



On The March: Respectfully, Jubal A. Early

by **Cecily Nelson Zander**

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Headquarters 2d corps, A. No.–Va.

To Gen. Jubal A. Early, Commanding Division:

General-

Gen. Jackson's compliments to Gen. Early, and he would like to be informed why he saw so many stragglers in rear of your division to-day.

Respectfully, A. S. Pendleton, A. A. G. 2d Corps.

.....
 Headquarters Early's division, A. no.–Va.

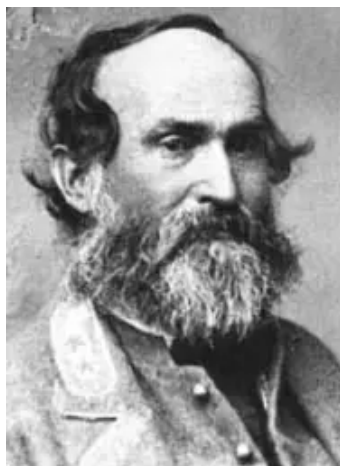
To Col. A. S. Pendleton, A. A. G. 2d Corps:

Colonel-

General Early's compliments to General Jackson, and he takes pleasure in informing him that he saw so many stragglers in rear of my division to-day, probably because he rode in rear of my division.

Respectfully, Jubal A. Early, Commanding Division

Any of us who suffer from the affliction of needing to walk at high speeds – and are miffed by those who prefer more laconic strolling – will immediately empathize with Thomas J. Jackson and Alexander S. Pendleton's frustration after a tiring march in the early fall of 1862. Jackson, the master of the march, found troops belonging to Jubal A. Early's division from his wing of the Army of Northern Virginia's struggling to keep pace with the lead elements of his column. Never one to let sleeping dogs lie, or straggling men rest, Jackson asked his adjutant to enquire about the straggling to the division's commander; and, for his trouble, received a typically acerbic Early reply.



Jubal A. Early

The story of stragglers in rear of the division has been related time and again by historians seeking a shorthand for explaining the personalities of two very different Confederate officers. In the balance of history, memory, and narrative such stories are very important. How better to understand Jubal Early's humor than to explain that he combatted Jackson's prickliness with an answer so blatantly obvious that it made Jackson, rather than Early (whose men were behaving badly) look foolish. Like so many stories of the Civil War, the tale of confusion and confrontation on the march gives vibrancy to the narrative and brings the characters who so often lie flat on the page to life.

But what if the story is just that: a story? What if Sandie Pendleton never enquired, on behalf of General Jackson, about the straggler in Early's rear? In one sense, it hardly matters, as the illustration offered by the anecdote captures an element of Jubal Early's personality corroborated by dozens of contemporaries and their myriad tales of the wit

and sarcasm of Robert E. Lee's "bad old man." At most, perhaps, it makes for an interesting digression into the ways in which the history of the Civil War has been written and for a brief and diverting dive to try to find the source of the straggling tale.

Most historians who reference the story in modern scholarship offer, as their citation, Robert Stiles's classic work *Four Years Under Marse Robert*, published in 1903 by New York's Neale Publishing Company. But Stiles's work was far from the first in which the story appeared. In 1866, what seems to be the first version of the tale appeared in inaugural issue of *The Land We Love*, a southern heritage magazine founded by Daniel Harvey Hill in the immediate aftermath of the war. Perhaps Hill believed that turning the focus to Jackson's acerbic nature would distract readers from his own deeply quarrelsome personality. Or, more likely, it simply made for good copy.

Readers more than likely looked to Hill and his new magazine as a potential inside source for the history of the Confederate armies; and, as the Lost Cause interpretation of the conflict began to cohere, a place where they go to find celebrations of the prominent Confederate personalities to whom they had attached their hopes of independence during the four-year struggle against the Union. And Hill, in conformation with the cult of personality that had already grown around Stonewall Jackson, used the story to bolster Old Jack's reputation. Hill's interpretation suggested that Jackson was not above others making a joke at his own expense. The article was not an example of Early's wit, but rather of Jackson's forbearance. There were no further inquiries from Jackson to Early, the editors wrote, because of the "great kindness [Jackson] felt toward and great confidence he always expressed in his gallant and indomitable subordinate."

The story next appeared in a publication entitled *The Grayjackets*, whose authorship was ascribed to "a Confederate." It is not certain who compiled the volume, which, like the *Land We Love* magazine and other early postbellum 'histories' was largely a pastiche of clippings and other materials that an anonymous editor deemed of interest to general readers. The compiler of *The Grayjackets*, who may have been Hill or John Esten Cooke (based on the similar nature of the volume to *Land We Love* or Cooke's *Wearing of the Gray*), described the exchange between Jackson and Early as "A Spicy Correspondence." The likelihood of Hill's authorship may be more doubtful, however, because *The Grayjackets* explained to readers that the exchange happened while Jackson's troops were marching north to Maryland at the outset of the Sharpsburg campaign, while the original *LWL* story placed the exchange's occurrence during the retreat of the Confederates through Winchester.

A SPICY CORRESPONDENCE.

DURING the march of General Lee's army through Northern Virginia to Maryland, General Jackson chanced to notice a number of stragglers from General Early's division. That night he caused the following note to be sent to his gallant subordinate:

“HEAD-QUARTERS, LEFT WING.

“GENERAL:—General Jackson desires to know why he saw so many of your stragglers in rear of your division to-day?

“(Signed,) A. S. PENDLETON, A. A. G.

“*To Major-General Early.*”

Old Jubal at once replied:

“HEAD-QUARTERS, EARLY'S DIVISION.

“CAPTAIN:—In answer to your note, I would state that I think it probable that the reason why General Jackson *saw* so many of my stragglers on the march to-day is, that he rode in rear of my division.

“Respectfully,

“J. A. EARLY, Major-General.

“*Captain A. S. Pendleton, A. A. G.*”

The word “saw” was duly underscored with the general's boldest dash. Contrary to general expectation, General Jackson only smiled, and made no further inquiries about the curious investigators whom small-pox could not terrify.

A Spicy Correspondence, in *The Grayjackets*

The earliest accounts of the exchange correctly identified Sandie Pendleton as a captain on Jackson's staff. Edward A. Pollard related the tale in 1867 in his early history of the Army of Northern Virginia: *Lee and His Lieutenants*. Pollard noted that the exchange helped to bond Early's men to him as their commanding officer and noted that Early's troops “particularly relished” the story of the exchange. Pollard's version of the story noted

that the worst straggling had taken place somewhere along the line of march between Winchester and Culpeper, where Jackson's wing of the army was directed to link up with James Longstreet's after the retreat from Maryland.

Where the *Land We Love* speculated it was "old peach and honey" that the troops were after as they lagged behind their column, Pollard said it was "apple jack" that the men sought from the homes and barns along their marching route. Pollard also noted that Early tried to stop the straggling by telling his men that any "hut" in which they might find whiskey would also be full of smallpox; but disease did not prove much of a deterrent.

The most referenced formulation of the anecdote, however, did not appear until the twentieth century—in the work of Robert Stiles, whose *Four Years Under Marse Robert* represented a masterpiece of Lost Cause historiography when it was published in 1903. The fact of the anecdote's proliferation from Stiles means that the most referenced and reprinted version of the story is actually the least accurate—or, the one riddled with most errors and ambiguity.* Stiles failed to provide any indication of when or where the exchange occurred. He also assigned the wrong rank to Pendleton; who was never a colonel and was not made a lieutenant-colonel until Jubal Early assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia's Second Corps in 1864, only a few months before Pendleton's death on the retreat from Fisher's Hill.



Alexander "Sandie" Pendleton

The formulation of the story at the head of this article is, indeed, that which Stiles offered posterity. And, on most days and for most purposes, it is the perfect anecdote of humor on the march during the American Civil War. If nothing else, I will sign off my investigation with the salutation crafted to cover all manner of sins:

Respectfully,
Cecily N. Zander

*Particularly astute readers might also note that if the incident did indeed occur on the retreat from or march to Maryland; the use of Second Corps to designate Jackson's command would be incorrect. At the time of the supposed exchange, the Army of

Northern Virginia existed in its two wing structure, not in its post-Fredericksburg corps alignment.

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