



# MOSBY'S RANGERS

## LESSONS IN INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

### LESSONS LEARNED AND HISTORY RIDE

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20505

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Center for the Study of Intelligence  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, DC 20505  
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**Mosby's Rangers: Lessons in Intelligence  
and Special Operations**

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Lessons Learned and History  
Staff Ride

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**Center for the Study of Intelligence**  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, DC  
2015

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# **Mosby's Rangers: Lessons in Intelligence and Special Operations**

## **Lessons Learned and History Staff Ride Handbook**

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Col. John S. Mosby

*As glides in seas the shark,  
Rides Mosby through green dark.*

—Herman Melville

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**Introduction**

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During much of the Civil War, Col. John Singleton Mosby, Confederate States of America (CSA), and his Partisan Rangers operated as an unconventional force and followed a tradition of American irregular warfare handed down by Maj. Robert Rogers of Rogers' Rangers of the French and Indian Wars and Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, of the American Revolution.

On this staff ride, you will travel through some of the areas known as Mosby's Confederacy in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Fauquier Counties. The staff ride will pass on some of the intelligence and special operations lessons learned by Colonel Mosby and his Partisan Rangers during the American Civil War.

On 21 April 1862, the rebel government in Richmond passed the Partisan Ranger Act authorizing and encouraging the formation of irregular or guerrilla units to harass a much larger and well-supplied Union Army mobilizing to invade the South at multiple points. In the trans-Mississippi West on the Missouri-Kansas border, William C. Quantrill commanded a sizable rebel guerrilla unit that included Jesse and Frank James, and Cole, Jim, and John Younger—of postwar outlaw fame. "Bloody Bill" Anderson and Sterling Price also operated in Missouri. M. Jerome Clarke formed a similar rebel irregular unit in Kentucky, while Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Hunt Morgan raised mounted units that would harass Union forces in Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Mississippi, and Alabama. Similar units came into being later in the war in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and even California, where Rufus Henry Ingram formed a guerrilla band to combat the Confederacy's enemies on the Pacific Coast. In Virginia, a major center of rebel power and population close to Washington, DC, numerous guerrilla units formed under John Moberly, Turner Ashby, Elijah White (White's Rebels), John Hanson McNeill (McNeill's Rangers), and, perhaps the most famous, John S. Mosby—the Confederacy's "Gray Ghost."



Mosby and his command, although partisans like the others, developed strategies and tactics that made them unique in the history of Civil War irregular warfare. Mosby's success was due to a combination of audaciousness, leadership skills, detailed planning, and brilliant use of intelligence, terrain, mobility, and weaponry. His accomplishments are considered exemplars of unconventional/irregular warfare and form part of the core of the US military's special operations capabilities today. They deserve careful study.

In World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) studied Mosby and his methods, and his tactics and lessons learned remain a current focus of research and study by US Special Forces and Special Operations Forces. In 1951, at the Army War College, OSS founder Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan spoke of Mosby's Rangers and their part in the tradition of American partisan warfare:

*If there is one certain deduction to be drawn from past experience, it is that guerrilla tactics, when carried out by a resourceful and persistent enemy, have generally resulted in prolonged warfare, especially against invading armies.*

Mosby has had a tremendous and lasting effect on the way the US military—especially our Special Operations Forces—operates. Today, the John Singleton Mosby Reserve Army Center at Fort Belvoir is home to the 55th Sustainment Brigade. The crest of that unit incorporates Mosby's famous slouch hat with ostrich plume. The current edition of the US Army's Ranger Handbook states:

*The American Civil War was again the occasion for the creation of special units such as Rangers. John S. Mosby, a master of the prompt and skillful use of cavalry, was one of the most outstanding Confederate Rangers. He believed that by resorting to aggressive action he could compel his enemies to guard a hundred points. He would then attack one of the weakest points and be assured numerical superiority.*

Mosby's Rangers are honored on the official website of the 75th Ranger Regiment, which traces its lineage to Mosby and other American Ranger units such as Rogers' Rangers, Francis Marion's Partisans, the Rangers of World War II, and Merrill's Marauders. Colonel Mosby is a member in the US Army Ranger Hall of Fame.

Every US Army Special Forces soldier swears to the Special Forces Creed. They live and sometimes die by its motto "De Oppresso Liber" (To Free the Oppressed). An older version of that creed states, "I serve with the memory of those that have gone before me: Rogers' Rangers, Francis Marion, Mosby's Rangers, the First Special Service Forces and Ranger Battalions of World War II, the Airborne Ranger Companies of Korea."



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## **Mosby's Early Years**

John Singleton Mosby was born in Powhatan County, Virginia, in 1833 to Virginia McLaurine and Alfred Daniel Mosby. John's father attended Hampden-Sydney College, a rare event for that time. The Mosby family had deep Virginia roots, having emigrated from England before settling in Charles County in the early 1600s. The family moved to Charlottesville, Virginia, while John was still very young. Several accounts describe him as a child small in stature, frail and sickly, who was often bullied. As a boy, Mosby read an account of Revolutionary War hero Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox. It made an impression. Mosby initially attended his father's alma mater to study mathematics but transferred to the University of Virginia in 1849 to pursue classical studies. While there, he quarreled with, and then shot and wounded, another student over a perceived insult, and at age 19 ended up serving several months in prison. Expelled from the university because of his misdemeanor conviction, he used his seven months in detention to study law and write a request for a pardon to Virginia Governor Joseph Johnson. Receiving the pardon in late 1853, Mosby continued his law study and was admitted to the Virginia Bar. In December 1857 he married Pauline Clarke, the daughter of a prominent Kentucky attorney, former congressman, and well-connected politician. Mosby eventually settled down to practice law in Bristol, Virginia, and the couple had three children, two born before the Civil War, and one during the conflict. As sectional tensions between the north and south flared between 1860 and 1861, and as talk of war grew more frequent, John Mosby spoke out against those advocating Virginia's secession from the Union.



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## **Strategic Setting, 1860-61**

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The election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in November 1860 split the nation. Although the president-elect was a moderate on the abolition question, southerners, fearing that northern radicals and abolitionists would control his administration, viewed Lincoln's election as a political, economic, and social threat to their traditional way of life and the region's economy. Certain that no compromise was possible and that continued existence within a federal union dominated by those perceived as hostile to the planter aristocracy of the South, many states began to talk openly of secession. South Carolina voted to leave the Union on 20 December 1860, followed in January 1861 by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and, on 1 February, Texas (all Deep South slaves states heavily engaged in cotton production), establishing the

Confederate States of America. The border slave states of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Delaware remained in the Union, even though their populations were divided in their loyalties. Outgoing President James Buchanan viewed secession as illegal but also viewed going to war to stop or reverse secession as being illegal as well. Stymied, Buchanan did nothing as the Union dissolved. When inaugurated on 4 March 1861 in Washington, President Lincoln sought to reach out to the rebellious states to effect some compromise but to no avail. On 15 April, after the fall of Fort Sumter, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to crush the rebellion. Northern states, especially Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts, rapidly answered the call and dispatched troops to Washington. Virginia, which had doubts about the wisdom of secession, had no doubts about Lincoln's intent to use armed force to act against seceding states. Virginia voted to secede on 17 April and joined the Confederacy in May, soon followed by Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina.



### **Birth of Mosby's Rangers**

Like many Virginians fearing an imminent northern invasion, Mosby enlisted as a private in the 1st Virginia Cavalry and fought at the First Battle of Manassas (or First Bull Run) on 21 July 1861, a southern victory that dispelled any illusions on the part of the North that the rebellion would be short-lived. During his time with the 1st Virginia, Mosby was mentored by Col. William "Grumble" Jones. Mosby came to the attention of Confederate cavalry commander James Ewell Brown (J.E.B.) Stuart and received a commission as a 1st lieutenant to serve as an adjutant in early 1862. When Grumble Jones was replaced by vote (electing officers was a Confederate practice for ranks below brigadier general), Mosby resigned his commission, in lieu of being relieved by the new commander, and reverted to being a private.



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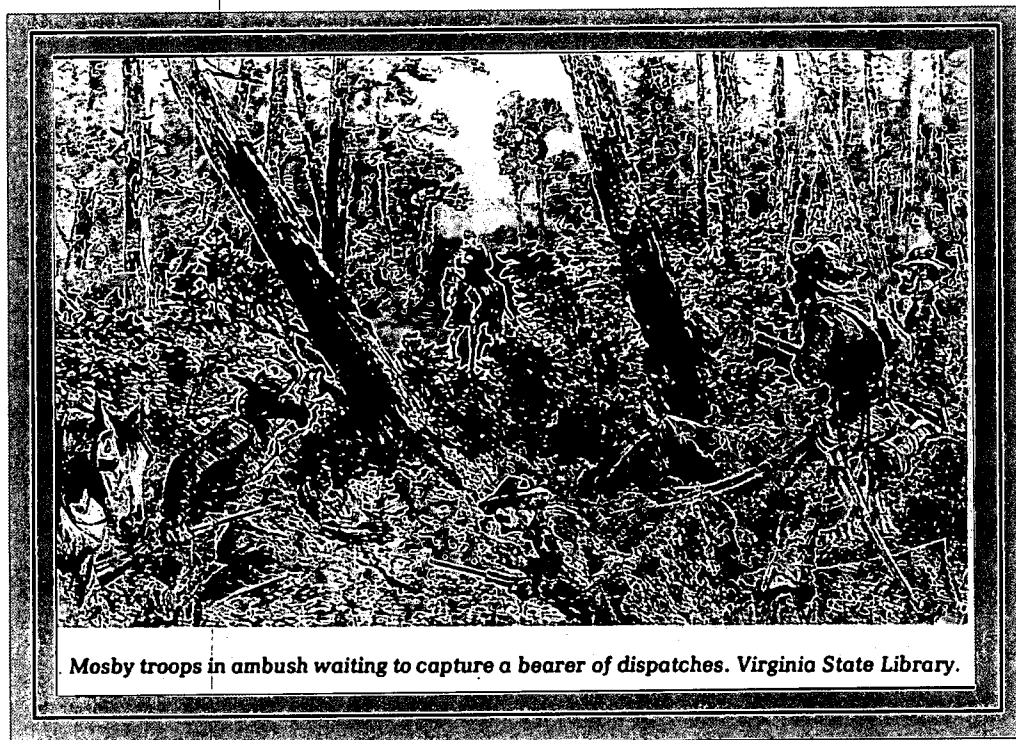
That year Mosby began working as a scout, collecting intelligence, for now-Brigadier General Stuart during the Union's ill-fated Peninsula Campaign (March-July 1862) between the James and York Rivers south of Richmond. The campaign ended in another military disaster for the Army of the Potomac commanded by Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, but nearly entailed personal disaster for Mosby, who was captured by Union forces in July 1862. Mosby was privy to important verbal dispatches; however, he said nothing. He was held for a short period in Washington's Old Capitol Prison before being paroled and exchanged for a Union officer. While he was being transported by boat for his release, he took great notice of Union troop movements and elicited information from the boat captain. On his return, he reported this intelligence immediately and directly to Gen. Robert E. Lee, the recently appointed commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. Mosby returned to ride with Stuart during the battles of Second Manassas, Chantilly, and Antietam in 1862 and they developed a mutual trust and friendship.

As Mosby began his military career, he read military books whenever he could, including William Hazlitt's *The Life of Napoleon*. He kept his wife Pauline busy sending him books not just on military topics though.

Mosby was given his first independent command under General Stuart on 30 December 1862 when he was ordered to raise and operate a squad-size stay-behind force from the 1st Virginia Cavalry. Mosby began to collect intelligence and conduct raids be-



hind Union lines in the counties along the Potomac River between Virginia and Maryland. To avoid detection from larger and ever-present Union forces, his Rangers would form up on predesignated dates and at specific locations, conduct their raids, often at night, and then disperse. When these tactics proved successful, Stuart ordered Mosby to recruit more men and conduct more operations. The recruitment of partisan units helped boost the total manpower available to the Confederacy. Many southerners were willing to support the cause but did not want to leave their homes and local areas, especially if vulnerable to Union military action, as in the case of Northern Virginia. Service in a partisan unit allowed the individual to stay close to home and take part in the fighting rather than join a larger regular



*Mosby troops in ambush waiting to capture a bearer of dispatches. Virginia State Library.*

force, such as Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, that frequently campaigned far and wide and whose soldiers were always required to be either on the march, in battle, or in camp. It also allowed for profit from captured animals and weapons.

From then on, Mosby reported directly to Stuart until Stuart's death resulting from the Battle of Yellow Tavern in May 1864. After that he reported directly to Lee, an uncommon chain of command for a partisan leader during the war. When the Rangers dispersed they would reside alone or in small groups at "safe houses" owned by the many Confederate sympathizers in Northern Virginia, especially in areas within 25 miles of the District of Columbia that were occupied by Union forces. If there was an emergency or a need to conduct an operation, a rider would be sent to the various safe houses to alert the Rangers when and where to gather. Their targets included Union pickets, small camps and outposts, railroads and locomotives, supply and US mail wagons, and, as we shall see, high Union military leadership. This staff ride visits sites associated with some of those targets.

While Mosby practiced unconventional warfare, his operational successes can be attributed to his understanding of basic military tactics (the same as practiced by Robert Rogers and Francis Marion) and the operational principles that guide them. In today's US military these principles are codified as the nine Principles of War:

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Mass	Surprise	Unity of Command
Objective	Economy of Force	Security
Offensive	Maneuver	Simplicity

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*Lesson Learned (Unity of Command): Mosby knew his commander's intent and was generally allowed to act independently of higher command authority. He chose his own targets that fit into overall Confederate campaign or strategic goals. Mosby and his men had the support of the local population, who housed and fed them, from Manassas to the Shenandoah Valley.*

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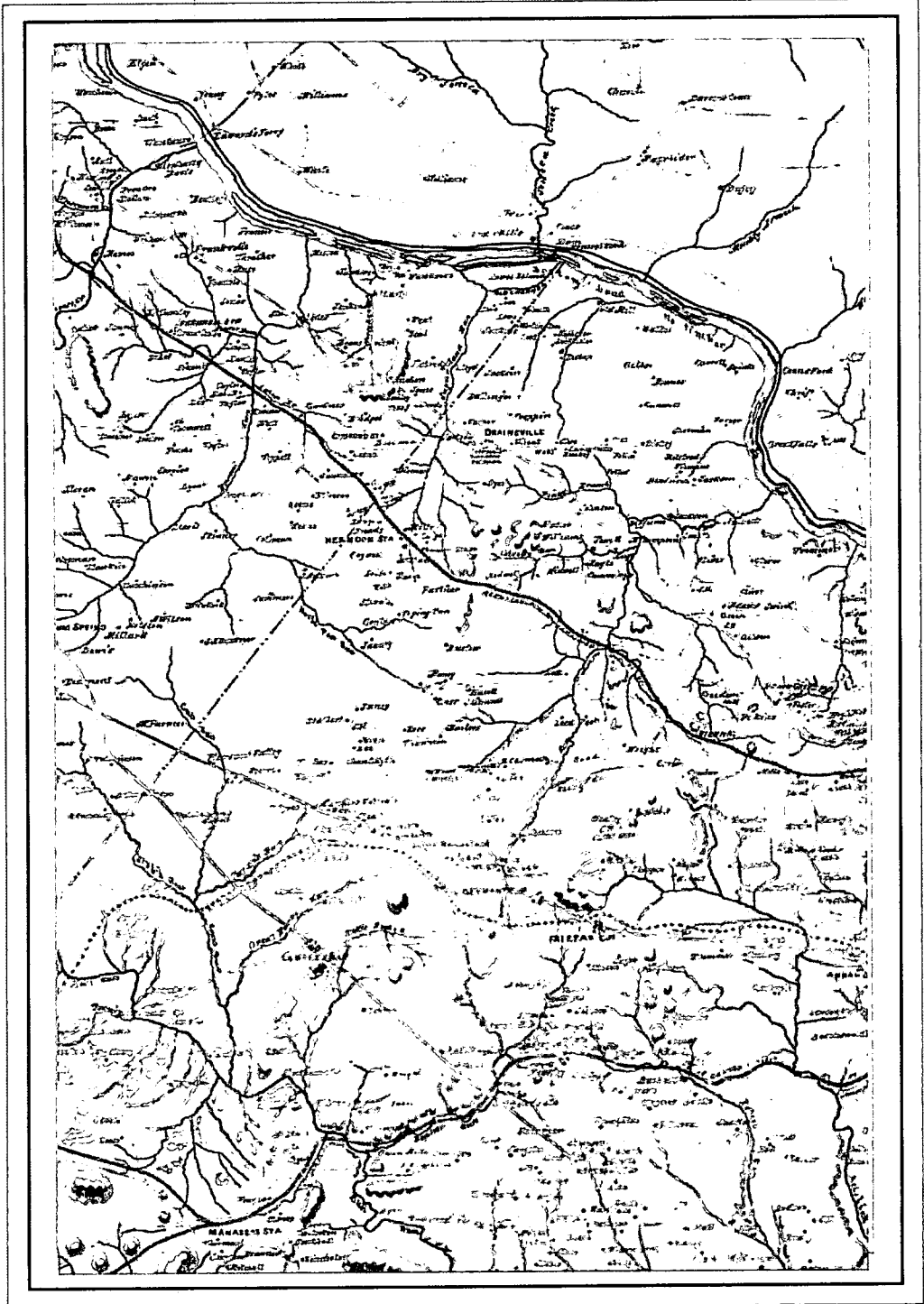
The Rangers existed largely off of what weapons, horses, and supplies they captured and local popular support as authorized under the Partisan Ranger Act. At times the Rangers also captured large sums of money, in Union payrolls, which had a demoralizing effect on the Union soldiers who went unpaid. Although considered outlaws, bandits, or "bushwhackers" by many northerners and most federal troops, Mosby's 43rd Virginia Cavalry Battalion, like Elijah V. White's 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion to Mosby's north, was a formal unit listed on the Army of Northern Virginia's order-of-battle. Fully or partially uniformed in Confederate gray, Mosby's Partisan Rangers were therefore considered to be official and legitimate members of the Confederate armed forces and were allowed the same status under accepted rules of warfare as their Army of Northern Virginia or Union Army contemporaries, although as we will see, exceptions occurred. As a general custom, everywhere on both sides, if you were caught in your army's uniform, you were a prisoner of war; if you were in disguise, you were a spy and could be hanged. Men who rode with the "Gray Ghost" and other such military units were for the most part considered soldiers. Many other riders, particularly a Confederate espionage group operating under Gen. Braxton Bragg in Tennessee known as Coleman's Scouts, commanded by Henry B. Shaw under the pseudo Coleman, were treated as "spies."

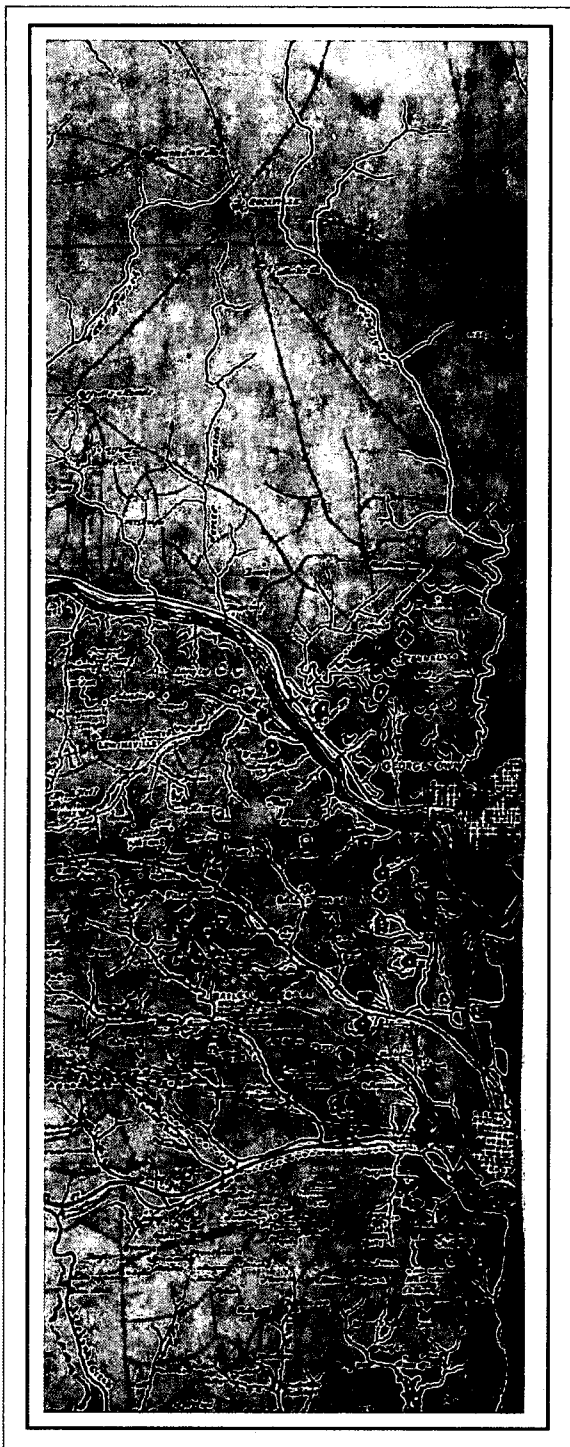
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*Lesson Learned (Offensive): Mosby and his Rangers operated year-round. In an era of truly poor transportation routes that hindered logistics and the supply of armies even in the best of weather, conventional Union and Confederate forces would go into winter quarters from late fall until late spring, restricting their activities both by necessity and design. Taking advantage of stationary and often inactive adversaries, Mosby's Rangers would accelerate their operations during the colder months to wreak maximum havoc. Mosby also avoided main roads and traveled via the woods and local paths as much as possible to avoid becoming a victim of ambush himself. The Rangers also captured most of their equipment, horses, and weapons. Use of captured equipment is still a principle of guerrilla warfare.*

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### **Strategic Setting, 1861**

Being some 60 miles south of the Mason-Dixon Line, Washington, DC, remained surrounded by slave states (Maryland, Virginia, and nearby Delaware) through the Civil War. Populations in these states, and in the capital itself in the early years, remained divided in their loyalties. Baltimore, for example, was considered a hot bed of sedition and had experienced violent rioting at Camden Yards as Union military units, especially militia units from Massachusetts, the home of the abolitionist movement, traveled south by rail to Washington in the spring of 1861. The artillery pieces of Fort McHenry, normally defending the Patuxent River access to the inner harbor, were repositioned to cover the city itself to intimidate the city's pro-South elite. Across the Potomac, residents of Arlington and Alexandria proudly flew rebel flags from their homes and businesses, clearly visible to government officials in the White House and US Capitol. Within the capital itself, rebel sympathizers infiltrated the District's newly formed militia and other military units. Soon after Lincoln's inauguration, Col. Charles Pomeroy Stone was appointed as inspector general of the DC militia and through 1861 pursued rebel sympathizers in the District of Columbia and collected intelligence on numerous southern plots, most of which turned out to be more ru-



mor than fact. But, even after these rebel sympathizers were ferretted out or crushed, Union officials remained wary.

Very much "behind the lines," Union Army engineers began constructing several rings of fortifications, eventually numbering nearly 200 individual posts, to protect the capital from rebel attack; Union troops also secured the Chain Bridge and other vital river crossings (two on the Potomac and one on the Anacostia). Between April and July 1861, troops of the Army of the Potomac moved into Northern Virginia, occupying hostile territory as far as Centreville, Chantilly, and Herndon. Federal troops sporadically operated in other areas of western Fairfax and eastern Loudoun Counties as well, with their headquarters at Fairfax Courthouse.

While several rings of fortifications eventually surrounded the capital (Fort Totten, Fort Stevens, Fort Drum, Fort Washington, Fort Marcy, and Fort Hunt, among others—all connected by Military Road), with thinner "picket lines" of federal troops farther out, the early defenses were porous. Although required to have a pass to enter and leave the federal city (easily forged), a person could move back and forth largely unhindered between areas in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia, especially at night and especially if one avoided heavily patrolled main thoroughfares and the few bridges into the city.

This nonexistent, heavily manned "front line" would facilitate Mosby's later operations, as well as espionage rings centered in the nation's capital, the largest established by Virginia Governor John Letcher, whose members included Thomas Jordan, Betty Duvall, and Rose O'Neal Greenhow—all prominent Virginians well-connected in Washington social circles. Together, they formed the "Secret Line," the name for the network of operatives from Baltimore, through Washington, to Richmond, 150 miles to the south. The Secret Line became the conduit to smuggle vital intelligence in the form of letters, verbal intelligence reports, and other documents to Confederate military and political leaders, especially those working for the South's Secret Service Bureau under Maj. William Norris. Although known to Union military and counterintelligence officials, the agents of the Confederate Secret Service Bureau, and those along the Secret Line, like Mosby, operated with varying degrees of success for the duration of the Civil War.



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**1. Near the intersection of Route 123 and Hunter Mill Road at 2911  
Hunter Mill Road, Oakton**

.....

**Mosby's Oak**

During the Civil War, this area of Oakton was known as Flint Hill. This oak tree on Hunter Mill Road is over 400 years old. Mosby used it at times as a rendezvous location and, while working as a scout for Stuart, tried to capture a Union sympathizer named Alexander Haight near here. Haight got away. Hunter Mill Road was an important route used by Mosby during the Civil War, and there were many engagements along its length, especially in the area of the former W&OD railcrossing on Hunter Mill (now the bike trail). During the Civil War, the railroad here was named the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad. It was a frequent target of Mosby's Rangers. On 18 October 1864, Mosby's men, led by Capt. Richard Montjoy (Mosby was not present), entered Falls Church to capture horses. They also captured a Baptist minister John D. Read (or



Reed), a Union sympathizer, alleged spy, and detested abolitionist. Read is also alleged to have blown a horn to alert the home guard as the Rangers entered town. That same day, 18 October 1864, not far from the railcrossing, farther down Hunter Mill Road and off the rail line, Mosby's men executed Reverend Read near Piney Branch. There is a marker near the spot. There was an old jump rope song that school kids sang in the area for many years afterwards:

*Isn't any school,  
Isn't any teacher;  
Isn't any church,  
Mosby shot the preacher.<sup>1</sup>*

Near here, behind the Old Methodist Church at the foot of Hunter Mill Road on Route 123, at 2951 Chain Bridge Road, Oakton, was a campground for a 20-man detachment from the 16th New York Cavalry. On 7 March 1865, barely a month before Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse ending the Civil War in Northern Virginia, Mosby's men attacked the unit while it was on patrol, killing two, wounding one, and capturing three troopers along with several horses without suffering any casualties of their own.

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The rest of the Union patrol ran. During the Civil War there was no Chain Bridge Road/Route 123 in this area, but there was a Courthouse Road. The original Methodist Church at that time was on nearby Blake Lane. North from here on Route 123 is Flint Hill Cemetery where four of Mosby's Rangers are buried.

In Vienna, the US Army constructed and manned Freedom Hill Fort as a signal tower location and to specifically guard against raids and ambushes in the area by Mosby and the Rangers. Company A from the 5th Pennsylvania Artillery Regiment manned Freedom Hill. Mosby's Rangers just went around it.

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*Lesson Learned: Freedom Hill is a good example of how large numbers of Union forces were tied up guarding against Mosby's irregular operations. Guarding static locations against highly mobile forces has occurred countless times in the history of guerrilla warfare. Mosby and his men were always capturing Union horses; they kept the very best of them for their own use and as remounts while others were sold and sent on to the Confederate Army.*

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Freedom Hill is preserved today as a small park off of Courthouse Road near Route 123. There is a historical marker, and the outline of some of the entrenchments can still be seen.



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**2. Get on I-66 West and then turn west onto US-50 W/John S. Mosby Highway. From US-50 W turn north onto West Ox Road for approximately 1.7 miles to the corner of Thompson Road.**

.....

As you turn off US 50 please note that on 1 September 1862, the Battle of Chantilly was fought here at the intersection of Little River Turnpike (now US-50) and West Ox Road. At the time of the battle, Mosby was with Stuart's cavalry, which conducted reconnaissance and acted as a cavalry screen for Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, who launched the main attack against Union forces. A few days earlier at Second Manassas Mosby had his horse shot out from under him.



**Thompson's Corner Raid Site**

On 25 February 1863, Mosby and 25 Rangers left Rector's Crossroads, which is a stop later on the staff ride, for one of their earliest raids. The raid was planned against a picket of 50 troops from the 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry camped here at the corner of Thompson Road and West Ox Road. The weather was a mix of snow and rain on the morning of 26 February when Mosby and his Rangers surprised the encamped Pennsylvanians, causing them to flee. Three Union troopers and one officer were killed, several were wounded, and five were taken prisoner along with 39 horses. Mosby recorded no casualties in the raid. Sgt. James F. Ames, who had deserted to Mosby from the 5th New York Cavalry on 11 February 1863, accompanied the raid, though Mosby insisted he do so unarmed as a test of his loyalty. Nicknamed "Big Yankee," the unarmed, but large and muscular, Ames captured a Union trooper who was well-armed with saber, pistol, and carbine. These Pennsylvania cavalry fell under the overall command of a British soldier of fortune commanding a Union cavalry brigade, Sir Percy Wyndham, who hence called Mosby a "horse thief."

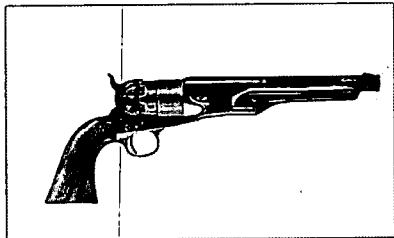
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*Lessons Learned (Mass, Offensive, Surprise, and Maneuver):*

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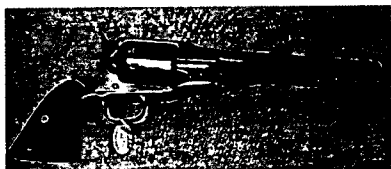
Selection of Mosby Rangers Weapons



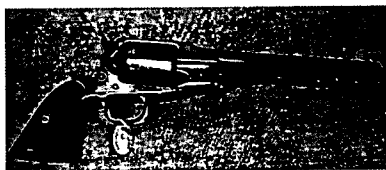
Colt Model 1860 Army revolver



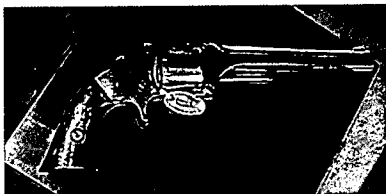
Remington New Model Army revolver



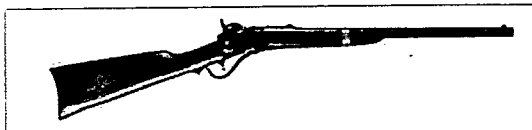
Remington 1858



Remington Navy



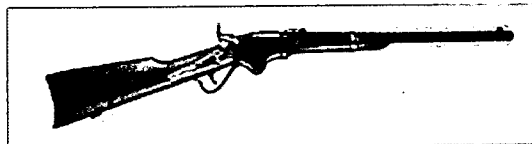
S & W Model 2



Sharps



Merrill



Spencer

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## **Weapons**

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Even though there were more Union troopers at Thompson's Corner than Mosby's Rangers, Mosby was able to concentrate his combat firepower to high effect. While most light and heavy cavalry units on both sides were equipped with sabers (usually the 1860 model Light Cavalry and the older, more common 1840 model Heavy Dragoon known as the "wrist breaker") and carbines (usually the .52 to .56 caliber Smith, Sharps, Burnside, Merrill, or Spencer), which were deemed more manageable for a mounted rider, cavalrymen on both sides carried at least two and as many as six revolvers. Most common on both sides were the single-action 1851 model Colt and 1858 model Remington revolvers, long military staples. Two new revolvers that appeared the year before secession were highly sought after: the Colt 1860 single-action Army model (in .44 caliber) and the 1860 Navy model (in .36 caliber). There were three series of Remington Army and Navy models revolvers produced during the Civil War, two of which incorporated improvements to the original 1858 patent design. The guns produced in the third Remington series, the 1863 version, were called the New Model Army revolver (in .44 caliber) and the New Model Navy revolver (in .36 caliber).

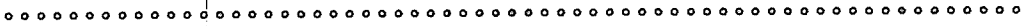
In addition to government-issued weaponry, cavalrymen on both sides often purchased their own weapons, sometimes of smaller calibers, such as the Smith & Wesson No. 2 Army Model with the new .32 caliber rimfire cartridge. Most pistols were of standard cap and ball variety, which required each of the six chambers to be loaded individually with black powder from a flask and a lead ball, with a percussion cap primer needed on each cylinder cone or nipple, all rammed home with a built-in rod. Soon after the war began, paper "cartridges" became available, each cartridge containing a proper measure of powder and the ball as one unit wrapped in flammable nitrate paper. The cartridge could be slid into the chamber, speeding the loading process. Reloading on a galloping horse under fire, however, was not a task for the amateur, thus the tendency of the cavalrymen to carry multiple revolvers to avoid constant and often difficult reloading. By carrying several of these pistols each, the Rangers had significantly more close-range firepower (18-24 shots) than their Union infantry opponents armed, typically, with only a single-shot, muzzle-loaded Springfield rifled musket. At one March 1864 rendezvous before an operation, Ranger J. Marshall Crawford reported that each of the 200 Rangers carried three Colt Army Model revolvers. He also noted the use of double barrel shotguns by the Rangers with 24 buckshot loaded in each barrel.

After one lopsided engagement, Mosby sent word to the Union commander that their sabers and Merrill carbines made them defenseless and that the US government would do better to arm them with revolvers like Mosby. The Merrill was a single-shot, breech-loading carbine. All the pistols that Mosby's men carried, especially the .44 caliber Colts and .36 caliber Remington, had been captured from Union arsenals in the early days of the war or from federal troops they encountered. A few of Mosby's men were armed in

addition with carbines. Breech-loading carbines were highly valued because they could be reloaded in the saddle. The Spencer, known in the parlance of the day as a "repeater," was considered state-of-the-art in modern weaponry. It had a seven-round tube in the buttstock and fired some of the first metallic cartridges ever developed—containing bullet, powder, and primer all in one—allowing upwards of 20 shots per minute (10 times the rate of fire of the average infantryman). It was very expensive to manufacture and only cavalry units received them.



**3. Turn around and return south on West Ox Road to US-50 and then proceed west on US-50 to the International Country Club.**



**Chantilly Plantation Overseer's House**

The historic house on the right, or north side, of US-50 was the overseer's house for Chantilly Plantation. The plantation covered a large area from here to the north and west. The plantation house was built by the husband of Cornelia Lee Turberville Stuart on land she had inherited from her father. In February 1863, Union soldiers burned the plantation house. A small segment of the plantation is now the golf course.

After a long ride, on 23 March 1863 near here, Mosby and a group of Rangers emerged from the woods near Chantilly Plantation. Their horses were already tired as they approached a Union picket stationed along Little River Turnpike (now US-50). The Rangers charged the mounted Union pickets known as "vedettes" from the French word for "lookout." One Union soldier was killed and five or six were captured in this melee. A reserve cavalry force of 70 men from the 5th New York Cavalry counterattacked, and Mosby, seeing he was outnumbered, retreated west on the turnpike for a mile or so until reaching Sander's (or Saunder's) Toll Gate (intersection of today's US-50 and Centreville Road).

The Rangers' mounts were too tired though to outrun the Union cavalry, so Mosby had his men take cover in a group of fallen trees just off the turnpike, where they waited to ambush the pursuing Union cavalry. The Union troopers were strung out as they galloped along the turnpike in hot pursuit. As the Union soldiers came abreast of the concealed Rangers, Mosby's men opened fired at close range. Then, giving a rebel yell, they charged the Union cavalry from the flank. Five Union troopers were killed and 35 were quickly captured. The regimental history lists three enlisted killed or mortally wounded, two enlisted and one officer wounded; and 35 enlisted and one officer

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captured. These troopers belonged to the command of Lt. Col. Robert Johnstone. In his report on the ambush, Johnstone wrote of his men: "The column broke and was pursued by the enemy for one and a half miles. It was then rallied by the exertions of Majors Bacon and White." Another Union cavalry force near Frying Pan heard the firing and joined in the fight. Mosby and the Rangers took off heading west and were pursued for about eight miles before the Union cavalry halted their pursuit at night fall.<sup>2</sup>

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*Lessons Learned (Maneuver, Surprise, Mobility): Mosby understood intrinsically the following standing order issued to Rogers' Rangers: "If somebody's trailing you, make a circle, come back onto your own tracks, and ambush the folks that aim to ambush you." In conjunction with using the woods and lesser known paths to approach, hereafter Mosby always made sure that the horses were well rested when they hit a target. He had learned this hard lesson during the raid on the Chantilly picket.*

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- .....
- 4. At intersection of US-50 and Stringfellow Road turn south on Stringfellow Road and enter parking lot of the Chantilly Regional Library at 4000 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly.**
- .....

**16 October 1863 Wagon Train Ambush Site—Chantilly Regional Library**

On the cloudy night of 16 October 1863 Mosby and seven of his men were concealed behind Union lines along the Little River Turnpike when they observed a Union wagon train moving west along the turnpike without an armed escort. In the darkness, Mosby and his Rangers fell in behind the wagon train acting like they were a Union cavalry escort. They passed through a large Union camp with its campfires that covered both sides of the turnpike. After passing the last picket (near where the Chantilly Library now stands), Mosby and his men sprung their ambush on the wagon train. The Confederates killed a Union officer and captured 13 Union soldiers and a captain; 36 mules, and seven horses.

Farther south, where Stringfellow Road turns into Clifton Road at the intersection with modern Route 29, is where Mosby was wounded on 14 September 1864.

Stringfellow Road may be named after a famous Confederate scout who served under J.E.B. Stuart and who at times worked with Mosby. Capt. Benjamin Franklin (Frank) Stringfellow often disguised himself as a Union soldier or officer on his "behind the



lines" missions. A story from a contemporary account claims that on one of these occasions five mounted Union soldiers approached him and questioned him at length. Satisfied by his story, they decided to ride on, but Stringfellow was not satisfied. He drew his revolvers and shot three of them from their saddles—the other two escaped.<sup>3</sup> The truthfulness of this story is in doubt. Stringfellow was an excellent scout and spy, and—having already had his cover pass scrutiny—it is hard to imagine he would have jeopardized this mission, or future ones, without a good reason.

In another instance of derring-do, Stringfellow disguised himself as a woman and was coached by two Southern women, a mother and daughter, on how to behave. On the mission he attended a dance, collected intelligence, and captured a Union Army lieutenant.<sup>4</sup>

Another account from Stringfellow himself claimed that during one intelligence-gathering mission he found himself close enough to Gen. U.S. Grant to have shot him but declined to do so. Stringfellow also penetrated wartime Alexandria and Washington, DC, to collect intelligence. During these missions he used a cover of being a dental assistant and obtained a dental license.

Mosby and Stringfellow had a falling out though. Mosby blamed Stringfellow for faulty leadership during the 9 January 1864 Loudoun Heights Raid, which took place on a peak overlooking Harper's Ferry. Stringfellow had discovered the camp of some troublesome Maryland cavalry and proposed a raid to Mosby. It was conducted at night in frigid temperatures by two elements. The coordinated attack failed to accomplish its goal and Mosby saw it as a defeat. More on this later in the staff ride.



.....  
**5. Return to Route US-50 W then turn north onto Centreville Road.**  
.....

Farther south on Centreville Road where it turns into Walney Road is the present-day Eleanor C. Lawrence Park. During the Civil War this area was the property of Lewis H. Machen and then his widow. Capt. William Chapman leading Company A of Mosby's Rangers surprised and ambushed a 40-man patrol of Union cavalry from the 16th New York Regiment, who were grazing their horses and picking cherries near Machen's barn. The Rangers killed six Union soldiers and captured 20 more and 30 horses.<sup>5</sup>

One of the Union cavalymen captured was Sergeant Thomas P. "Boston" Corbett, who on 24 April 1865 shot John Wilkes Booth.

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During the Civil War, the area on the left (west) side of Centreville Road, [redacted] was the property of the Turley family and site of the family estate Turley Hall, which fell into ruins and was torn down.

(b)(3)

**Laura Ratcliffe's Civil War Home Site**

Also on the west side of Centreville Road, in front of Discovery Square, is the area where Laura Ratcliffe, a distant cousin of Robert E. Lee and friend and informant to both Mosby and Stuart, lived and operated during the Civil War. Both Mosby and Stuart were guests at her home during the war. Laura's relationship with Stuart has fueled some historical speculation. Although Stuart was married, he wrote romantic poetry to Laura Ratcliffe, which survives in an album she kept. Stuart introduced Mosby to Ratcliffe and there were two aspects to that. Not only was Ratcliffe going to serve as an intelligence source for Mosby, but Stuart wanted Mosby to keep an eye out for her welfare.

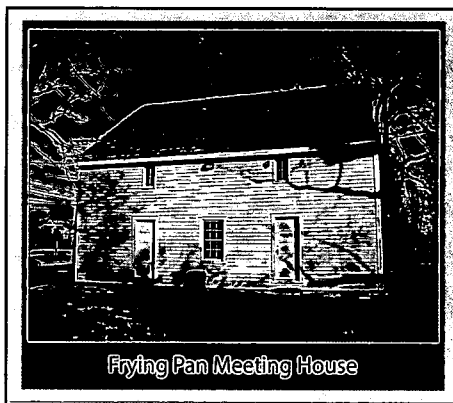
The Ratcliffe property appears on Civil War-era maps, but the exact location of her wartime home, which was razed in the 1990s, has been a matter of dispute. However, we believe it to be at the location of the fire hydrant in front of Discovery Square Townhouses.



.....  
**6. Continue to 2615 Centreville Road**  
.....

**Frying Pan Church**

There were several skirmishes here during the Civil War. On 26 January 1863, Mosby and his Rangers captured two mounted Union sentries at the church. From here, Mosby and the Rangers continued south to the "Old Chantilly Church" where they captured nine or 10 pickets from the 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry.<sup>6</sup> The Old Chantilly Church no longer exists; it had been located farther south on Centreville Road in an area we passed—generally where Lowe Street now intersects Centreville Road.



Frying Pan Meeting House

There was another skirmish here at Frying Pan Church on 17 October 1863 involving Confederate troops and Union cavalry.

Mosby and his Rangers often used the meeting house/church as a rendezvous location, and it was close to the home of Laura Ratcliffe. One of Mosby's Rangers, Mortimer Lane, is buried in the churchyard in an unmarked grave. Lane died of tuberculosis after being imprisoned and paroled.

*Intelligence Lessons Learned: Mosby raided lines of communication and captured dispatch riders with Union Army operational plans. When Mosby's men took prisoners they segregated them from other prisoners and questioned them individually so they could not concoct a story among themselves. His practice of controlling the prisoners in this fashion followed Rogers' Rangers Standing Orders and is the same technique the US military uses today. Early in their existence the Rangers sometimes paroled a few of their Union prisoners as they did not have the manpower to guard them or escort them south. This practice evolved though as the 43rd Virginia grew in size with Union prisoners being sent under guard mainly to Libby Prison ("Hotel Libby") in Richmond. The Rangers also targeted US Mail deliveries looking for intelligence and greenbacks. The Rangers had their own scouts whom Mosby sent out to look for targets of opportunity.*



.....  
**7. Enter McNair Farms Road on the west side of Centreville Road and continue to the terminus of Squirrel Hill Road to the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Mosby's Rock is farther down Squirrel Hill Road near the church overflow parking lot near Big Boulder Road. There is a marker at the location.**  
.....

### **Mosby's Rock**

Mosby's Rock is a large rock formation that Mosby and Ratcliffe used as a dead drop. It was a short walking distance from Ratcliffe's home on Centreville Road; she left messages for Mosby and he in return left her US currency captured during his many raids. This allowed Mosby and Ratcliffe to minimize face-to-face meetings in an area with a heavy Union presence.

*Lesson Learned: (Security)*



.....  
**8. Continue north on Centreville Road and cross under the Dulles Toll Road to 2346 Centreville Road, Herndon**  
.....

**Merrybrook—Laura Ratcliffe's Postwar Home**

Just before crossing under the Dulles Toll Road on the left near Woodland Park Road is Merrybrook where Laura Ratcliffe lived after the Civil War. This is a private residence; however, the property owners hold commemorative events honoring Laura Ratcliffe, and there is a website "Friends of Laura Ratcliffe." There is a historical marker and a small place to park near Merrybrook.



.....  
**9. Pull into Worldgate Centre on the right and loop around to the Marriott Hotel parking lot at 13101 Worldgate Drive, Herndon.**  
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**Worldgate Marriott—Laura Ratcliffe's Grave**

As noted, Laura Ratcliffe provided Stuart and Mosby with information on Union troop movements in Fairfax County. On 11 February 1863, she learned from a Union soldier who came to her house to buy eggs and milk that federal troops were planning to capture Mosby. After he left, she set off three miles in the direction of the Coleman House where Worldgate is now located. There she found Mosby and his men and warned him that Union forces near Frying Pan were planning to ambush and capture him. Mosby had been planning a raid in this location and federal troops hoped he would do just that, surfacing so an even larger Union force could ambush and capture him. Mosby was able to avoid contact and he remained ever in Ratcliffe's debt. Eventually, as the war went on, Union officials began to suspect Ratcliffe's loyalties and debated arresting her on espionage and treason charges. However, she was careful enough to avoid confirmation of those suspicions. Ratcliffe died at the age of 87 at Merrybrook in 1923.

Laura Ratcliffe is buried in a small copse of trees near the parking lot.

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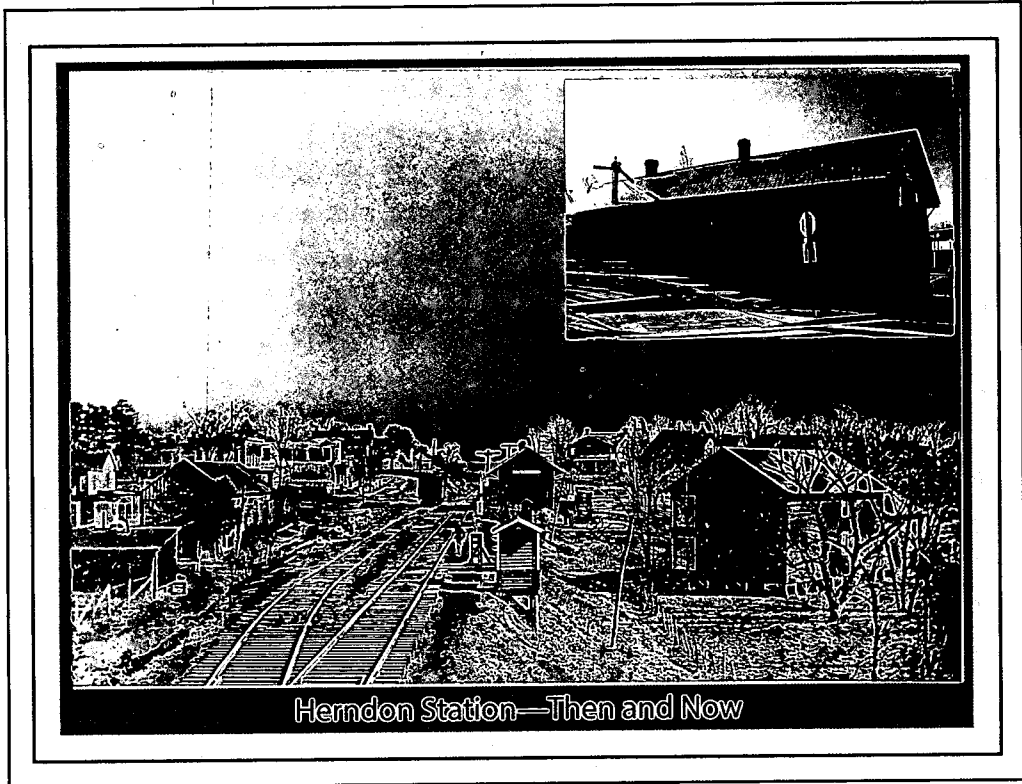
*Intelligence Lesson Learned: Mosby had a network of informants, of whom Ratcliffe was one, to inform him of Union Army movements. Laura was a very careful spy, who was never caught though she was certainly suspected.*

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.....  
**10. Continue north on Centreville Road, which becomes Elden, turn left onto Lynn Street. Herndon Station is located at 717 Lynn Street, Herndon.**  
.....

### Herndon Railroad Station



At the time of the Civil War, there was a sawmill here in addition to the station. On 16 March 1863, Mosby gathered 40 Rangers at Rector's Crossroads (modern day Atoka) and rode toward Herndon, resting that night at Ball's Mill at Goose Creek in Loudoun County. On the 17th, St. Patrick's Day, the Rangers emerged out of the woods. This was a tactic they used regularly to get close to their target and also avoid using main roads and being discovered or ambushed. Some were wearing captured Union overcoats and this gave the Union troopers pause. The Rangers achieved surprise and attacked a picket of Vermont Cavalry stationed here at the Herndon railroad station and nearby sawmill. The Rangers captured nearly all of the troopers, horses, and supplies of the post.

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As Mosby's men were leaving the area, they saw four horses tied up outside of a house. The horses belonged to four Union officers dining at the home of Kitty Kitchen Hanna. This house was located where the Main Street Bank is now situated at 727 Elden Street, Herndon. Two of the officers ran outside intending to fight and were captured. The other two tried to hide in the attic; one of Mosby's men—some say it was the Union Army deserter "Big Yankee" Ames—shot through the ceiling, causing it to collapse and with it the two Union officers came crashing down to the floor below.

*Yesterday I attacked a body of the enemy's cavalry at Herndon Station, in Fairfax County, completely routing them I brought off 25 prisoners—a major (Wells), 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, and 21 men, all their arms, 26 horses and equipments. One, severely wounded was left on the ground. The enemy pursued me in force, but were checked by my rear guard, and gave up the pursuit. My loss was nothing. The enemy have moved their cavalry from Germantown back of Fairfax Court-House, on the Alexandria Pike. In this affair my officers and men behaved splendidly.*

—John Singleton Mosby<sup>7</sup>

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*Lesson Learned (Maneuver, Surprise, Offensive, and Mass): Mosby nearly always seized and maintained the initiative. His principal aim was to tie up Union forces and disrupt lines of communication in Northern Virginia. In the summer and fall of 1864, when Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan was conducting a scorched earth campaign in the Shenandoah Valley—the breadbasket of the Confederacy—Mosby's operations tied up between one-third to two-thirds of his 90,000-man force, depending on whose version you read. Effectively, this reduced Sheridan's ability to engage in combat with regular Confederate forces under Jubal Early. Although Sheridan outnumbered the Confederate forces and eventually overwhelmed them, if all of the Union forces detailed to guard against Mosby and to hunt for him are taken into account, Union and rebel forces in the Valley were more evenly matched.*

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## Deception, Captured Union Equipment, and Supplies

Mosby's Rangers were heavily dependent on captured Union weapons, uniforms, and supplies. Generally, they tried to keep a semblance of Confederate Army appearance, but many wore jaunty slouch hats with plumes typical of many cavalry units dating back to the Royalist Cavaliers of the English Civil War. In one raid on a wagon train along the Little River Turnpike, Mosby's Rangers are known to have captured a shipment of Union cavalry boots—enough for each Ranger to procure three new pairs. Every Ranger carried a sack or two on their horse for carrying away captured supplies.

Mosby at times wore very elegant custom-made Confederate Army uniforms. Records show the Rangers requisitioned from the Quartermaster of the Confederate Army large numbers of uniform pants, jackets, and bulk gray cloth. In some instances the Rangers deliberately disguised themselves as Union soldiers by wearing captured blue Union overcoats; the highly prized overcoats had the additional benefit of being quite warm. They also wore a rain coat of a type common to both armies, which simply allowed them to pass themselves off as Union soldiers. When Union pickets challenged them, the Rangers, at times, responded that they were Union cavalry of such and such a unit. Password and challenges were used in the Civil War, especially by pickets, but often the troops on patrol might not have known them.



## **Union Army Counterpartisan Operations and Tactics**

As the Union pickets were, in the parlance of the day, getting “gobbled up,” many posts started to string wire near their pickets to unseat Mosby’s riders. Confederate sources and Ranger scouts, though, usually warned the Rangers as to their existence and locations.<sup>8</sup>

General Sheridan even employed a special force, Blazer’s Scouts, specifically to find, kill, or capture Mosby and his Rangers. Armed with deadly seven-shot Spencer carbines, the unit was made up of hand-picked soldiers and named after its commander 1st Lt. (later Capt.) Richard Blazer. Mosby and his men were normally able to elude them. But on 17 November 1864, Blazer’s Scouts killed several Rangers in a fight with Ranger Company D led by Capt. Richard Montjoy. The next day in Cabletown (or Kabletown), West Virginia, the 1st Squadron of Mosby’s Rangers, composed of Companies A and B, under the command of Capt. Adolphus “Dolly” Richards, came looking for Blazer’s Scouts. The Rangers found them and engaged in a “desperate fight.” According to one account, 31 Union soldiers were killed or wounded and 19 more were taken prisoner, including Captain Blazer. The Confederates also captured scores of the valuable Spencer carbines and 35 horses. Captain Richards’ recollection of the incident was that close to 62 were captured and only 15 or 16 of Blazer’s men escaped.<sup>9</sup> The casualties of the Blazer’s Scouts far outnumbered those who escaped. Captain Blazer had fought bravely and only surrendered when he was knocked from his horse. Mosby’s Rangers lost one killed and six wounded. Three Rangers being held prisoners of the Blazer Scouts at the time of the fight were also released. As a result of this fight, Blazer’s Scouts was essentially wiped out as an effective fighting force and was formally disbanded in January 1865.<sup>10, 11</sup>

Another Union unit, the Jesse Scouts, operated in Confederate uniforms and collected intelligence on Confederate movements. The Jesse Scouts operated in small teams and for a period collected intelligence and reported to Union cavalry commander Philip Sheridan during his 1864 Shenandoah campaign. The unit also conducted counter guerrilla operations against Mosby and John H. McNeill and their partisan ranger groups. At times its men posed as Mosby’s Rangers. The existence of the Jesse Scouts and its near-constant presence behind the Confederate lines were known to Mosby, and the unit’s operational methods, very similar to Mosby’s own, gave added cause for the rebels to always be on their guard. One Civil War historian noted that as a counterintelligence response to this threat Mosby issued membership cards to the real Rangers.<sup>12</sup> Mosby’s Rangers also arrested—and in at least one case executed—those suspected of being Union spies.

Another Union unit with an antipartisan mission was the Loudoun Rangers. Formed from Union sympathizers—surprisingly, many of them Quakers—living in Loudoun County, the Loudoun Rangers were the only Union Army unit raised in Virginia. It was ideally suited as a scout unit because it knew the operational area. It took part in Sher-



idan's Shenandoah Valley campaign (August–October 1864) then returned to scouting and an antipartisan role. In one engagement in November 1864, the Loudoun Rangers killed one of Mosby's best officers, Capt. Richard Montjoy.

On 6 April 1865, three days before Appomattox, the Loudoun Rangers were encamped near Key's Switch, west of Harper's Ferry. It did not react as a large body of what appeared to be Union cavalry approached. In reality it was the 52 Rangers of Company H of the 43rd Battalion, led by 24-year-old Capt. George Baylor, who had joined the Rangers after serving as an officer in the regular Confederate Army. Company H, formed just one day earlier, was under orders to hunt down the Loudoun Rangers, which had caused such problems and had killed Captain Montjoy. Mosby's men got the jump on the Loudoun men and, in the ensuing engagement, captured 65 Union soldiers and 81 horses. Company H's casualties were one wounded. Before they left, Mosby's Rangers burned the camp. There was an exchange of gunfire with some of the remaining Loudoun Rangers and one of the latter was killed.<sup>13</sup> The Loudoun Rangers ceased to exist as an effective fighting force and was formally mustered out of service a short while later.

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*Lessons Learned (Maneuver, Objective, Offensive, and Surprise): Mosby understood the role his forces played in drawing off his enemy's strength from the main campaign and quoted Sheridan's own postwar memoirs to make his point. Sheridan wrote that his effective strength to meet rebel Gen. Jubal Early's force was depleted because he had to guard his supply lines and communications from Rebel partisan attacks. According to the groundbreaking Mosby author, Virgil Carrington Jones, Sheridan understated Mosby's effect. It was only when the official unit records were released years after the war that it became clear to what extent Mosby had tied up Sheridan's command.*

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The Union antipartisan forces formed to target Mosby effectively used tactics similar to those the Rangers used. Mosby realized they threatened his operational mission and success and they also became Ranger targets.

*The military value of the species of warfare I have waged is not measured by the numbers of prisoners and material of war captured from the enemy, but by the heavy detail it has already compelled him to make, and which I hope to make him increase, in order to guard his communications to that extent diminishing his aggressive strength.*

—John Singleton Mosby<sup>14</sup>



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**11. Head north on Elden to Fairfax County Parkway and take that north to Route 7. Exit Fairfax County Parkway and head west on Route 7.**  
.....

**The Battle of Dranesville**

The Battle of Dranesville was fought in this area on 20 December 1861. The battle took place between Confederate forces under the command of Brig. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart and Union forces under Brig. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord. On the 20th, Stuart withdrew after his artillery was knocked out and Ord sent his infantry forward. Casualties on both sides were light, but the Confederates lost more men. Stuart returned to the area the next day; however, the Union forces had already left the area.

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**12. On Route 7 heading west, just before crossing Dranesville Road, is Sugarland Run—a creek that flows under Route 7.**  
.....

**The Sugarland Run Ambush**

Here on the morning of 22 February 1864, Mosby set an ambush for a company-size Union patrol from the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry, which included 25 men from the 16th New York Cavalry. Mosby had sent out two of his scouts, Sam Underwood and Walter Whaley, to watch the patrol's movements, and they let him know its route. The Union cavalry had been in Rector's Crossroads the day before hunting for Mosby and was moving east back toward its camp in Vienna. The Union soldiers were probably looking forward to getting back to camp.

Companies A, B, and C of Mosby's Rangers were involved in the ambush. Mosby set up an L-shaped ambush (to the front and side) with a mobile element that was to charge the rear of the spread-out Union column, which had vedettes (scouts) and security deployed forward. Mosby dismounted 15 men with carbines and hid them along one side of the turnpike under the command of Capt. Richard Montjoy. These men were the ambush element.

Mosby wanted the Union column to bunch up before initiating the ambush. He had Lt. Frank H. Rahm and a few Rangers, disguised as Union soldiers, position themselves in the path of the Union patrol. As the vedettes approached, they challenged Rahm; he challenged them in return, claiming that he and his men were from the 5th New York Cavalry. This caused confusion and several minutes of delay as both sides went back and forth accusing the other of probably being rebels. In that time, the main body of the

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Union patrol closed on the vedettes—just as Mosby wanted. Watching this, Mosby blew a whistle to initiate the ambush and the Rangers with carbines opened up. This volley of fire was followed by the mounted assault element, led by Capt. William Chapman, attacking the patrol from the rear while giving the rebel yell. A small number of Union soldiers escaped the kill zone and raced toward the Potomac. “They fled in every direction in the wildest confusion,” Mosby noted in his report.<sup>15</sup>

The commander of the Union patrol, Capt. J. Sewell Read, surrendered to Baron Robert von Massow, a Prussian Army officer serving with Mosby. Von Massow ordered Read to move to the rear and turned his back on him. Van Massow, however, had failed to relieve Read of his pistol, and Read shot him in the back, seriously wounding him. Captain Chapman then took one well-aimed shot and killed Read. Mosby reported the Union patrol suffered 12–15 killed, about 25 wounded, and 75 captured. Mosby's men also captured 90 horses and numerous weapons. One Ranger was killed and four wounded, including von Massow.

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*Lessons Learned: (Surprise, Offensive, and Maneuver). The forces were fairly evenly matched. Mosby had about 160–175 men against 150–167 Union cavalry. Mosby executed a classic L shape ambush that started with the violent action of the volley from the carbines. The tactic is still taught at the US Army Ranger School. The Ranger mounted element assaulted through the kill zone as the men with carbines would have shifted their fire and/or aimed at individual targets. The assault through the kill zone to clear it is still the preferred ambush technique in use today. At Ranger School, students are taught that, as the kill zone is cleared, prisoners are disarmed, collected, and controlled. At Sugarland Run, Mosby's Rangers failed to do this. Not only did Read shoot von Massow, but another Ranger, John Munson, was also wounded by a Union soldier whom he had captured and failed to disarm.*

*Mosby watched his target carefully and sprung the ambush at the place and time of his choosing. In this case, and numerous others, he set the ambush on the return route of the Union patrol when they would be less alert and eagerly looking forward to a rest back in camp. Lieutenant Rahm's ruse probably worked well because he was encountered as the Union patrol was heading back to their camp in Vienna and getting close to Union lines from which Rahm appeared to be coming.*

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**13. Continue west on Route 7. Turn off at the intersection of State Hwy 808 (Broad Run Drive) at the Galilee United Methodist Church. Proceed about one mile to Dairy Lane then turn right.**

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**Miskel's Farm**

Miskel's Farm was the site of the "April Fools Fight." On the night of 1 April 1863, Mosby and a 65-man detachment bivouacked at this farm. Believing themselves to be far from the closest Union force, they posted no lookouts. A Vermont cavalry force of 200-plus men commanded by Capt. Henry Flint, hunting Mosby's Rangers, approached early in the morning of 2 April. A Union sympathizer had tipped them off to Mosby's presence. One of his men staying nearby tried to alert Mosby but arrived only moments ahead of the Union troops that came galloping behind him. Mosby and his men were caught by surprise. About 25 of them took shelter in a barn and mounted their horses for a counterattack. The audacity of the action and the accuracy and rapidity of the fire from the Confederates drove off the Union cavalry, which got bottled up on a narrow road. Now Mosby and the Rangers were in pursuit of the much larger federal force. In the fight, Ranger Lt. Sam Chapman distinguished himself emptying both of his Colt pistols and then drawing his saber. Mosby lost one killed and three wounded. Union Army casualties totaled nine killed, including Captain Flint, 15 wounded, and 82 captured. The Union detachment also lost about 100 horses.

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*Lessons Learned (Security and Offensive): At Miskel's Farm, Mosby had not paid enough attention to his own security. Though surprised, he escaped by launching an aggressive counteraction that turned the tables. The technique of attacking your way out of an ambush is still taught in US Army Ranger School and incorporates what are known as immediate action drills. Mosby's Partisan Rangers were deadly accurate with their Colt pistols because they practiced extensively. There was no formal practice per se, but the standard was to be able to fire and hit a tree three times while riding at a full gallop toward and past it. In combat, some of the Rangers held the reins in one hand while firing; others who had a familiar mount let loose the reins and fired revolvers in both hands. Because of the difficulty of reloading a cap and ball pistol on horseback, many cavalymen—both sides—carried multiple pistols. By carrying several of these pistols the Rangers had significantly more close-range firepower than their Union counterparts, who were armed with sabers, revolvers, and carbines. The 1860 Colt had a removable cylinder for rapid reloading, but there is no evidence the Rangers used them as an alternative to the manual reload of all the chambers.*

*Many of Mosby's engagements show that the Union commander was either killed or captured, often early in the fight. This was by design: Mosby trained his men to*

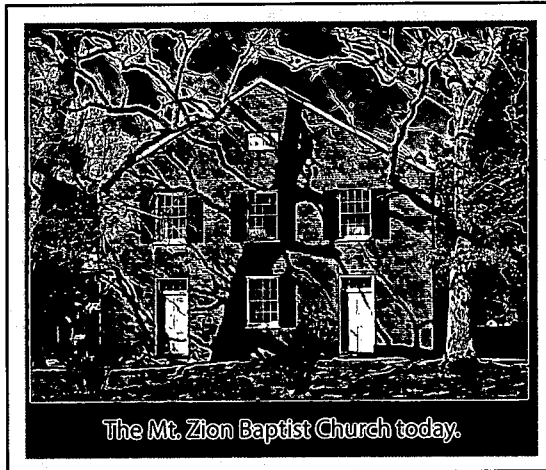
*go after the Union commanders for the shock effect their loss would have on unit cohesion. This lesson of the effect of targeting enemy leadership is applicable to irregular warfare today. After Miskel's Farm, Mosby would never again drop his guard.*



**14. Loop around back to Broad Run and then back on Route 7 west to take the Loudoun County Parkway south to US-50 W. When completed the parkway will run directly from Route 7 to US-50. While work is underway, travel to US-50 W on the Loudoun County Parkway until reaching Ryan Rd., then turn right and continue until Evergreen Mills Rd. Turn right again and take Evergreen Mills Rd. to Watson Rd., then turn left (north). This route comes out at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church near US-50 and Route 15.**

**Mt. Zion Baptist Church**

Numerous events related to Mosby's Rangers took place here at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church. At daybreak on 26 January 1863, Mosby held a rendezvous with his original 15 men. From here they headed to Frying Pan Meeting House, which we visited earlier, and there they captured the two vedettes later that same day.<sup>16</sup>



On 6 July 1864, Union Army Maj. William Forbes was leading a 150-man-strong force of New York and Massachusetts cavalry that was out hunting for Mosby. They paused here at the Mt. Zion Church for a rest. Mosby and his men came from the east of the church and they surprised them at this location. Mosby used a light field piece, a 12-pound Napoleon cannon, in the engagement. Capt. Sam Chapman, a former divinity student, who had been an artilleryman in the "Dixie Artillery" before joining Mosby, commanded the cannon and crew. The cannon fire spooked some of the Union horses.

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The Rangers then seized the moment and charged the Union troopers on horseback yelling and firing their pistols. They closed quickly and their skill in using the .44 Colt revolvers again gave them the advantage. Major Forbes fought until his horse was killed and fell on top of him. Pinned underneath, he was forced to surrender. Hand-to-hand fighting continued for the next hour and carried over into the surrounding woods. In this time, the Union Army had 14 men killed, 37 wounded, and 55 captured. Mosby only lost one Ranger in this fight and six wounded.

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*Lesson Learned (Mass, Offensive, Surprise, and Maneuver): Once again, Mosby and his men applied several principles of war. They were deadly accurate with their Colt pistols and the Union soldiers had great difficulty engaging them. The cannon at Mt. Zion Church had a psychological effect; however, it would later prove too cumbersome for Mosby's style of mobile warfare, and he, like most cavalry commanders on both sides, eventually discarded artillery altogether. Mosby's Rangers used two other types of artillery pieces during the war—a six-pounder and a 3-inch ordnance rifle.*

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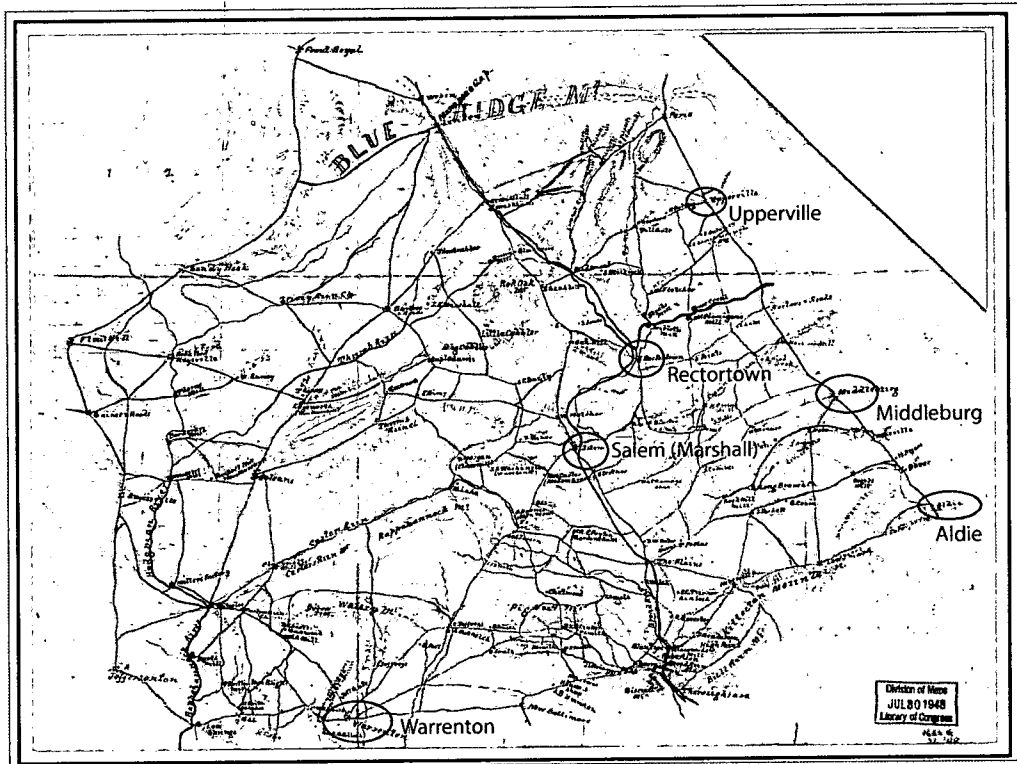
The graves of the Union soldiers who fell that day are in the cemetery and VA markers commemorate 12 of them. Two of Mosby's Rangers are also buried here; however, they did not fall in this engagement. One of those is Capt. Jesse McIntosh of Company E, who was captured by the Union Army and held at Fort Warren, Massachusetts. He died a year after the war ended.

During the rest of the war, the church was used at various times as a hospital and as a Union prison for Mosby's supporters. By 1981, the church congregation had thinned to the point that the elders turned the property over to Loudoun County.

### **Old Carolina Road**

The Old Carolina Road ran alongside the back side of the cemetery Today's Route 15 generally follows the route of the Old Carolina Road and part of the original can still be seen here. Even before the colonial period, Indians used the road to travel from Pennsylvania to the Roanoke River on the Virginia-Carolina border.



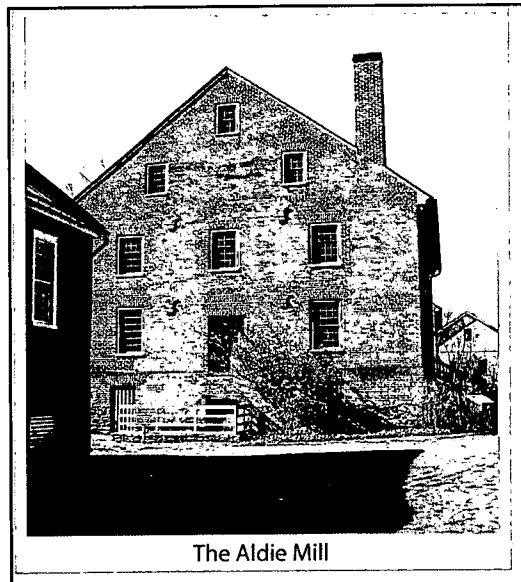


**15. Head west on US 50 to Aldie Mill at 39401 US-50 (John S. Mosby Highway), Aldie There is a visitor parking lot located here.**

**Aldie Mill and Bridge**

Aldie Mill was built in 1807. Here on 2 March 1863, Mosby and a small detachment of Rangers attacked a larger force of Vermont Cavalry numbering 59 men. This detachment was part of Sir Percy Wyndham's cavalry command. Wyndham was a colorful character who had served in Giuseppe Garibaldi's Red Shirt army during the unification of Italy in 1860-61. He died in 1879 in a hot air balloon accident in Burma.

Union cavalry had been searching for Mosby around Middleburg, and when



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they did not find them they took some local men captive. After Union troopers left the town, Mosby and his men learned what had happened and pursued them in the direction of the mill. Mosby's Rangers came galloping from the direction of Middleburg and surprised and scattered the Union troopers. In the ensuing short action, Mosby's spooked horse galloped toward Union forces out of control. At the bridge just east of the mill, Mosby jumped off his horse and rolled toward the river. Many of the surprised Union soldiers tried to hide in the mill and 19 of them were pulled out covered in flour. Mosby released the captured Middleburg residents.

At the western edge of Aldie was the Snicker's Gap Turnpike—a strategic route to the Blue Ridge passing through Snicker's Gap.

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*Lessons Learned (Surprise)*

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.....  
**16. Continue farther west on US-50 to the area between Champe Ford Road to the south and Cobb House Road to the north. This is Dover.**  
.....

**Dover Crossroads**

During the Civil War, Dover Crossroads was a small village used often as a rendezvous point for Mosby and his Rangers. It was a strategic location where Little River Turnpike and Ashby's Gap Turnpike (now Route 50) terminated. It was here on 8 March 1863, a cold, wet day with snow on the ground, that Mosby gathered a group of 29 Rangers to try and capture the English mercenary Percy Wyndham, who was headquartered at Fairfax Courthouse with Brig. Gen. Edward Stoughton. Mosby



English mercenary Percy Wyndham



was seeking to make Wyndham pay for his remark that Mosby was a "horse thief." This would become Mosby's most famous raid and we will see the site later in the day. Very few of Mosby's men knew their operational targets as they headed for the Fairfax Courthouse.

*Lessons Learned (Security): Mosby practiced operational security (OPSEC) on the raid by only letting his key leaders know his plan in case any of the Rangers were captured en route to the Fairfax Courthouse target. Once they had passed through a gap in Union lines and were closing on Fairfax Courthouse, he spread word on their actual mission. Special Operations advisers working with indigenous forces of unknown reliability in unconventional warfare often apply this technique of OPSEC. If the key leaders are killed or captured, though, the mission could fail because it and the intent are unknown to subordinates.*



.....  
**17. Continue 0.7 miles west on US-50 to Oakham Farm Lane**  
.....

**Oakham Farm**

On the right, heading toward Middleburg, is Oakham. It was here on 29 December 1862 that Mosby, then working as a scout for J.E.B. Stuart, proposed that he remain behind Union lines to collect intelligence and conduct special operations. Stuart agreed and Mosby's first efforts were so successful that he was granted an independent squad-size command in the 1st Virginia Cavalry.

Oakham is now a private residence.



.....  
**18. Continue on US-50 to Middleburg**  
.....

**Middleburg—Lorman Chancellor Home**

The Lorman Chancellor home is on the left coming into town at 301 E. Washington Street, Middleburg. Currently the home holds the offices of the Middleburg Museum Foundation.

On Sunday, 8 March 1863, Mosby stopped here for lunch at the home of Lorman Chancellor before the raid on Fairfax Courthouse. Chancellor was the mayor of Middleburg during the Civil War, a southern sympathizer, and a supporter of Mosby, who often came here. During lunch this day, Mosby told Chancellor, "Tonight I shall mount the stars or sink lower than the plummet ever sounded."

Civil War author Kevin Siepel wrote:

*Although for the most part good fighting men, his rangers were, in some ways, the "featherbed soldiers" they were accused of being. They were strangers to camp routine. They slept not outdoors but in comfortable quarters provided by a sympathetic populace. They seldom even made coffee for themselves, let alone fired bacon, soaked hardtack, or washed a shirt. Most couldn't pitch a tent and didn't know the first thing about cavalry drill.... In fact, it was the ranger's very lack of regimentation that made them successful; they were encouraged to think for themselves. Boarding with local families made for as many obligations as privileges.<sup>17</sup>*

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*Lessons Learned: Mosby and his Partisan Rangers normally dispersed to "safe houses" between operations and also depended upon support of a sympathetic populace in their irregular warfare. During operations, Mosby and the Rangers would camp in the woods or on farms. Mosby did not have a permanent headquarters. Sometimes, he would use a particular safe house as a temporary headquarters for a brief period.*

*Support or control of the populace is a formalized and recognized principle in guerrilla wars. Mosby was familiar with the term "guerrilla," meaning "little war" and, while he himself did not use the term to describe his men and their operations, he did not regard it as an insult. Mosby's Rangers had to behave as gentlemen while guests of local civilians in order to earn their continued support. Mosby did not tolerate any errant behavior among those serving under his command. When a rendezvous was planned, the men were expected to show up promptly. Failure to do so would result in their return to service in a regular unit in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, where discipline was even stricter and the lifestyle more regimented and Spartan.*

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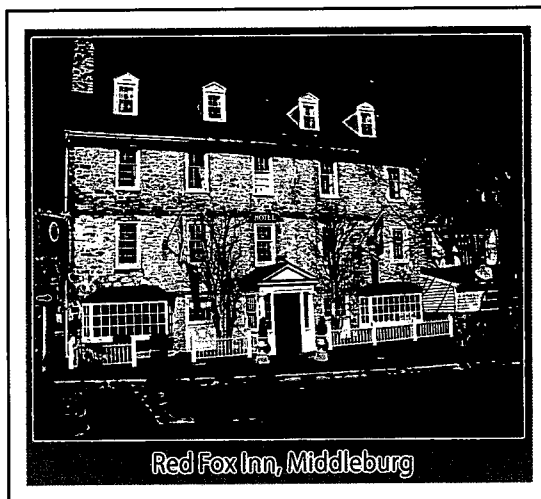
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**19. On the right at 2 E. Washington Street, Middleburg**

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**Red Fox Inn**

In 1863 the Red Fox Inn was known as the Beveridge House. It was here on 17 June 1863, prior to the Battle of Gettysburg, that Mosby provided J.E.B. Stuart with intelligence on Union forces trying to gain entry into the Shenandoah Valley in order to determine Lee's whereabouts and plans for that summer's campaign to invade Pennsylvania and divide the North.



Red Fox Inn, Middleburg

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**20. Take US-50 west to Atoka (Rector's Crossroads)**

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**Rector's Crossroads—Now known as Atoka Village**

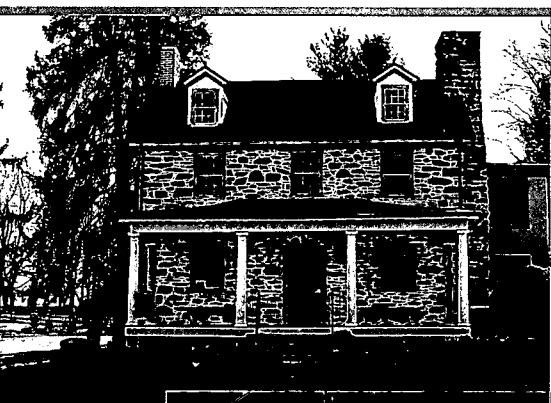

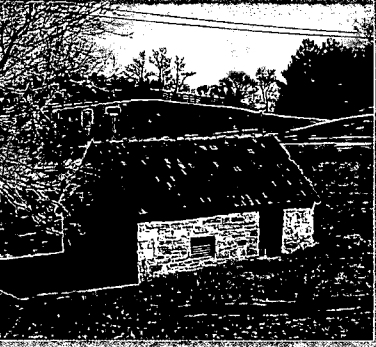
Rector's Crossroads was at the heart of Mosby's Confederacy. During the Civil War, the location contained a general store, a blacksmith's shop, a springhouse, and a friendly populace. The Caleb Rector House, which is now the headquarters of the Mosby Heritage Area, played a key role in the establishment of Mosby's Rangers as the 43rd Virginia Cavalry Battalion. It was here on 10 June 1863 in the front parlor of the home that then-Major Mosby appointed the officers of Company A—the first company of the 43rd Battalion, as his Rangers became regularized—at least in name.

Mosby resisted pressure from Stuart to drop the term "Partisan Rangers," which the Partisan Ranger Act of April 1862 had authorized. They had many exchanges on this subject. There was a compromise solution. Mosby persuaded Stuart to let him use the name "Partisan Ranger," which had more allure for recruiting purposes, but in reality though Mosby was leading a regular Confederate unit, "a partisan corps," supporting the main army independently and using irregular tactics. Although Mosby's Rangers were no longer purely Partisan Rangers under the Partisan Ranger Act, they did retain at least one important aspect of the Partisan Ranger Act throughout the war: they were allowed to sell captured weapons, horses, and mules to the Confederate War Department for US

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“greenbacks.” The South needed these supplies and Mosby’s Rangers were an excellent source. The profits were divided among the Rangers, although Mosby is not known to have taken any share.

For the most part, Mosby followed standard Confederate Army procedures for the administration of his unit. For example, Mosby signed a receipt for \$32,244 paid on 29 October 1863 by the Quartermaster Confederate States Army for 103 mules, one horse, 72 wagon straps, and 13 wagon saddles that had been captured and sold to the

<p><b>Caleb Rector House, 1461 Atoka Road</b></p> <p>J.E.B. Stuart camped on the grounds of the house on 23 June 1863. Here Stuart received orders from Lee to cross the Potomac and advance north toward Pennsylvania, where the Battle of Gettysburg occurred a week later. Not long before his death, Mosby revisited the Caleb Rector house, and as he sat in the front parlor he was seen to cry by the mistress of the house.</p>	
<p>Today, the house is the headquarters for the Mosby Heritage Area Organization, and visitors are welcome. Take some time and walk around the village.</p>	
<p><b>Site of Civil War Store, 1468 Atoka Road</b></p> <p>Even after the war, the general store here was a frequent site of Partisan Ranger reunions. Mosby attended very few reunions as he found them too emotional. He also said he could not remember all of those who claimed to have served with him. A new store is now situated on the spot, but the original blacksmith's house still stands behind the store.</p>	
<p><b>Watering Spot</b></p> <p>The stone springhouse in a small gully provided water Mosby and his men used for their horses and to fill canteens before the Fairfax Courthouse raid.</p>	

CSA. By order of J.E.B. Stuart with a note from Stuart's adjutant-general, Major Henry B. McClellan.<sup>18</sup>

Mosby went to Richmond in December 1864 to seek permission for his command to become a formal regiment. On 6 December 1864, he wrote a letter on the subject to Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon. Mosby submitted the request through Robert E. Lee, his commander. Lee endorsed the request on 7 December and added, "No officer has done better Service than Col. Mosby and if the law permits I should be much gratified if he was promoted to a Colonelcy."<sup>19</sup> Seddon approved the plan and the promotion and the promotion recommendation was forwarded to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. In January 1865, Mosby's 43rd Virginia Partisan Rangers became a regiment divided into two battalions—one led by Lt. Col. William Chapman and the other by Maj. Adolphus "Dolly" Richards. Mosby was promoted to colonel with an effective date of rank of 7 December 1864.

Some 1,900 men served in Mosby's Rangers between January 1862 and the end of the Civil War. At times, Mosby also used a squadron organization, generally meaning two companies working together. Although Mosby handpicked the officers for his companies, they also had to be subsequently elected by the men, following Confederate Army procedure. On 27 March 1865, as the Confederacy was crumbling, Lee sent an order to Mosby appointing him commander for all of Northern Virginia.



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**21. Continue on US-50-W to the village of Upperville**  
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**Upperville**

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Upperville has not changed much since the Civil War, and Mosby and his men would probably recognize it. Here on 9 January 1864, Mosby held a rendezvous for about 100 Rangers for a raid on Maj. Henry Cole's 1st Potomac Home Brigade of Maryland Cavalry, which was encamped at Loudoun Heights, a few miles to the north. The winter nighttime raid became one of the Ranger's worst defeats. Capt. Frank Stringfellow, the scout, had located the camp and proposed the daring raid to Mosby. The operation involved a two-pronged night attack; Mosby led one element of Rangers and Stringfellow led a smaller element of 10 scouts, who were to penetrate the camp and capture Cole. On that starry night, with temperatures hovering near zero, the two Confederate assault elements saw each other silhouetted by the snow as they maneuvered close to the Union camp.

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Although accounts differ about which group opened fire first, most likely it was Stringfellow's men. But, soon—with each thinking the other was the enemy—they charged. Several of Mosby's casualties were the result of this friendly fire. The shots awakened the Maryland Cavalry, which put up a stiff resistance, rallied by Capt. George Vernon, who kept fighting despite having an eye shot out. The Rangers retreated. During the fight, Ranger Capt. William R. Smith (Company B) and Lt. William Thomas Turner (Company A) were killed. Smith was a regular Confederate officer, who had joined Mosby after serving in the "Black Horse Cavalry." In all, the Rangers suffered over a dozen casualties and Stringfellow lost one of his scouts. Cole's brigade lost six men killed, 14 wounded, and six captured. Because Stringfellow had proposed the raid and led the other assault element, Mosby held him responsible for the death of two of his most valuable officers and thereafter bore a grudge against him. The day after the raid, Mosby sent a message under a flag of truce to Major Cole asking to recover the bodies of his dead. Cole is said to have replied, "If Mosby wants them so badly, let him try attacking this camp again."<sup>20</sup>

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*Lessons Learned: This complex nighttime winter raid, involving two maneuvering assault elements, approaching their objective over difficult terrain, was too much of a stretch even for Mosby's Rangers. Mosby certainly felt the raid had tarnished his reputation as a leader and tactician. In today's military such an operation would include the use of night vision goggles and communication between the elements. As a result of the raid, the temporarily demoralized Rangers reduced their operational tempo for the next month. Although Mosby saw it as a failure, Generals Lee and Stuart saw it differently, encouraging him to keep up the pressure on the Union enemy. They recommended to President Jefferson Davis and the War Department that Mosby be promoted to lieutenant colonel, which took place soon after.<sup>21</sup>*

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**22. Return to US-50 E in the direction of Atoka. Turn right onto Atoka Road (Route 713 South).**

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**Lakeland—Where Mosby was shot, December 1864**

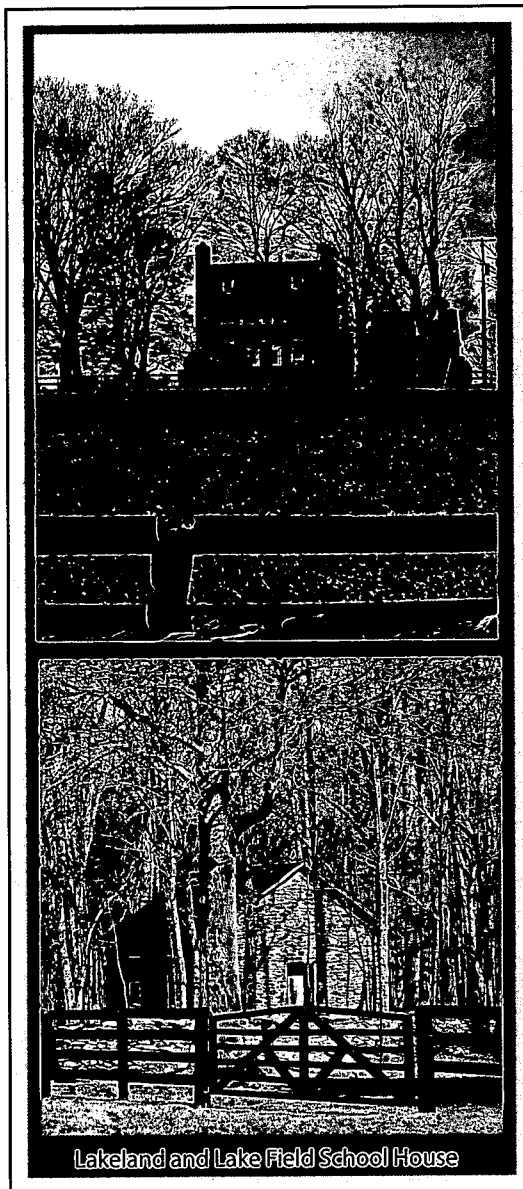
Coming out of Atoka and heading south to Rectortown on the left (1654 State Route 713, Marshall) you will see Lake Field School, which is a one-room Civil War-era schoolhouse. Just past the schoolhouse on the right (1690 State Route 713) is the former home of Ludwell Lake, known as "Lakeland." The home was one of Mosby's safe houses. It is currently a private residence.

On the night of 21 December 1864, Mosby was having a dinner here of ribs, biscuits, and coffee. Ludwell Lake Jr., whose father owned the house, was a private in Mosby's Command. Mosby and another Ranger, Tom Love, had arrived at Lakeland after

attending a wedding of a Ranger in nearby Rectortown. A company of New York Cavalry, searching for Mosby, saw horses tied up outside and approached the house. Mosby, who could be seen through the window, was shot by one of the troopers and was hit in the abdomen. Before the Union troopers could enter the house, the seriously wounded Mosby took off and hid his uniform jacket, with its lieutenant colonel insignia, and then smeared more blood on his face and mouth while lying down on the floor. Some of the Union troopers had been drinking, and they and their commander, Maj. Douglas Frazer, examined and questioned Mosby, who claimed he was Lieutenant Johnson of the 6th Virginia Cavalry. The Lake family played along and declared Mosby a complete stranger. Thinking "Lieutenant Johnson" was mortally wounded, the Federals left him for dead, but not before stripping him of his cavalry boots. Tom Love was taken prisoner, but he did not reveal Mosby's identity.

A young slave from Lakeland saved Mosby by taking him in an oxcart to "Rockburn," another home more than a mile away. "I was rolled up in quilts and blankets...." Mosby wrote in his memoir, "It was an awful night—a howling storm of snow, rain, and sleet. I was lying on my back in the cart—we had to go two miles to the house of a neighbor, over a frozen road cut into deep ruts."<sup>22</sup>

By the time the Union troopers realized they had made a mistake and circled back to collect Mosby, he was gone. At Rockburn, Mosby received life-saving care and the bullet was removed from his side. Major Frazer wrote a letter to his commander saying that none in his unit realized at the time it was Mosby and that they thought the wound was



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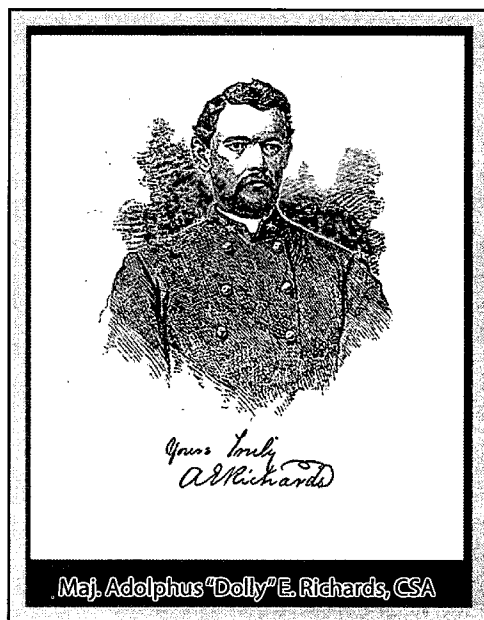
fatal. Frazer's commander called the mistake a blunder. Rumors began circulating that Mosby was dead. Mosby would spend until February 1865 recovering from his wound.

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*Lesson Learned (Security): Have a good cover story and stick to it. Mosby claimed to be Lieutenant Johnston and Tom Love backed up his story as did the Lake family. Mosby was wounded three times during the Civil War. When wounded, Mosby's Rangers were cared for in the safe houses of supporters. Mosby also had a doctor, William L. Dunn, assigned as the unit's surgeon for most of the war. At times, Dunn was well equipped from captured Union medical supplies. Another doctor, Aristedes Monteiro, also served as the Ranger's surgeon and he wrote about his wartime service in his memoirs. Seriously wounded Rangers, as was Mosby in this situation, were sent south away from the front lines to recover.*

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While Mosby was away recovering from his wound, Lieutenant Colonel Chapman followed by Maj. "Dolly" Richards commanded the Rangers. Mosby handpicked and mentored his subordinate commanders. Richards was aggressive and the operational tempo did not slow during Mosby's recovery. On 18 February 1865, Maj. Thomas Gibson, commanding 125 Union cavalry from the 14th Pennsylvania, launched a raid near Upperville searching the family homes of known Rangers and capturing some 18 Rangers. Richards hid in a "secret room" as Union troops searched his father's house, finding his Confederate uniform and equipment.



Maj. Adolphus "Dolly" E. Richards, CSA

When they left, Richards donned an old brown suit and gathered between 38 and 43 Rangers, who pursued the Union raiders. Richards knew the terrain and had scouts observe the Union cavalry. He easily outmaneuvered them and, when the Union troopers entered a narrow defile near Mt. Carmel Church in Paris, Virginia, Richards ordered a charge. The Union cavalrymen had no room to escape and their casualties were heavy: 25 killed or wounded, 64 taken prisoner, including Major Gibson, and most of their horses captured. All of the captured Rangers were freed. Mosby himself wrote after the war about an event where he was not present, "I have always said it was the most brilliant thing our men ever did."<sup>23 24</sup>



To counter these increasingly frequent Union raids, the Rangers started planting pressure activated "torpedos"—a primitive type of improvised explosive device (IED), or land mine—on the roads leading to some safe houses. Many of the safe houses had secret rooms. Some had trap doors hidden under carpets in the floor for hiding or a quick escape. To avoid surprise raids, the Rangers sometimes built small huts in the woods and mountains near the safe houses and slept there when the weather was mild, while still taking their meals at the safe houses. The evenings at the safe houses were pleasant affairs as the accounts show they were entertained with music and played cards.<sup>25</sup>



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**23. Continue on Atoka Road in direction of Rectortown. Five Points is located at the intersection of Atoka Road (State Route 713) and Carter's Mill Road and nearby 5 Points Road.**  
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**Five Points, Rectortown—New Year's Day, 1864**

Early on the morning of 1 January 1864, Capt. A. M. Hunter and 77 troopers, from the 1st Potomac Home Brigade of Maryland Cavalry (Cole's Cavalry) were passing through Five Points. They had come from Harper's Ferry to search for Mosby. Coincidentally, Capt. William Smith and about 30 Rangers from Company B had gathered that day at nearby Rectortown (Mosby was not present). Smith found the Marylanders first and ambushed them here, where five roads come together. In the first salvo, Captain Hunter's horse was shot out from under him and he was captured. Around 22 Union troopers were killed or wounded, 35–54 taken prisoner, and 50–69 horses were captured (there were varying accounts). The few remaining Union soldiers fled. The wounded Union soldiers were cared for in local homes and paroled. In the action, the Rangers captured 39 brand new Colt Army Model revolvers. The Rangers discarded the captured sabres and carbines as they found them of little use.

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*Lessons Learned (Maneuver, Surprise, and Offensive): Aggressive action allowed Smith's smaller force, which had more firepower, to overwhelm a larger force. This engagement also shows how the Rangers' tactical success was not dependent on Mosby's presence.*

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**24. Turn west on Route 710 and continue to Route 713.**  
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**Woodward's Store**

Mosby and his men used the building at the corner of Route 710 and Route 713, Woodward's Store, as a meeting site and safe house. In September 1864, the Union Army briefly occupied Rectortown with 2,000 men.

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*Lessons Learned: Mosby held regular inspections to see who would turn up at a planned rendezvous and check on their equipment. One such inspection conducted in Rectortown on 11 November 1864 drew 500 men and was designed to root out those who came along on raids only to loot or who were known to avoid fighting. Based on accounts from their company captains, these men were called out and relieved of all equipment and weapons and placed under guard. Some 80 men were struck from the rolls of the 43rd Battalion that day and sent to Richmond under guard to join Lee's besieged army in the trenches at Petersburg, though some of them escaped along the route.<sup>27</sup>*

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.....  
**25. Turn left on to Route 713 (here Maidstone Road) and proceed to Lost Corner Road (less than a mile).**  
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**Rectortown Lottery Site**

The lottery site building is near 3000 Lost Corner Road, Delaplane. There is a historical marker there.

The Rectortown Lottery Site had both strategic and tactical significance in the Civil War. Following the indecisive Battle of Antietam on 19 September 1862, President Lincoln traveled to the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac to meet with its commander George McClellan. Lincoln was disappointed that McClellan had not moved more aggressively against Lee's army during the battle, and even more disappointed that McClellan's larger force did not pursue and finish off the retreating rebel army. Witnesses described the meeting as tense. McClellan did not hide his low opinion of the president, and Lincoln finally realized that McClellan was not the type of leader who could win the war. As the Union Army moved into Northern Virginia winter quarters

in 1862, this site became McClellan's headquarters. It was here in November 1862 that a telegram from the White House sent via the War Department arrived relieving McClellan of command and replacing him with his subordinate Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside. McClellan would leave the army, only to return as the Democratic candidate opposing Lincoln for reelection in November 1864. Shortly after assuming command in this building, Burnside would take the Army of the Potomac off to another major defeat at Lee's hands at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Burnside would soon receive a telegram announcing his relief as well, as Lincoln continued his search for a winning general.

But the site gets its name for another event, one with more tragic and poignant overtones. It started on 23 September 1864, when Union Cavalry under the command of Brevet Brig. Gen. George Armstrong Custer, a subordinate of Sheridan's, captured and executed six of Mosby's men near Front Royal.

Whether Custer gave the order is a subject of debate among some historians. Mosby, however, blamed Custer. The hangings may have been retaliation for the Rangers executing a group of Custer's Michigan volunteer cavalry in August 1864 when they were caught burning houses but more likely it was the result of an incident that occurred on 22 September 1864. A group of Rangers led by Capt. Sam Chapman attacked a Union ambulance train. In the fight, Union Army Lt. Charles McMaster was killed. Some of the Union soldiers said McMaster had been shot while surrendering and there were calls for revenge. In October, Union Col. William Powell executed another Ranger. Mosby, thinking it would deter further executions, requested Lee's permission to execute seven Union soldiers in retaliation. Lee endorsed the request and forwarded it to the Confederate War Department, which issued an order approving the executions.

On 6 November 1864, at this location, Mosby's Rangers assembled 27 captured Michigan cavalymen and had them draw lots. Seven numbered strips of paper were drawn and seven men were designated for execution. Mosby kept his distance from the death lottery while it was underway. But upon learning from his sergeant major, Guy Broadwater, that a Union drummer boy had drawn a fatal slip of paper, Mosby spared him and had the drawing continue for a replacement.



Private Lucien Love, Company D, Mosby's Rangers. One of the Rangers hanged in Front Royal.

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The condemned soldiers were led away toward Berryville to be executed close to Union lines. On the way, the group met Ranger Captain Montjoy, escorting his own group of Union prisoners. Montjoy was a Mason and was wearing a necklace with the Masonic square and compass. One of the condemned Union soldiers was also a Mason and, seeing this symbol on Montjoy, gave him a Masonic hand signal for distress. Obligated to assist another Mason in need, Montjoy had this soldier replaced with one from his own group of prisoners. Closer to Berryville, two of the Union soldiers slipped their ropes in the dark and rain and escaped. Fearing more would escape, the Rangers shot two prisoners on the spot and hanged the remaining three with bed cords. The Union soldiers who were shot and left for dead survived their wounds, although one lost an eye.

Upon learning that some of the Union soldiers had escaped execution, Mosby did not order any replacements. On 11 November, he wrote a letter to General Sheridan, which was sent under a flag of truce with one of his best scouts, John Russell. In the letter Mosby explained the executions and said that in the future he would treat Union prisoners humanely as long as the Union treated his captured men the same. Sheridan agreed. The executions stopped on both sides.

Two months later Mosby was in Richmond, recovering from his wounding, when he decided to observe a prisoner exchange. On one of the boats on the James River holding Union prisoners awaiting exchange was the drummer boy from Rectortown. He recognized Mosby and ran and embraced him for sparing his life.



### **Mosby's Rangers and the Laws of War**

Union Army Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck had first-hand experience with the frustrations caused by Confederate partisans, irregulars, guerrillas, and bushwhackers in Missouri. He called them all guerrillas and his solution was to hang or shoot them. His General Order No. 2, 13 March 1862, known as the "No Quarter" order stated, "All persons are hereby warned that, if they join any guerrilla band, they will not, if captured, be treated as ordinary prisoners of war, but will be hung as robbers and murderers." After his service in Missouri, Halleck came to Washington in the July 1862 as commanding general of the Union Army. He remained in that position until Grant replaced him in March 1864.

In August 1862, "Old Brains" Halleck, as he was nicknamed, commissioned Dr. Francis Lieber, a Prussian-born legal scholar who had served in the Napoleonic Wars, to study the issue of partisans, irregulars, guerrillas, and "bushwhackers" to differentiate be-



Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck, USA

tween these forces and determine what, if any, protection each was afforded under the laws of war. The initial result was a treatise titled "Guerrilla Parties: Considered with Reference to the Laws and Usages of War." Lieber defined what constituted a partisan corps as soldiers who operated in uniform detached from the main army "chiefly upon the enemies' lines of connection and communication, and outside of or beyond the lines of operation of his own army, in the rear and on the flanks of the enemy." The partisan's chief means of success, he concluded, was "rapid and varying movements and surprises... but he is part and parcel of the army, and as such, considered entitled to the privileges of the law of war, so long as he does not transgress it." This definition closely fit with the tactics and mission of Mosby's Rangers.

Halleck had a legal background and he asked Lieber to draft a formal army regulation that would include these definitions as well as provide instructions on how to handle irregular warfare in its many forms from the legal to criminal perspectives. The result was the "Lieber Code." It was written and approved for Union soldiers and published on 24 April 1863 as General Order 100. Many of the Halleck's actions in Missouri, including the "No Quarter" order, were defined as illegal under the Lieber Code, specifically Article 60. The Lieber Code regulated how Union soldiers were supposed to deal with various situations of irregular warfare but, despite its publication, was not well known in the Union Army. The Confederacy never adopted it. The Confederate Army operated under the Confederate Articles of War adopted in 1861, and the Partisan Ranger Act of 1862, under which Mosby's unit was originally formed. The Confederate Articles of War were a verbatim copy of the "United States Army Articles of War" that had been adopted in 1806 and were still in use in the US Army at the start of the Civil War.

While the Lieber Code did not carry the force of law in the Confederacy, Articles 27 and 28 covered retribution and when it is justified, and Article 59 allowed an exception to the treatment of prisoners of war in retaliation.

Article 27 states:

*The law of war can no more wholly dispense with retaliation than can the law of nations, of which it is a branch. Yet civilized nations acknowledge retaliation as*

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*the sternest feature of war. A reckless enemy often leaves to his opponent no other means of securing himself against the repetition of barbarous outrage.*

Article 28 states:

*Retaliation will, therefore never be resorted to as a measure of mere revenge, but only as a means of protective retribution, and moreover, cautiously, and unavoidably; that is to say, retaliation shall only be resorted to after careful inquiry into the real occurrence, and the character of the misdeeds that may demand retribution."*

The Lieber Code offered protections to legitimate prisoners of war, unless they were guilty of a crime; however, Article 59 also states:

*All prisoners of war are liable to the infliction of retaliatory measures.*

Article 81 of the Lieber Code defined partisans in much the same way as Lieber's earlier treatise:

*Partisans are soldiers armed and wearing the uniform of their army, but belonging to a corps which acts detached from the main body for the purpose of making inroads into the territory occupied by the enemy. If captured, they are entitled to all the privileges of the prisoner of war.<sup>28</sup>*

It is not known whether Mosby was personally aware of the contents of those articles, but, in essence, they would have justified his request to General Lee to retaliate for the hangings of his Rangers. As part of that retaliation Mosby was not seeking revenge, but a way to end any further executions of his men.

In his 1951 speech at the Army War College, OSS founder William Donovan cited Lieber and his works and used Lieber's definition of what constitutes a partisan. While explaining OSS partisan and guerrilla warfare operations in World War II, General Donovan, also a lawyer, classified Mosby's Rangers as a partisan corps. "[The] term has been employed," he told his audience, "to designate a corps whose mission it is to strike the enemy by action distinctive from that of the corps' main army. Since its duty is to support the main effort it is an integral part of the army and as such entitled to the privileges of the laws of war. It generally acts against the enemy's lines of communication and beyond the lines of operation of his own army in the rear and on the flanks of the enemy."

In early 1864, the Confederacy repealed the Partisan Ranger Act for all units except Mosby's and John H. McNeill's, following reports of some excesses by self-forming bands. Mosby's Rangers, the 43rd Battalion of Virginia Cavalry, was by then a hybrid—a regular unit conducting irregular warfare under provisions of the Partisan Ranger Act; one unique aspect was that Rangers could sell captured animals and weapons to the Confederate War Department. Mosby himself called his unit the 43rd Virginia Partisan Ranger Battalion in official correspondence.

## **Punitive War: The Union Army Response in Dealing with Partisans—What Not to Do**

*The tactical difficulty of combatting guerrillas led Union forces to rely primarily on the unoriginal, and usually unproductive, tactic of punishing civilians.*

*Clay Mountcastle<sup>29</sup>*

Despite Lieber's views, and the code, Halleck himself remained a proponent of punitive measures against supporters of southern partisans or guerrillas in order to curb their activity. In late 1864, as Grant's chief of staff, he ordered the destruction of all homes and property within five miles of railroad lines in the area known as Mosby's Confederacy.<sup>22</sup> These harsh measures did not significantly impede Mosby's ability to threaten the rail networks.

Grant and Sheridan also shared similar views during the war on the need to destroy Mosby's ability to operate and live off support from the populace. Weary of hearing about Mosby, Grant issued an order to Sheridan to hang without trial any guerrilla he captured.<sup>23</sup> That ended, though, when Sheridan agreed to stop the executions of Mosby's men after the incident at Rectortown lottery. The Rangers still knew that if they were captured wearing Union Army uniforms, such as the popular and warm blue overcoats, they would be executed. Some dyed the blue overcoats black to avoid this fate.

In late November 1864, frustrated in the efforts to capture Mosby and to deny his Rangers assistance from the local populace in Mosby's Confederacy—and on direction of the Secretary of War Edwin Stanton—General Sheridan ordered the destruction of all farms and crops and the confiscation of all horses and other livestock in Loudoun and Fauquier Counties. In addition, all males between the ages of 15 and 50 were subject to summary arrest and detention. Stanton's orders were part of a larger Union strategy that came from Grant's suggestion that Union commanders everywhere begin to focus on destroying the South's infrastructure and war-making capabilities; impoverishment of the southern civilian population by destroying farms and property was part of that strategy. A conventional army during the Civil War could not survive long without local support to provide food for themselves and forage for their animals.

Gen. William T. Sherman's infamous "March to the Sea" in 1864 that cut a swath of destruction 50 miles wide and several hundred miles long through central Georgia and South Carolina was intended to "make the south howl." Although Grant's 1864 campaign destroyed less of Northern Virginia than Union armies destroyed elsewhere, during the autumn of 1864, Sheridan's command conducted a devastating campaign the length and breadth of the Shenandoah Valley.

What became known as the "Burning Raid" commenced on 28 November 1864. Some 5,000 Union cavalry troops from Sheridan's 1st Cavalry Division led by Brevet Maj.

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Gen. Wesley Merritt entered Loudoun County. The objective was to destroy all support for Mosby's Rangers in Loudoun and Fauquier Counties. For five days Union troops burned barns, destroyed crops, confiscated or slaughtered livestock, and arrested all males between the ages of 15 and 50. It caused carnage among both rebel and Union sympathizers, but it was a flawed policy and tactic because it hardened the resolve of Mosby's men, some 80 percent of whom were from these very areas. There was a logistical effect on Mosby's Rangers though. As a result of the lack of supplies and forage, when Mosby's command became a regiment in January 1865, and with Lee's permission, Mosby dispersed one of the new battalions to operate in Virginia's Northern Neck—the Chesapeake Bay area bounded by the Potomac River to the north and the Rappahannock to the south. Lt. Col. Chapman led that battalion independently starting on 3 January 1865 and then returned to join Mosby and the regiment on 10 April 1865.

The torching of the homes of known, or suspected, Mosby supporters was another action that often hardened the anti-Union attitudes of Northern Virginians. These were the Ranger's own families and relatives who were affected, and there is no evidence that support for the partisans waned. They certainly did not start turning in their sons, husbands, and male relatives. Also, many Rangers stayed in safe houses that were home to young and eligible Southern women. A great number of marriages occurred between Rangers and the daughters of those families that provided support thus strengthening these ties.

There were Union sympathizers in Northern Virginia as well, however, and they provided intelligence to the forces hunting Mosby. There was also a large Quaker community in these counties and most, but not all, took no active part in the Civil War. Mosby's Rangers often purchased supplies from the Quakers, who did not generally provide them freely. The Quakers, nonetheless, also suffered under the Union burning raids and were usually not spared the destruction. If anything, punitive war in Mosby's Confederacy only seemed to encourage the Rangers to act more aggressively and seek revenge. When horses were no longer available in Mosby's Confederacy, Mosby and his men raided behind Union lines to capture the mounts they needed.

Sheridan's actions in the Shenandoah Valley in the late summer and fall of 1864 caused devastation and severely reduced supplies, which considerably hindered the operations of Lee's larger Army of Northern Virginia. When Mosby and his Rangers started operating in the Shenandoah the following spring the populace welcomed them and provided support—what little was still available.<sup>30</sup>

In a similar fashion, Mosby's Revolutionary War hero, Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, tormented the British Army in South Carolina by collecting intelligence, alternating between ambushing them and hiding from them, and attacking their lines of communication and supply. And like the British Army with Marion, the Union Army had to spend an inordinate amount of time trying to deal with Mosby.



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The Germans, too, faced an unseen enemy combating Soviet partisans in occupied areas of the Soviet Union, and their punitive war and measures against the populace only strengthened the partisans and their base of support. The frustration of combating an enemy that remains unseen until it chooses to attack and has a base of support among the populace has confronted US forces in modern wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

As discussed earlier, the Union response to his campaign of irregular warfare that seems to have troubled Mosby most was the employment of special antipartisan units, such as the Jesse Scouts, Blazer's Scouts, and Loudoun Rangers, whose mission was to hunt down him and his men. Blazer's Scouts treated southerners and their property with respect and obtained more cooperation than otherwise would have been expected in a region where most favored the South.<sup>31</sup> Mosby made their defeat a priority, and in the case of Blazer's Scouts and the Loudoun Rangers, he succeeded.

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*Lessons Learned: Current US military counterinsurgency doctrine is clear on the need to refrain from engaging in punitive war because of its counterproductiveness. US military counterinsurgency doctrine is to "secure the safety and support of the local populace."<sup>32</sup> US doctrine also calls for protection of personal property and for any destruction of property not to be excessive and done only to gain a military advantage.*

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**26. From the lottery site, loop back to Rectortown using Route 713, turn right on Route 710 (Rectortown Road) to head south toward Marshall.**

***In Marshall, turn right on West Main and continue several blocks to 8372 West Main Street then turn right on to Frost. A closed PNC Bank is on the right side. This is the location of the disbandment marker.***

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### **Disbanding Site, Salem (present-day Marshall)**

Although the marker commemorating the disbandment of Mosby's Rangers is located near the former PNC Bank in Marshall, which was known as Salem at the time of the Civil War, the actual site, however, is located down Frost Road near Salem Street closer to woods.

Mosby often used Salem as a rendezvous site, and he summoned his command to gather here on 21 April 1865, less than two weeks after Lee had surrendered and a week after Lincoln's assassination. Prior to Appomattox, Lee had hoped to break free from Grant's pursuing forces—whose overwhelming strength had ended the siege of Petersburg and captured Richmond—and link up with the other remaining Confederate army under Joseph E. Johnston still retreating before Sherman's forces in North Carolina. Lee, however, could not make his escape.



Mosby learned of Lee's surrender from a circular distributed by Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, who at the time was commanding Union forces in the Shenandoah. Scott had issued an statement that Mosby would not to be allowed to surrender on the same terms as Lee. Brevet Brig. Gen. Charles Hale Morgan, Hancock's chief of staff, retracted that statement and said that Mosby would indeed be granted the same terms as Lee. Not trusting the various versions, Mosby entered into negotiations with the Union Army while he sought guidance from the CSA. Mosby sent Ranger Channing Smith to Richmond, which had fallen, and he was able to penetrate Union lines. The Confederate government had fled, but Smith met with General Lee, who was paroled

after Appomattox and living in Richmond. Lee, who knew Smith, told him that as a condition of his parole he could no longer issue orders, but that on a personal level he recommended Smith and the Rangers go home to their families.<sup>33</sup>

Mosby continued his negotiations with the Union Army. While he was parlaying in Millwood, one of his men was engaged in a horse race against a Union soldier. As they finished the race just outside of the town of Millwood, the Ranger saw a brigade of Union cavalry, which was in the area by chance. Mosby's man raced back and alerted his commander. Suspecting a trap, Mosby broke off the talks and galloped out of town. Given this level of uncertainty, Mosby chose to disband his command instead of surrendering. Several hundred Rangers gathered here at Salem on 21 April 1865. They were well clothed and armed and had fine mounts. They neither looked, nor acted, defeated. Colonel Mosby's younger brother William ("Willie"), who served as his adjutant, read the disbandment order:

*Soldiers! I have summoned you to gather for the last time. The vision we have cherished of a free and independent country has vanished, and that country is now the spoil of the conqueror. I disband your organization in preference to surrendering it to our enemies. I am now no longer your commander. After an association of more than two eventful years, I part from you with a just pride in the fame of your achievements and grateful recollections of your generous kindness to myself. And now at this moment of bidding you a final adieu, accept the assurance of my unchanging confidence and regard. Farewell.*<sup>34</sup>

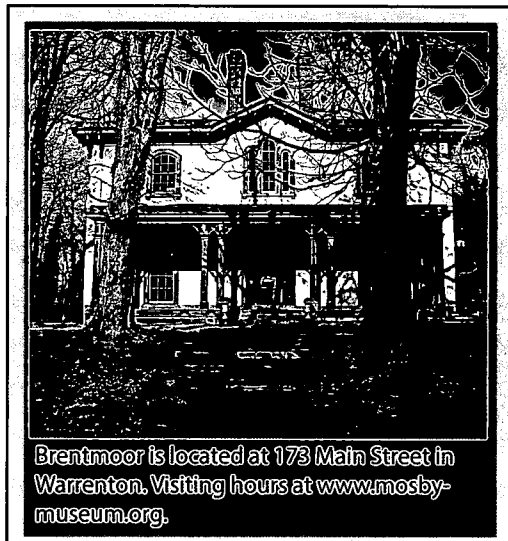
The next day, a large group of Rangers, led by Lt. Col. William Chapman, obtained their paroles in Winchester, Virginia. Mosby and a small group of Rangers headed south, considering a linkup with Johnston's army still fighting in North Carolina. Johnston, however, surrendered to Sherman in Raleigh on 26 April before Mosby could join him. As there was still a \$5,000 price on Mosby's head, he waited before seeking his own parole. On 17 June 1865, Mosby along with his brother Willie obtained their paroles from the Union Army in Lynchburg, Virginia. Most accounts note that Mosby wore his Confederate uniform and had his holstered Colt revolvers on his belt and slung over his shoulder. There is a bit of a mystery here though. While John Mosby's signed parole is not in his Confederate service record, Willie's is. It shows that he was paroled by the Union Provost Marshal General on 17 May in Winchester, Virginia.



**27. Get back on the road to Warrenton, which now becomes Business Route 17. Cross over I-66 and continue to Warrenton.**

**Mosby Home in Warrenton**

Mosby took up his former career as a lawyer after the war, living here in Warrenton from 1867 to 1876. Mosby was not popular in Warrenton because of his views on reconciliation with the north and his close friendship with former adversary U. S. Grant. When Grant ran for president of the United States, Mosby served as his Virginia state campaign manager, and after his election Mosby accepted an appointment as American consul to Hong Kong, serving in China for the State Department for seven years. Thereafter, Mosby did legal work for the Southern Pacific Railroad, served in the US Department of the Interior, and later in the Department of Justice.



**Warrenton Cemetery and Mosby's Grave**

The town of Warrenton owns and operates this cemetery, which is located at W. Lee Street and S. Chestnut Street. The cemetery is open during the day and visitors are asked to be respectful. Mosby's tomb is near the center of the cemetery not far from a Confederate Obelisk. There is a plan of the cemetery at the groundskeeper's shed. Mosby's grave is surrounded by those of his family members.

Colonel Mosby died at the age of 82 on 30 May 1916 and is buried here with numerous other Rangers from his Civil War command. During the compilation of the official war records of the Union and Confederate armies, it was discovered that, more than any other Confederate officer, Mosby was "mentioned in dispatches" by General Lee. They had a friendship that continued until Lee's death in 1870. In fact, Lee told Mosby, "Colonel, the only fault I have ever found with you is that you are always getting wounded" (from Mosby's memoirs). There are numerous complimentary notes in the official archives of the CSA Army from Lee on Mosby.



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**28. Return to I-66 East and head toward Washington. Get off at the US-50 exit to Fairfax.**

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**Fairfax Courthouse Raid, the Capture of General Stoughton**

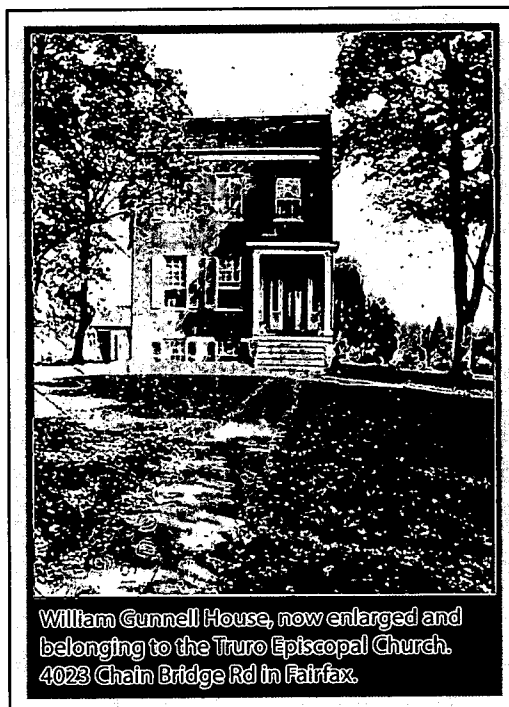
The snow was melting on the night of 8/9 March 1863, and a cold drizzle and mist was in the air as Mosby and his men rode into Fairfax around 2 a.m. His objective was to capture three senior Union Army commanders: Col. "Sir" Percy Wyndham, Brig. Gen. Edwin Stoughton, and Lt. Col. Robert Johnstone, 5th New York Cavalry.

Earlier that day, Mosby had gathered 29 Rangers at Dover Crossroads, a small village near Middleburg. For operational security, only a few Rangers knew the details of their intended mission as they rode toward Fairfax Courthouse.

The targeted senior Union officers were billeted near the courthouse. Security was light. Union soldiers were garrisoned a mile outside of town near what is now Jermantown (also then known as Germantown). They felt safe—after all they were some 10 miles behind Union picket lines. As they had so often in the past, Mosby and his men used deception, and so when Union sentries challenged them as they entered the town they simply claimed to be Union cavalry.

The operation was certainly aided by the Union Army deserter "Big Yankee" Ames, who knew the area and rode as one of the 29 men with Mosby that night. Ames guided the raiders through a gap in the Union picket lines between Chantilly and Centreville.<sup>35</sup>

The Truro Episcopal Rectory, adjacent to the Episcopal church and across the street from Fairfax Courthouse, was owned during the Civil War by Dr. William Gunnell. The brick house has been expanded since the Civil War and the seam is visible to the right side of the front entrance. Stoughton was asleep in the first floor bedroom on the left side of the house when Mosby awakened him with a slap on the backside. Stoughton



William Gunnell House, now enlarged and belonging to the Truro Episcopal Church. 4023 Chain Bridge Rd in Fairfax.

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had been “entertaining” that night, and there were a few champagne bottles scattered around the room. The surprised, yet groggy, Union general was surly and demanded to know what was going on. Mosby asked if he had heard of Mosby. When Stoughton gruffly replied that he had, Mosby informed him that he was now his prisoner.

There is a plaque in the churchyard commemorating the event. The main target, Wyndham, was not captured because he was then in Washington. Johnstone, another target, was awakened by the riders in town and escaped in his night clothes by hiding out under an outhouse behind the Oliver Gunnell House at 4023 Chain Bridge Road where he was staying. His wife struggled with Mosby's Rangers to delay their search of the house while Johnstone hid. He would forever more be known to the lower ranks in both northern and southern armies as “Outhouse Johnstone.”

Following the raid, Union troops arrested several Fairfax Courthouse citizens suspected of having provided intelligence to Mosby, including Joshua Gunnell and Antonia Ford. To this day it is not known if either was involved, although Ford's circumstances were certainly suspicious. Antonia was the “Belle of Fairfax,” and at the time of the raid both Stoughton's mother and sister were lodging at her father's home at 3977 Chain Bridge Road. Antonia came from a well-known and prominent pro-rebel family. Her father, Edward R. Ford, publicly supported the South, her brother was serving under J.E.B. Stuart's command, and she herself supposedly held an “honorary commission” signed by Stuart.<sup>36</sup>



Antonia Ford, the Belle of Fairfax

She was arrested by Maj. Joseph Willard, provost marshal in Fairfax, after an undercover female agent (probably Frankie Abel) working for Union Secret Service chief Lafayette Baker visited her to elicit information about her possible connection to the raid. Ford was imprisoned in Old Capitol Prison, located on the site of today's US Supreme Court, while Willard, who had become smitten with her, worked diligently for her release. In 1864, she married Willard—part owner of the famous Willard Hotel in Washington. One thing that points toward her possible role in the raid or as a Confederate source is that her first cousin was Laura Ratcliffe; the two were very close and often stayed with each other. Laura Ratcliffe was

born at Fairfax Courthouse where Ford lived. At least one of Stuart's letters to both of them survives, written at a time when Ford may have been staying near Frying Pan. Mosby in several letters denied her involvement.<sup>37</sup> Since Antonia convinced Willard of her innocence, and married him, it would stand to reason that she may not have wanted to be identified as a spy, but this is only a theory.

Mosby sent the following report to Stuart after the raid:

*General:*

*I have the honor to report having accurately ascertained the number and disposition of the troops in Fairfax County, I determined to reach Fairfax Court-House, where the general headquarters of that portion of the army were established. Sunday night, the 8th instant, being dark and rainy, was deemed propitious. I kept the Pike until I got within about a mile and a half of the Court-House, when I turned to the right in order to avoid some infantry camps, and came into Fairfax Court-House from the direction of the railroad station, The few guards stationed around the town, unsuspecting danger, were easily captured. I then sent one party to the headquarters of Colonel Wyndham...another party to Colonel Johnstone's, while with 6 men I went myself to Brigadier General Stoughton's. Unfortunately Colonel Wyndham had gone down to Washington, but his assistant adjutant-general and aide-de-camp were made prisoners. Colonel Johnstone having received notice of our presence, made his escape. General Stoughton I found in bed asleep.*

*While these things were going on, other detachments of my men were busily engaged in clearing the stables of the fine horses with which they were filled. It was about 2 o'clock when I reached the Court-House, and I did not deem it safe to remain there over one hour and a half, as we were 10 miles within the enemy's lines, and it was necessary that we should get out before daylight, the close proximity of the enemy's forces rendering our situation one of great peril, there being three regiments of cavalry camped 1 mile distant, at Germantown, two infantry regiments within a few hundred yards of the town, one infantry brigade in the vicinity of Fairfax Station, and another infantry brigade, with artillery and cavalry, at Centreville. About 3:30 o'clock, therefore, I left the place, going in the direction of Fairfax Station, in order to deceive the enemy as to my line of retreat... When I came to within a half mile of Centreville I turned to the right, passed so close to the fortifications there that the sentinels on the redoubts hailed us, while we could distinctly see the bristling cannon through the embrasures. ...*

*The fruits of the expedition are 1 brigadier-general (Stoughton), 2 captains, and 30 men prisoners. We also brought off 58 horses most of them being very fine, belonging to officers; also a considerable number of arms. We left hundreds of horses in the stables and other places, having no way of bringing them off, as I was*

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*already encumbered with more prisoners and horses than I had men. I had 29 men with me; sustained no loss. They all behaved admirably.*<sup>38</sup>

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*Lessons Learned (Mass, Objective, Offensive, Maneuver, Security, Surprise, Simplicity): This raid illustrates how tactical operations can have strategic effects. At Fairfax Courthouse, Mosby had a simple and audacious plan. He used weather and darkness to cover his movements and obtain surprise. On the way into Fairfax, according to one account, he cut the telegraph lines heading west. This prevented notifying the Union infantry in Centreville who could have blocked his retreat. The Rangers also captured the telegraph operator in Fairfax Courthouse that night.*

*The use of "Big Yankee" Ames for his knowledge of the area was critical to planning and carrying out the operation but he had to be thoroughly vetted first. He was distrusted when he first deserted, and Mosby "tested" him several times to ensure his loyalty and reliability. Prior to the Fairfax Courthouse raid, Mosby told Ames if he wanted to ride with him had to steal some horses from Union forces. Ames stole the horses but also returned with vital intelligence. In another test, Mosby had Ames accompany him unarmed on the 26 February raid against Thompson's Corner in Fairfax. Ames would show his unswerving loyalty to his new commander, when he rushed in to save Mosby from seven Union cavalry that had surrounded him in April 1863. In this melee, Mosby killed three and Ames killed two before the other two took off.*<sup>39</sup>

*For a deserter, Ames had a quirk, though, and he refused to fight on a ride into Pennsylvania saying he deserted to defend the South but wouldn't fight on northern soil. This shows that some deserters or sources can have specific motivations and limits to their cooperation. Mosby had a small number of men who deserted from his command and sold information for gold to the Union Army.*

*Mosby and his men also used deception on the raid when Union sentries challenged them as they entered Fairfax. Mosby also said, "The safety of the enterprise lay in its novelty: nothing of the kind had been done before."<sup>40</sup> Not a shot was fired on the raid.*

*After the raid, Mosby attempted to deceive the Union as to his route of withdrawal. This follows the standing order of Rogers' Rangers, "Don't ever march home the same way. Take a different route so you won't be ambushed." Mosby often moved his force off of the main roads and traveled through the woods or by smaller local trails to approach a target. As Ranger J. Marshall Crawford noted in his postwar book, "Mosby always avoided the highways and confined his marches to by-paths and through woods and fields." This is the same way US Army Rangers are taught to move tactically today. While Mosby had men who knew most of*



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*the area, they sometimes had to use local guides to show them a back way. Although not a best practice, in a few cases where Mosby could not get the willing assistance of the local population, his Rangers were known to have threatened the locals to guide and help them.*

Mosby also had a few British, Irish, and German professional soldiers of fortune who joined the 43rd Battalion. Some were prompted to travel and join Mosby, to learn from him, upon hearing of his exploits. English-born Captain Bradford Smith Hoskins was killed in action with the Rangers in May 1863. John Robinson, a former British Army captain, fell in the Loudoun Heights raid from friendly fire.<sup>41</sup> John Atkins was a young Irishman who sailed from Ireland to join Mosby and was killed in October 1864. The young Prussian baron and uhlán lieutenant, Robert von Massow, served with Mosby and often wore his Prussian steel grey uniform. He was severely wounded, shot in the back during Sugarland Run fight in February 1864. He returned to Prussia to recover and served in the Prussian Army and later in the German Imperial Army where he was promoted to general of cavalry. He served as a corps commander, and president of the Imperial Army Military Court, before retiring just before World War I.



Mosby (standing center) with a group of his Rangers. Undated image.

## **Aftermath**

After the raid, on 14 March 1863, the *Washington Evening Star* reported the following: "Moseby's (sic) guerilla (sic) thieves stole Brigadier General Stoughton at midnight from his warm couch without giving him special notice and carried him to Dixie, where he cannot listen to the dulcet sound of his famous Vermont band." In all likelihood, Mosby would have read those lines, as he made sure to read newspapers to see what the Union was saying about him.

Striking behind the lines was indeed a novel tactic and not everyone in the Confederate Army approved of Mosby's unconventional warfare. When Mosby brought Stoughton to Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, who found the action so disturbing that he told Mosby his command was disbanded. Stuart on the other hand and, ultimately, Robert E. Lee were pleased and Mosby weathered the minor storm. After the raid, Robert E. Lee wrote a letter to Stuart stating, "Mosby has covered himself with honors!" Mosby was promoted to major shortly after the raid with the support of General Lee. In November 1863 he tried to repeat his Fairfax success by capturing the Union provisional (unelected) governor of Virginia, Francis Pierpont, in Alexandria. Mosby and a few Rangers rode into the city but Pierpont had just left for Washington. Mosby did capture Col. Daniel Dulany (also Dulaney), Pierpont's military aide de camp; Dulany's son French, a private in Company A, Mosby's Rangers, accompanied the raid and took great delight in capturing his own father. Mosby tried to capture Pierpont again in June 1864 but failed when federal forces in Alexandria were alerted to his approach.

"Big Yankee" Ames was eventually promoted to the rank of second lieutenant in the Confederate Army. As a Union Army deserter he had sworn to never be taken alive, for the penalty was a firing squad. He was shot and killed by a Union soldier on 9 October 1864 near Delaplane. The Union soldier was in turn shot by Ranger Ludwell Lake Jr. of Lakeland. There is a marker near the spot on Route 17 and a headstone for Ames in Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery.

## **Psychological Effect of Mosby's Operations**

Mosby's unconventional operations behind the Union lines, often at night and in bad weather, utilized surprise and violence of action. They had an unnerving effect on the Union forces in the area, including the author Herman Melville, who had the opportunity to ride along as an observer with Union cavalry from Vienna as they hunted for Mosby in April 1864. He wrote a poem about Mosby titled "The Scout toward Aldie," published in 1866. This poem may be the first documented mention of the Rangers being described as ghosts.

From the first stanza of "The Scout toward Aldie":

*The cavalry-camp lies on the slope  
Of what was late a vernal hill,  
But now like a pavement bare—  
An outpost in the perilous wilds  
Which ever are lone and still;  
But Mosby's men are there—  
Of Mosby best beware.*

And given Melville's nautical bent, he also sees Mosby as something swift, silent, and fearful:

*As glides in seas the shark,  
Rides Mosby through green dark.*

### **Distant Notes on Mosby's Legacy and Influence**

In the 1880s, after serving as US consul in Hong Kong, Mosby worked as a lawyer for the Southern Pacific Railroad in San Francisco. While there he met the son of one of his neighbors and had an influential effect on the young man's military interest and upbringing. Mosby and this boy often went horse riding together and reenacted battles. The boy later went on to attend the Virginia Military Institute, then West Point. He served in World War I before becoming the most aggressive, and famous, US Army tank commander of World War II. It seems no accident that Gen. George S. Patton wore two ivory-handled Colt revolvers, as did his boyhood mentor Colonel Mosby.<sup>42</sup>

In October 1898, a young Lt. Winston S. Churchill of the 21st Lancers took part in one of the last large British cavalry charges during the Battle of Omdurman in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. As he closed on the Dervish enemy, Churchill conducted the charge firing a German-made Mauser Model 1896 "Broom Handle" semiautomatic pistol. Churchill had a shoulder injury that plagued him and limited his ability to use a saber. In his book *The River War*, Churchill said he was also influenced by the accounts of Mosby and his Rangers and their success with pistols.<sup>43</sup>



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**Endnotes**

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22. *The Memoirs of Colonel John Singleton Mosby*. Foreword by J. O. Tate. (1917; reprint, Barnes and Nobel, 2006), 214.
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31. Crawford, *Mosby and his Men*, 286.
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33. Connery, *Mosby's Raids*, 111.
34. Siepel, *Rebel*, 153. Quoted from Mosby's Farewell Address, 21 April 1865, J. Henley Smith Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
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40. Mosby, *Memoirs*, 104.
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43. Ibid, 130-31.



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- p. 8 Mosby troops in ambush awaiting to capture a bearer of dispatches (Virginia Room, Fairfax County Library).
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- p. 13 Mosby's Oak, (photograph by author).
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