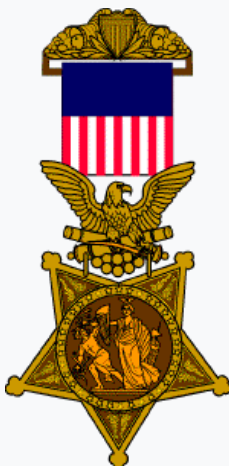


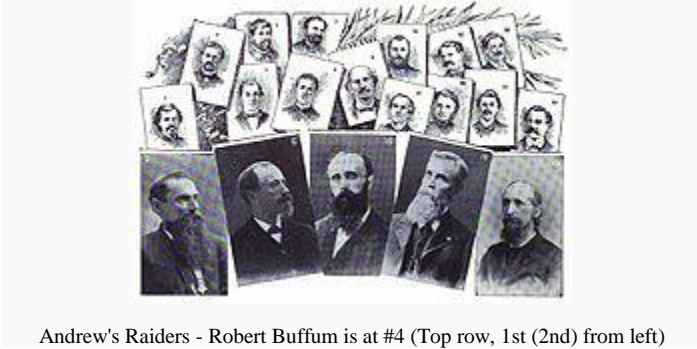
Robert Buffum



Born	July 7, 1828 Salem, Massachusetts
Died	July 20, 1871 (aged 43) Auburn, New York
Allegiance	 United States of America
Service/branch	 United States Army
Years of service	1861 - 1864
Rank	Second Lieutenant
Unit	 Company H, 21st Ohio Infantry
Battles/wars	Great Locomotive Chase
Awards	 Medal of Honor

Robert Buffum (July 7, 1828 to July 20, 1871) was an American soldier who fought in the American Civil War. Buffum was the third person to receive the country's

highest award for bravery during combat, the Medal of Honor, for his action during the Great Locomotive Chase in Georgia (U.S. state) in April 1862. He was honored with the award on 25 March 1863.



Buffum was born on July 7, 1828 in Salem, Massachusetts and enlisted into the 21st Ohio Infantry at Gilead, Ohio on September 2, 1861. He was among a group of Ohio men (19 soldiers and 2 civilians) who volunteered to participate in a secret mission to disrupt Confederate communication. In April the group, led by James J. Andrews, which later came to be called *Andrews' Raiders*, boarded a train in Georgia. On April 12, after the train had stopped in Big Shanty, they commandeered the train's engine and three boxcars and headed towards Chattanooga, Tennessee. Under pursuit from the Confederates, they destroyed track and telegraph lines along the way. They never made it to Chattanooga but abandoned the engine. They were all captured within a week. Some of the men were hanged. Buffum was taken as a prisoner of war, but was eventually exchanged on 17 March 1863.

Unfortunately Buffum became an uncontrollable alcoholic in the post war period. He also suffered psychological

damage as a result of the war and of the time spent as a prisoner in the hands of the Confederates. Buffum spent three years in a mental hospital after he left the Army. A short time after his release from the hospital he began to drink again and, one night following an argument with a man who vilified President Lincoln, he shot and killed the man. He was indicted for murder and sent to the State Asylum at Auburn as an insane criminal.

Despondency may have been the cause of his suicide behind the barricade he put in front of his cell door to stop anyone from entering the cell. Robert Buffum slashed his own throat in his cell in the Asylum at Auburn, New York on July 20, 1871. As his heroism as a Union soldier was unknown to Asylum staff, he was buried on prison grounds on July 21, 1871. During the period between his burial in the State Lot [at Fort Hill Cemetery] and the discovery of his final resting place, Buffum's corpse had been moved to a new state burial ground three and a half miles away [in an area adjacent to Soule Cemetery in the Town of Sennett] where it rested in an unmarked grave, really a mass grave containing many convict corpses.

On July 29, 1995, members of the Medal of Honor historical society honored the resting place of Lt. Robert Buffum with a marker testifying to his bravery during the Civil War. Many Buffum family members attended the brief but impressive ceremony. Officials from the Auburn Correctional Facility also participated in recognizing the veteran.



Volunteers have maintained the gravesite ever since. Each year a new American flag is placed on the grave, in memorium.

Citation

One of the 19 of 22 men (including 2 civilians) who, by direction of Gen. Mitchell (or Buell), penetrated nearly 200 miles south into enemy territory and captured a railroad train at Big Shanty, Ga., in an attempt to destroy the bridges and track between Chattanooga and Atlanta.