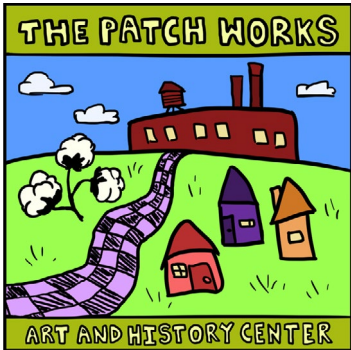


Sherman's Top 10 List of Sh*t I Really, Really Want to Blow Up.

By Nina & Jake Elsas, The Patch Works Art And History Center

By 1864, Atlanta had become nothing more than an industrial war-machine. Factories galore belched out cannons, pistols, railroad cars, gun carriages, swords (yes, swords), leather, wool jackets, pants, cotton shirts, shoes, buttons, bits, buckles, and spurs. Warehouses were swollen with food, clothing, ammunition, and sundry provisions. "Hospitals" (i.e.: unused hotels and schools) dotted the downtown area, as physicians patched up as best they could an endless supply of refugees and wounded soldiers.



Then, as icing on this meshugas wartime cake, there was the exceptionally productive **Rolling Mill**. Even before the War Between the States, the Atlanta

Rolling Mill – built in 1858 next to the **Georgia Railroad** in an area then known as the 3rd Ward, just a stone's throw inside Atlanta's city limit – had quickly emerged as the Number Two rolling mill in the South. It was... on a roll, one might say. Eh-heh.

"But what does a rolling mill do," you ask? Well, simply put, it's a factory that re-rolls worn out railroad tracks. Pretty straightforward. Or, at least, that's what a rolling mill normally should be doing, unless a war were to break out. But we all know that would *never* happen.

So, war broke out. And in 1863, The Atlanta Rolling Mill was re-branded as the **Confederate Rolling Mill**, diversifying its previously monocultural line of products to include cannons and 2"-thick sheets of iron for Confederate Navy ironclads. **Not surprisingly, this change in operations placed the Rolling Mill on Sherman's "Top Ten List of Sh*t I Really, Really Want to Blow Up."**

Well, in the summer of 1864, Willy T. reached the outskirts of Atlanta, kicking back for a spell while shelling the crap out of downtown Atlanta. You can imagine that the Union Major-General was as giddy as a schoolboy on a snow day: just a little bit further up the ol' dusty trail and that Rolling Mill would be as good as blasted...

"Ha! I say HA! The Confederate Army, suh, would never give a Damn Yankee the satisfaction... All y'all Northern Aggressors can just leave the blowing up to us! In your face, Shermey!"

On September 1st 1864, retreating Confederate General John Bell Hood – who had only recently replaced the slightly-more-ineffectual General Johnston – sent that Rolling Mill straight to hell, ordering his men to set ablaze (as some sources claim) 81 ammunition-filled train cars, which were conveniently parked next to the mill to keep them safe from Sherman. Oops.

Suffice it to say, those ammunition-filled train cars did exactly what ammunition-filled train cars do when on fire: they exploded... BIG time.

As the legend goes, the blast was so loud that Sherman could actually hear it, popping and whizzing throughout the night.

Good-bye Confederate Rolling Mill! And good-bye to pretty much everything within a quarter mile of the explosion. When the dust settled, the area was a surreal landscape of twisted railroad tracks and brick columns jutting up like branchless trees.

Even Oakland Cemetery, located just west of the Rolling Mill, didn't escape the devastation: the blast's crater is still evident on the eastern edge of the property.

And thus ended the Confederacy's strategy to win the war by not losing the war. After years of death, even the North had grown quite weary of the destruction. If the Confederacy had held Atlanta just a couple more months, until November and the next Presidential election, there was a very good chance Lincoln would have been voted out of office, replaced by a new leader more amenable to a war-ending armistice. Instead, Atlanta fell, and the Rolling Mill's demise became emblematic of the Confederacy's imminent downfall. Subsequently, Lincoln's popularity soared, and he won re-election.

As Atlanta's – and the Confederacy's – fate was coming to a loud conclusion, another event was simultaneously occurring that would, in due course, have a profound impact on the rebuilding of the war-torn South: an uptick in German immigration.

The 19th century had seen a surge in German immigrants arriving in the United States, with a massive "second wave" crashing on the U.S. shore in the 1860s. Joining this Teutonic Tide were quite a number of German Jews, seeking a new life in the New World.

And among these German-Jewish settlers was a young man, all of eighteen years old, who washed up on American soil in 1861. Although barely a man, he had grown up learning the family trade, which would soon take him far in a country that was embracing industry as an economic engine.

His name was Jacob Elsas, and within a few years, he'd make Atlanta his permanent home.

Just Do It.

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