



# CUMBERLAND VALLEY RAIL TRAIL



## High-Speed Ammunition Run on the Cumberland Valley Railroad

**A call for arms:** Near the end of the bloodiest day in American military history at the Battle of Antietam (Sept. 17, 1862), the Union Army Commander, General George B. McClellan, sent a telegraphic request to Army Headquarters in Washington, DC:

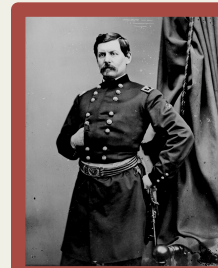
*... force some 20-pound Parrott ammunition through tonight, via Hagerstown and Chambersburg, to us near Sharpsburg, MD.*

McClellan's request resulted in a legendary high-speed ammunition resupply run down the Cumberland Valley Railroad (CVRR).

A four-car powder train made the 40-mile trip from the arsenal in Washington (now Ft. McNair) to Baltimore's Camden Station at modest speed. From there, the cars were pulled by horse (as usual) two miles north to Baltimore's Bolton Station where the train resumed its rail trip toward Harrisburg on the Northern Central Railroad at about 30 mph. This 84-mile leg of the trip was completed in record time: 2 hours 53 minutes.

Mary Emma Hollar (1844-1937), a young woman who lived on Railroad St. (now Earl St.) in Shippensburg in 1862, remembered well what she later described as: "... the thunder of the ammunition train rushing to supply the troops at [Antietam]." Hollar, a devoted Union patriot who provided bandages and surgical supplies to the troops, is pictured at right with her husband Gideon Weidman Landis (1838-1913) at their Newville home. Landis, a veteran of the Civil War, served as a member of Co. H, 9th Regimental Cavalry (the 92nd Volunteers, also known as the *Lochiel Cavalry*).

Image credit: Sydnor L. Dickenson



The ammunition train called for by General McClellan (above) traveled north from Washington to Baltimore on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, then continued on to Bridgeport (now Lemoyne, PA) via the Northern Central Railroad. The final leg from Bridgeport to Hagerstown was completed on the CVRR.

**CVRR to the rescue!** At the train yard in Bridgeport (now Lemoyne, PA), the CVRR engine *Judge Watts* took over and a fifth ammunition car was added. The final 74-mile dash to Hagerstown was made at an average speed of 37 mph, including 10-minute stops in Shippensburg and Chambersburg to allow the wheels to cool. The train's average running speed was 45 mph, and the *Judge Watts* pulled its cargo at 55 mph much of the way, a speed almost unheard of at the time.

**Railroads establish their worth as logistics routes:** Sharpsburg is only 70 miles away by wagon from Washington, DC, via the Potomac River Valley. Routing the ammunition 200 miles by rail from Washington to Bridgeport,

then down the CVRR to Hagerstown, demonstrated the logistical advantages of railroads. The final, high-speed leg of the ammunition run from Bridgeport to Hagerstown also established the CVRR as a pivotal supply route for Union troops, a role the CVRR played for the balance of the war.

