How and why did this new mysterious Col. Thomas Jackson destroy 42 locomotives and – much more – all owned by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad that summer of 1861? Call it a tactic that deprived approaching Union armies of assets. You can also say Jackson did one thing that may well have decided the Confederate victory at Manassas/Bull Run.
Just the same the Confederates’ gigantic grab of so many B&O locomotives, coal cars, equipment, the firing of buildings and the destruction of so many bridges spanning the Potomac – made the B&O system and Maryland forever blue, and forever Union.

Why did Jackson do it? He was ordered to.

Robert E. Lee on June 1, 1861 wrote Jackson’s superior, Gen. Joseph Johnston: *Destroy everything that cannot be removed, deprive them (the Federal armies-ED) of the use of the railroad, take the field and endeavor to arrest their advance up the Valley.* – (Official records of the Union and Confederate armies, Series I, Vol. II Chapter IX, p. 898).

So, Gen. Johnston and then-Colonel Jackson did what Lee ordered. As a result . . .

John W. Garrett, president of the B&O, reported to his shareholders: *On May 28, 1861, General possession was taken by the Confederate forces of*
more than one hundred miles of the Main Stem, embroiling chiefly the region between Point of Rocks and Cumberland. . . . (“35th Annual Report of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.” Baltimore, MD.: 1863. pp. 6-7).

What does such destruction look like? This task of destroying dozens of fifty-ton locomotives was a sight one could never forget.

David Hunter Strother, an artist, saw that ghastly scene about twenty miles from Harper’s Ferry at Martinsburg, Va. June 20, 1861:

we heard a strange singing and screaming in the air which resembled the notes of a gigantic Aeolian. These sounds grew more
...we heard a strange singing and screaming in the air which resembled the notes of a gigantic AEolian. These sounds grew more distinct and definite as we advanced, and still nearer the town we perceived immense columns of black smoke rolling up between us and the setting sun,

and tinging the whole landscape with a coppery hue... a scene was suddenly presented to us which much more resembled a dream of Dante’s Inferno, than an exhibition of real life. Jackson’s brigade was performing a grand “auto de fe” upon the rolling stock of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad...

... On the open space in front of the work-shops stood, ranged upon the tracks, between forty and fifty locomotives, roasting amidst the flames of a thousand cords of wood, distributed, refreshed, and stirred up continually by a brigade of... Confederates.
Strother wrote again the following day June 21, 1861:

This is the first of several short videos telling the story – First how Col. Jackson entrapped the B&O system; next how, when, and where his men destroyed bridges – Third, how forty-two locomotives, tenders, 386 coal hoppers and gondola cars were fashioned into self-destructive, molten, long-burning coal fires –
Fourth, how after the Battle of Manassas/Bull Run, Jackson and his men returned to the eastern Panhandle – once again, rid of Union soldiers – to tear up some thirty-six miles of double track employing ingenious, almost artistic, methods.

The fifth video is the remarkable story of how Jackson and a team of men and horses enabled and girded themselves to successfully transport eighteen, full-size locomotives, without benefit of rails, over some 38 miles of crumbling macadam to Strasburg, Va., an engineering marvel credited to one Captain Thomas R. Sharp, the previous Master of Transportation to the Winchester and Potomac Railroad.

Part 1 of our story: JACKSON ENTRAPS B&O TRAINS – May, 1861
Union armies began amassing for hundreds of miles east to west all along the north side of the Potomac River and the Baltimore & Ohio line. The armies would nearly gain control of the B&O road except for a stretch in the eastern Panhandle where Col. Jackson and his thousands of new troops were active.

A vote was coming on May 23rd that would reveal the political sentiment of Virginians statewide towards a convention’s vote in April to secede. If the western counties, tied to Baltimore so vitally by the B&O, were to proceed with an effort to form its own non-seceding state, then choking off the B&O pipeline to them would become a priority for the Confederacy. Jackson and Gen. Johnston would be the point men.

Early May, 1861 witnessed a wily game of chess between Jackson and his Union counterparts.

A precarious detente of sorts had been in place whereby Jackson was on orders to not interfere with B&O traffic – however irksome was the constant sight and night-long rumbling of coal cars spiritling coal east to the harbors in Baltimore to be used to interdict Confederate shipping.
But Jackson saw he could use his mere 44-miles of the 500-plus mile railroad to bring the whole B&O main stem to a screeching halt. That would mean no troops moving east or west, as western Virginia was struggling to become a separate state; and no more coal cars reaching Baltimore and Union ships.

Then, Union Gen. Benjamin Franklin Butler provoked Confederate leaders by making his own first “chess” move. Between May 5th and May 13th, Butler assured use of the B&O road by Union forces not only between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., but the main stem stretching west all the way to Jackson’s area of control beginning at Point of Rocks, MD just twelve miles shy of Jackson’s headquarters at Harper’s Ferry. Butler conducted his side of this “chess game” from the key crossroads at the Relay House nine miles from Baltimore. – (Summers, pp. 62-65)

Like every checkmate in this game of wits between Jackson, the president of the Baltimore and Ohio, and Generals like Butler, Jackson’s checkmate was “snuck” into fatal position one move at a time. Jackson’s greatest asset
in making his surprise, bloodless attack was the deluded wish and hope among the gentlemen class and the powerful that it wasn’t quite yet time for the relentless cruel hammer blows of war to fall. Jackson brought them war.

Much was at stake in terms of real assets and the conduct of this fledgling war between brothers.

This so-called chess game would come to an end soon. Jackson, on the orders of Johnston and Lee, would paralyze the B&O for ten months using – at first – only cunning and nary spilling a drop of blood or firing a single minie ball.

An estimated 56 locomotives – many weighing fifty tons – their tenders, 386 cars, 26 bridges, invaluable equipment and 36.5 miles of double track would be torn up or removed in the service of the Confederacy, the aggrieved courtesy of the B&O. – Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company. – ("Thirty-Sixth Annual Report." (for 1861) Baltimore: MD, 1864. pp. 7-8. Print).
Pre-war Boom Times for the B&O and Winchester-Potomac

The Baltimore and Ohio railroad held onto its business despite gathering storm clouds of war, and rival railroads by indemnifying its customers against any losses “from political or military causes.” Business, that May, 1861, was booming as demand for coal eastbound soared and the United States government began utilizing the railroad. – (Summers – p. 48).

In the 1830s, the Winchester-Potomac branch connected Winchester to the B&O at Harper’s Ferry, vastly enriching Jefferson County’s wheat farmers who could load flour at interim stops, a crop abundantly available because the county topped all other Virginia counties year after year in total wheat production. County and Valley found an eager, well-paying market in Europe.
But the Winchester-Potomac line, on the eve of the Civil War, could only bear the loads of smaller, older locomotives and relied on flat rails instead of the more common T rail. – (Cartmell, pp. 60-62).

NOW, LET THE “CHESS GAME” BEGIN

Still in command of his new mixed bag of hard-drilling volunteers at Harper’s Ferry, Col. Jackson stood by the Virginia governor’s orders that “the road not be used to prejudice Virginia” – up to when Butler made his
first move on Sunday, May 5th. Butler began controlling the B&O line from the Relay House south of Baltimore.

Jackson counter-moved, by seizing assets on an eastbound military train after Butler ordered searches and seizures on B&O trains and of their passengers.

On Thursday, May 9th, Jackson moved in kind at Harper's Ferry and “acquisitioned” five carloads of beeves and one of horses. He sent the assets south and bought for himself two horses, one his calm-and-steady war-horse first named “Fancy,” later “Little Sorrel.” – (Jackson, Mary Anna, pp. 171-173).
Four days later on Monday, May 13, 1861 – Butler extended his control all the way from the Relay House nine miles from Baltimore to Jackson’s stronghold at Harper’s Ferry. – (Summers, pp. 62-63).

John Imboden remembered in his article for “The Century”:

By Jackson’s orders I took possession of the bridge across the Potomac at Point of Rocks, twelve miles below Harper’s Ferry, and fortified the Virginia end of the bridge, as we expected a visit any night from General B. F. Butler, who was at the Relay House on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. It was my habit to keep awake all night to be ready for emergencies, and to sleep in the day-time, making daily reports, night and morning, to Jackson.

One Sunday afternoon, a little over a week after we occupied this post, I was aroused from my nap by one of my men, who said there were two men in blue uniforms (we had not yet adopted the gray) riding about our camp, and looking so closely at everything that he believed they were spies. I went out to see who they were, and found Jackson and one of his staff. As I approached them, he put his finger on his lips and shook his head as a signal for silence. In a low tone he said he preferred it should not be known he had come there. He approved of all I had done, and soon galloped away. and afterwards I suspected that the visit was simply to familiarize himself with the line of the canal and railroad from Point of Rocks to Harper’s Ferry preparatory to a sharp bit of strategy which he had been practicing for a few days. – (Imboden, p. 122-124).
On Wednesday, May 15th, Col. Jackson, figuratively, moved his queen into range of the B&O’s king. He had in mind the forty-four miles of double track that ran between Point of Rocks (12 miles below Harper’s Ferry on the opposite side of the river in Maryland) and Cherry Run, Va, thirty-two miles to its west. – (Summers, pp. 66-67).

That day, Jackson telegraphed Garrett at the B&O’s headquarters, complaining: *The noise of your trains is intolerable . . . My men find their repose disturbed by them each night. You will have to work out some other method of operating them.* – (Hungerford, p. 7).

Imboden continues:

*(Jackson) requested a change of schedule that would pass all eastbound trains by Harper’s Ferry between 11 and 1 o’clock in the daytime, and Mr. Garrett complied, and thereafter for several days we heard the constant roar of passing trains for an hour before, and an hour after, noon. But since the “empties” were sent up the road at night, Jackson again complained that the nuisance was as great as ever, and, as the road had two tracks, said he must insist that the westbound trains should pass during the same two hours as those going east. Mr. Garrett promptly complied, and we had then, for two hours every day, the liveliest railroad in America.* – (Imboden, p. 123).

On Wednesday, May 22nd Jackson’s order to Imboden: *From Point of Rocks permit all westbound trains, deny all eastbound trains and at noon the next day, close the line.* – (Summers, p. 66).

Thursday, May 23rd, Jackson’s order to Kenton Harper, commanding the 5th Virginia Infantry west of Martinsburg: *Permit all eastbound trains, deny all westbound trains, close the line at noon the 23rd, like Imboden.* - (Summers, p. 66).

Jackson said “checkmate” at noon that day, capturing inside the trap fifty-six locomotives and more than 300 cars.” – (Summers, p. 67).
Related and Local Links:

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The B&O’s early days by ‘Jack’ Snyder. [Click Here]. 440 words

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‘Jack’ Snyder – The B&O Model Was Key to American Prosperity. [Click Here]. 807 words


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Berlin, MD pontoon bridge next to remains of the original American Civil War. 9 June 2001 Web 9 April 2012.

Stonewall Jackson face-front photographed Winchester, Va, 1862. – Library of Congress


Herman Haupt

B&O Railroad Museum.

The Baltimore Bottleneck
B&O Railroad Museum. 15 September 2010 Web. 23 March 2012.

Little Sorrel
Ultimate Horse Site.com. 2 November 2006 Web. 5 April 2012.


The Baltimore and Ohio Company collected a charge of 3.75 cents per mile for passengers and from 5 to 8 cents per ton for freight on the Washington Branch. (Senate Documents, 2d Sess., 37th Cong., No. 1, p.11).

Norris and Knight engine

********************
LOC.GOV photos:

# Title: [Military railroad operations in northern Virginia: men using levers for loosening rails]
# Creator(s): Russell, Andrew J., photographer
# Date Created/Published: [1862 or 1863]
# Medium: 1 photographic print : salted paper.
# Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-ppmsca-10396 (digital file from original photo, front) LC-USZ62-90111 (b&w film copy neg.)
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# Title: [Military railroad operations in northern Virginia: men using levers for loosening rails]
# Creator(s): Russell, Andrew J., photographer
Title: Military railroad operations in northern Virginia: two piles of rails and wooden ties
Creator(s): Russell, Andrew J., photographer
Date Created/Published: [1862 or 1863]
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* Title: Military railroad operations in northern Virginia: African American laborers twisting rail
* Creator(s): Russell, Andrew J., photographer
* Date Created/Published: [1862 or 1863]
* Medium: 1 photographic print : salted paper.
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# Title: Railroad construction worker straightening track; pile of twisted rails in background. 1862-63
# Creator(s): Russell, Andrew J., photographer
# Date Created/Published: [between 1862 and 1863]
# Medium: 1 photographic print : salted paper.
# Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-ppmsca-10413 (digital file from original photo, front) LC-USZ62-60086 (b&w film copy neg.)
# Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
# Call Number: LOT 9209, no. 67 [P&P]
# Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
# Notes:
  o No. 67 (handwritten) and 2567 (stamped) on mount.
VIEW LOOKING NORTHEAST. – Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Martinsburg West Roundhouse, East End of Race & Martin Streets, Martinsburg, Berkeley County, WV

Creator(s): Barrett, William Edmund, creator
Date Created/Published: 1970
Medium: 4 x 5 in.
Reproduction Number: HAER WVA,2-MART,1A–2
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on images made by the U.S. Government; images copied from other sources may be restricted. (http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/res/114_habs.html)
Call Number: HAER WVA,2-MART,1A–2

Title: Martinsburg
Creator(s): Waud, Alfred R. (Alfred Rudolph), 1828-1891, artist
Date Created/Published: 1864 [ca. December 3]
Medium: 1 drawing on light green paper : pencil and Chinese white ; 23.5 x 32.7 cm (sheet).
Summary: Includes four scenes: Ruins of the depot; The Square; The Barricades; On the Opequan n. Martinsburg 64.
Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-ppmsca-21187 (digital file from original item) LC-USZ62-15146 (b&w film copy neg.)
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
Call Number: DRWG/US – Waud, no. 308 (A size) [P&P]
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
Notes:

* Signed lower right: A.R. Waud.
* Title inscribed in center of images.
* Published in Harper’s Weekly, December 3, 1864, p. 981.
* Inscribed in the scene depicting The Square: Hoge’s house, Court House.
* Inscribed on photographer’s wagon, center left: likenesses/ [Taft & Sewall?]
* Gift, J.P. Morgan, 1919 (DLC/PP-1919:R1.2.308)
* Reference print available in the Civil War Drawings file A.
* Forms part of: Morgan collection of Civil War drawings.

Mason Locomotive 1860

Troop train
Harper’s Weekly, November 7, 1863. Son of the South.net Start date unavailable Web 10 April 2012.

“This photograph shows what happens when an ammunition train goes BOOM! George Bernard saw the results when he photographed the remains of CSA General Hood’s 28-car ammunition train, which Hood’s retreating army burned after losing Atlanta to Sherman, September 1864”. Listserve – Top 20 Civil War Photographs. 14 June 2009 Web. 1 April 2012. Also. The Library of Congress.

Brunswick, MD Train Station
National Park Service. 22 April 1997 Web. 10 January 2012.

Relay House, MD 1858 (commentary by Jeff Lang)
Relay House, MD early 21st century (commentary by Jeff Lang)
Relay House, 1861 (commentary by Jeff Lang)

Drawing of Point of Rocks


Crippled train in Richmond
Legends of America. 19 June 2010 Web. 10 April 2012.

Map of the routes examined and surveyed for the Winchester and Potomac Rail Road State of Virginia, under the direction of Capt. J. D. Graham, U.S. Top. Eng., 1831 and 1832; surveyed by Lts. A. D. Mackay and E. French, 1st Arty., assistants in 1831, and Lts. E. French and J. F. Izard, assistants in 1832; drawn from the original plot by Lt. Humphreys, 2d Artillery.

William_S._Harney

List_of_American_Civil_War_generals#Confederate-H

Kenton_Harper

John_D._Imboden

Benjamin_Franklin_Butler

John_W._Garrett

Harper’s_Ferry_Railway

David_Hunter_Strother

Joseph_E._Johnston

Lew_Wallace

Robert_Patterson

George_B._McClellan

Drawing of Colonnade viaduct


Camelback_locomotive
The B&O's Early Days by "Jack" Snyder Pt. 1

Live Webcast – West Virginia During the Civil War

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Centipede_4-8-0 locomotive

Weidenbach paintings of Harper's Ferry
New York Public Library Digital Gallery. 5 April 2005 Web. 2 April, 2012

gasshopper locomotives

Hamilton, L. M.; Earthworks on Camp Hill, Guarding the Road to Charlestown, Va. – Charles Town photos
West Virginia Historical Photograph Collection. 9 October 2010 Web. 10 April 2012

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The Ufa train disaster, which occurred in June 1989 near the city of Ufa in Soviet Union, resulted in a death toll of 575 people and remains to be the deadliest railway disaster in Russian and Soviet history. The disaster occurred due to a highly flammable cloud created by the liquefied gas spill from a burst pipeline near the railway line, where two passenger trains were passing each other between Ufa and Asha. The disaster occurred due to carbon monoxide gas from steam engines of the locomotive No 8017 when it stalled with all the cars on a steep gradient inside the Armi tunnel. The low quality coal created poisonous carbon monoxide which caused the fatalities. The passengers and crew failed to notice the danger as the smoke and fumes spread slowly. Eric Michael Surkamp (born July 16, 1987) is an American former professional baseball pitcher. He has previously played in Major League Baseball (MLB) for the San Francisco Giants, Chicago White Sox, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Oakland Athletics. Surkamp was drafted by the San Francisco Giants in the sixth round of the 2008 Major League Baseball Draft out of North Carolina State University, where he played college baseball for the Wolfpack.