with the last effort, that old engine went rolling down the track. My grandfather pulled out his pocket watch and looked at it, and it was 12 hours and 1 minute."

After the mill burned, Ensley was out of a job. Yet he was a young man with valuable skills that he could put to use elsewhere.

The Texas/Cincinnati also was out of a job. But no one had any use for an old, worn-out locomotive.

In 1907, the NC&StL sent the engine to Atlanta to be scrapped. Alerted by newspaper reports, Atlantans convinced the railroad to donate it to the city. The Texas sat outdoors in Grant Park until 1927, when it was moved into a newly constructed building, the Cyclorama, housing the painting-in-the-round of the Battle of Atlanta.

Meanwhile, in 1917, Grandpa McCoy had bought 100 acres to farm in Acworth.

"He had a blacksmith's shop and made all the tools himself," Biddy said.

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"He could make anything – wheels for wagons, plows, everything he used on the farm, he made it. Right here, on McCoy Road."

Sometime in the late 1930s or early 1940s, Ensley McCoy started his own corn mill, running it off a 1931 Chevrolet engine set sideways in a frame. It had a straight exhaust pipe, a big square box for a radiator and a transmission hooked up to a pulley – "a big old belt that ran up to the big grinding rocks. He ground grain for everybody in the county," Biddy said.

Murl McCoy recalled, "He also built the corn sheller, powered off the same engine. You'd drop the corn cob in a chute, and it would split the cob one way and the grains would drop into a big hopper. Then you'd take the hopper and pour (the kernels) in to be ground up for meal. People would bring their corn and he'd shell and grind it for them; they'd bag it up, and he'd keep part of it as payment."

When Ensley could take a holiday from the farm and go down to Atlanta, he was sure to visit the Texas.

"My granddaddy loved that engine," Biddy said. "They'd let him get



Doug Biddy (from left) and brothers Durand and Murl McCoy share photos and memories of their grandfather Ensley McCoy around a kitchen table of the family homestead on McCoy Road in Acworth, Ga. After leaving the corn mill, Ensley bought a 100-acre farm and also set up a blacksmith's shop. David Ibata photo.

up on it, and he'd touch every nut and bolt. He loved it like one of his kids. And he always called it 'Old 212' – the number assigned to it by the NC&StL – "never the Texas or Cincinnati."

Ensley McCoy died in 1968. His wife passed away in the early 1970s. Both are buried in the New Hope Church cemetery, near where they grew up.



P&M Division

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time table directions at Bruceton, going from north to south. It would also change numbers, and he would have a different engineer from Bruceton to Nashville – a Nashville-Chattanooga Division man. He also had a separate time table for each division.

The designation "North Passing track Jackson" means a siding north of the depot at Jackson. On the Chattanooga Division, a station's two sidings would be designated "north" or "south," depending on the direction of the train to head in on these sidings when it was the first. For example, on an order reading, "No. 95 Engine 567 meet No. 6 Engine 537 at the southbound passing track Murfreesboro," No. 6 would use the main track to the passenger depot, stop there to do its station work, then head into the southbound passing track – which turned out just north of West Main Street. After pulling into the clear and the switch was re-lined for the main

track, No. 6 would remain on the siding until No. 95 arrived. No. 95 was superior to No. 6 by direction.

Had the order read, "No. 95 Engine 567 take siding and meet No. 6 Engine 537 at Murfreesboro," No. 95 would take the siding at the north switch of the southbound siding – that is, the first siding switch at Murfreesboro reached by it. Had the order read "No. 95 Engine 567 meet No. 6 Engine 537 at Murfreesboro," No. 6 would take the siding at the south switch of the northbound siding – the first siding switch to be reached by No. 6, No. 95 being superior to No. 6 by direction.

Engine 625 on the southward extra was one of the lighter 2-8-2 types, nicknamed "Jitneys." On the P&M and Nashville Divisions, these engines ran on through freight trains as well as on local freight trains. On the Chattanooga Division, such engines were regularly used on local freight runs Nos. 20 and 21, but ordinarily were not used on through freight trains.

The principle of wait orders is the same on this order as it was on wait orders on the rest of the NC&StL. That

is, No. 101 must not pass the north switch of the north passing track at Jackson prior to 2:05 a.m., unless Extra 625 South was in the clear on the siding with the switch lined for the main track. At 2:05 a.m., the order would be considered fulfilled whether or not Extra 625 South was on the siding. (Had the extra left the last station prior to Jackson with time to make the wait order at Jackson but was delayed so that it could not clear the main track prior to the expiration of the order, it would have to send a flagman ahead to flag No. 101. Of course, all we have is the order, and there is no way to tell if Extra 625 South "made" the wait order against No. 1, or if it didn't.)

When I went to work as an operator on the Chattanooga Division in July, 1941, Mr. Stokes had a regular job as conductor on Chattanooga Division passenger trains and kept such runs until his retirement in the mid to late 1940s.

