



NEWS AND NOTES

from

The Fauquier Historical Society

Vol. 6, No. 1

WARRENTON, VIRGINIA

Winter 1984

Profile: Colonel John S. Mosby

Few men in the history of our country have had as much written about them, or as many tales told, as Colonel John S. Mosby. An aura of legend surrounds him, which, after 150 years, continues to grow.

John Singleton Mosby, a son of Alfred Daniel Mosby of Amherst County, was born on December 6, 1833, at Edgemont in Powhatan County, the home of James McLaurine, his maternal grandfather.

He entered the University of Virginia at age sixteen, graduating in 1852. He was admitted to the bar in 1855 and established a law office at Howardsville, south of Charlottesville. On December 30, 1857, he married Pauline Clarke of Franklin, Kentucky, a young woman "distinguished for her personal attractions."

A few months later, in the fall of 1858, John and Pauline arrived at Bristol in Southwest Virginia, near the North Carolina border. Here he opened another law office and gradually succeeded in the practice of his profession.

Mosby was at Abingdon when he learned of the secession of Virginia, and its ratification, on April 17, 1861.

The young lawyer immediately joined a volunteer company of cavalry, the Washington Mounted Rifles, commanded by Captain William E. Jones. Captain Jones' company was later incorporated in the 1st Regiment of Virginia Cavalry, commanded by Colonel J. E. B. Stuart. Here he performed outpost services with his regiment and was soon appointed adjutant when Jones was promoted to the command of it.

He continued his scouting activities for Stuart, showing the promise that would be realized in the coming years of the war. It was on a scouting

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John S. Mosby

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Correspondence should be directed to:

The Fauquier Historical Society
P. O. Box 675
Warrenton, Virginia 22186

Telephone:
(703) 347-5525

Newsletter Chairman and Editor: Isabelle S. Palmer.

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Colonel Mosby

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expedition to Bull Run that Lieutenant Mosby captured the first of his thousands of prisoners. On another expedition he swam the Rappahannock in his hurry to reach Stuart's headquarters, while he sent his party on a longer and safer route over a ford.

Though General Stuart wanted to continue using Mosby as his scout, the now-General Jones objected. It was not until the regiment was reorganized and Gen. Jones dismissed from command that Mosby could accept Gen. Stuart's invitation to remain with him as a scout.

The Partisan Rangers

Early in February 1863, fifteen men from Mosby's old regiment were detailed to act with him. His instructions were to go into Northern Virginia and "operate inside the enemy's lines."

With a few exceptions, these men returned to their commands, and with a Captain's commission in hand, Mosby collected volunteers from Fauquier, Loudoun, Fairfax, a few from Maryland and several from Richmond. Mosby and his Partisan Rangers were under way!

A new way of life had begun for these men; there would be no regular

army life, drills or picket duty. There would be no winter quarters for laying-over. The government would supply no rations, clothing, equipment or ammunition, and since the Rangers would be closer to Washington than to Richmond, there would be no "communication with the lines that are friendly."

Said John W. Munson, one of the Rangers, "Few who saw this first handful of men move into the wilderness, singing songs of war, ever expected any part of it to return."

Many of the men were young boys who had run away from home to join the Rangers. Of them, Mosby said, "...they are the best soldiers I have. They haven't sense enough to know danger when they see it, and will fight anything I tell them to." But the majority of the Rangers were well-bred, refined gentlemen who regarded his command as a channel through which they could express their feelings. They were men of firm convictions, willing to fight and willing to sacrifice.

Each man understood that he was expected to follow his commander without question, and this was done with a blind, unwavering faith. Mosby never asked a Ranger to go where he would not go himself, and his example influenced the entire group.

He could look a man in the eye, reading him like a book, and satisfy

himself as to the man's worth of character.

This ability to estimate a man, "his absolute freedom from jealousy and selfishness, his unerring judgment at critical moments, his devotion to his men, his eternal vigilance, his unobtrusive bravery and his exalted sense of personal honor, all combined to create in the minds and hearts of those who served him, a sort of hero worship."

In turn, as the men read Mosby's worth, they all arrived at the same conclusions.

They saw an unassuming, plainly attired man, plain of manner, fair and slight but wiry, and looking as if he could endure any amount of exercise. He was generally taciturn, particularly towards strangers, though occasionally he would become talkative and quite agreeable. There was a rich vein of humor running through his nature, so close to the surface that it required only a little digging to reach it. In relaxed moments around the campfire he could be as full of fun as any of his men.

In conversation his voice was low, speaking slowly and distinctly, making himself understood at all times. "He had a pleasant voice, white and regular teeth, and keen, restless eyes which seemed an index to the mind." His bravery was tremendous and unquestioned; he was cool in danger, quick of mind, and practical in carrying out his ideas—qualities which undoubtedly accounted for much of his success.

The command was held together and shaped by the personality of its leader, and those who failed to respond to his personal influence were simply sent back to regular service. Mosby maintained a discipline which was strictly adhered to, though the military routine of regular service was not observed. He made rules which were never broken, and established rewards which were highly prized. The harshest and most dreaded punishment was to be returned to regular service.

Mosby's Confederacy

The partisans roamed from the Shenandoah Valley to the Potomac, and throughout the Northern Neck, but the heart of their activities was in upper Fauquier and southern Loudoun.

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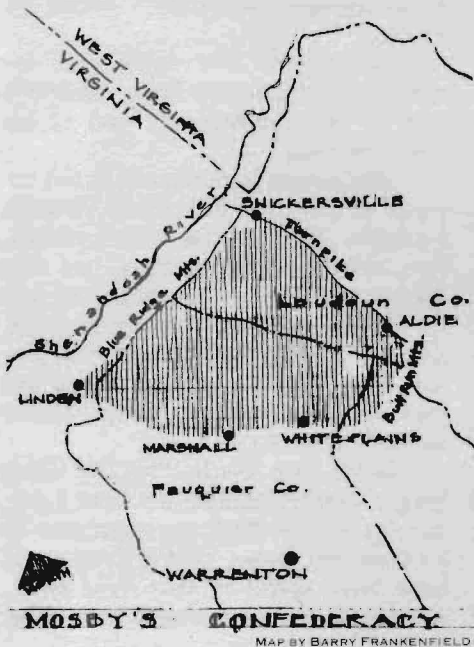
Colonel Mosby

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The region from which Mosby operated was disputed territory, lying outside the lines and left entirely unprotected during the war by civil and military authorities of either side. Except for the presence of the Partisan Rangers, the people living there would have been at the mercy of roving bands of deserters.

The Rangers performed the duties of police as well as soldiers. Mosby, acting as a military ruler and judge, not only kept the lawless element in check, but also settled civil differences between individuals.

On June 22, 1864, a meeting was held at Rectortown with 200 men present. General orders were read, "in which bounds were prescribed, within the limits of which the men were to remain when not on duty. They were as follows: From Snickersville (Bluemont), along the Blue Ridge Mountains to Linden; then to Salem (Marshall); to White Plains (The Plains); thence along the Bull Run Mountains to Aldie, and from thence along the turnpike to the place of beginning, Snickersville. The section thus mapped out was known as 'Mosby's Confederacy'."



No off-duty Ranger was to leave these bounds, about 20 miles square, without permission. Roll was called at each meeting, and any man absent from two successive meetings, without a satisfactory excuse, would be returned to regular service.

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From Our Correspondents:

To the president, Fauquier Historical Society:

The descendants of Colonel John S. Mosby wish to express their gratitude to the Fauquier Historical Society for the beautiful wreath you so kindly donated and had placed at his grave on Saturday, December 3rd, 1983, in honor of the celebration of his 150th birthday.

Sincerely,
Stuart Blackwell Cooper



UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA LIBRARY

MOSBY DAGUERRETYPE PURCHASED FOR \$2,000

The University of Virginia's Alderman Library has acquired an 1851 daguerreotype of one of the school's most colorful students — John Singleton Mosby.

Even as a law student at the University from 1849 to 1852 Mosby was a lively figure. He was sentenced to six months in jail and fined \$1,000 for shooting and wounding a fellow student. His sentence was later annulled by the state legislature.

He sat for the daguerreotype wearing an elaborately patterned vest and floppy bow tie. The daguerreotype was given to a fellow student, whose family passed it down through several generations before a dealer acquired it and sold it to the University.

The \$2,000 purchase price was shared by the University of Virginia Alumni Association and a rare books and manuscripts private endowment fund.

A Lass of the Mosby Confederacy

Colonel Mosby

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Courtesy Mrs. Nancy C. Baird

AMANDA VIRGINIA EDMONDS CHAPPELEAR

Amanda Virginia Edmonds, (1839-1921) was born at Belle Grove and lived there her entire life.

She was descended from John Edmonds, who had bought 1000 acres south of Paris, Virginia, from the James Ball estate in 1780. John was a half-brother of Col. William and Col. Elias Edmonds, who had acquired tracts near Warrenton.

Belle Grove was built by Amanda's grandfather, Isaac Settle, postmaster and merchant of Paris, Virginia, who gave it to her as her dowry. He also built the main portion of Mt. Bleak, now Sky Meadows State Park, for her uncle Abner Settle.

Tee, as Amanda was nicknamed, kept journals from 1857 to March 1867. The journals begin with the death of her father, Lewis Edmonds, who died of typhoid fever, and the sale of personal property and slaves to settle the estate.

She wrote of John Brown's raid, trial and the activities of the abolitionists leading up to the Civil War.

As Belle Grove is located two miles south of Paris and Ashby's Gap on Route 17, she witnessed much movement of troops through the neighborhood, starting with General Stonewall Jackson's men marching to board the cars at Piedmont Station for the First Battle of Manassas.

Two of her brothers were with

Stuart's Sixth Virginia Cavalry.

The most exciting years of the war were when Colonel John S. Mosby and his Forty-Third Battalion and several other soldiers stayed at her home. Her favorite beau, Lt. Matthew Ferrall Wagner, stayed at Mt. Bleak, her uncle's adjacent farm. When the men were not out on a raid, they were lounging around the house, chatting with one another, playing games and flirting with the ladies.

The last two years of the journals show what the reconstruction was like for the farm families of Fauquier. There was very little money, and a scarcity of some items of food and clothing. Otherwise, life went on much the same. The slaves had gone to the city, but a few stayed as servants and farm labor. Mr. Wagner went home to Mississippi and died about a year later of river fever.

In 1945, Amanda's son, B. Curtis Chappellear, who had not only inherited his mother's journals but also her interest and writing ability, realized the importance of the journals from an historical and sociological aspect, and was determined to have them published.

He and his niece, Nancy Chappellear, transcribed the journals, which were then edited and researched. He gave Nancy the journals, which are now at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond.

The Journals of Amanda Virginia Edmonds: Lass of the Mosby Confederacy, 1857-1867, edited by Nancy Chappellear Baird, will be published in the Spring of 1984. They will be on sale by the Fauquier Historical Society at the Old Gaol Museum with an autographing session during the Old Town Festival. Dates will be announced in the next issue of News and Notes.

Inquiries for mail orders should be addressed to Mrs. Baird at Rt. 1, Box 409, Delaplane, VA. 22025.

1. News and Notes, Vol. 4, No. 4

JOHN S. MOSEY,

ATTORNEY AT LAW

Warrenton, Va.,

WILL practice in the counties of Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William and Fairfax, and is associated with M. BANNON, Attorney at Law, of Baltimore, in the purchase and sale of real estate.

He will also attend to cases of Bankruptcy in the U. S. Courts. July 13th

The many legends about Mosby that formed during the war, aside from his actions in battle, stemmed from the manner the Rangers were dispersed in Mosby's Confederacy. The men were scattered about the countryside in the homes of friendly and sympathetic people, often with two or more Rangers to a household. Stories of the escapes and near captures of Mosby's men are many, as are the accounts of the courage and initiative of the women of these homes.

As a rule, the householder was compensated for board and room, but occasionally he was not. When the Rangers returned from a successful raid, their spoils were usually shared with their hosts.

In the Partisan Ranger service, spoils of war were distributed among the officers and men. This was their only means of replenishing ammunition, supplies and livestock. Mosby, however, refused to avail himself of this privilege; his horses came from the family farm. In the rare instances where his horse would fall beneath him in battle, one of his men would give him his horse and then capture an enemy's horse for himself.

Throughout the tales and legends, with intense light, Mosby's love of the Confederacy and of his men is woven.

His genius is evidenced in the records of the 43rd Battalion, Virginia Cavalry. His tactical development, now called guerilla warfare, has won for him not only a place in legend but in modern military history as well. Surely, Twentieth Century warfare has proven that the lessons learned from the Partisan Rangers will not be isolated in time.

In his own words, "No one clung longer to the Confederacy than I did, and I can say, with the champion of another lost cause, that if Troy could have been saved by this right hand, even by the same it would have been saved."

—Isabelle S. Palmer



The President Reports:

In my capacity as mayor of the Town of Warrenton, I have obtained the use of the council room at the Municipal Building at 18 Court Street as a year-round meeting place for the Board of Directors of the Fauquier Historical Society.

Board meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. Society members who are interested in the work of the Society are invited to attend these monthly meetings.

At the December meeting, Mrs. Herbert N. Heston of Broad Run was elected to the board and to the executive committee. She will serve as our corresponding secretary.

Treasurer Bill Sudduth reports that \$2,305 has been contributed to the Society in memory of the late William Parkinson. Some time ago the board voted that this fund would be used to complete the restoration of the kitchen. This was one of Bill's primary interests, and when completed, the restored room will be dedicated to his memory.

Plans are under way for the celebration of the 225th anniversary of the founding of Fauquier County on May 1st, 1759. Further announcements will be made in the Spring issue of News and Notes.

Christian Name Index

The late James Anderson Fleming, of the Virginia Historical Society's library, prepared a Christian Name Index to Nancy Chappellear Baird's *Fauquier County, Virginia Tombstone Inscriptions*.

In addition, Scott Carter, Ripley Robinson and others have found a few more of the older graves in the county, which will be included with some inscription corrections.

These will be published in perfect binding for release about February 1984.

Copies may be obtained from Mrs. Nancy Chappellear Baird, Rt. 1, Box 409, Delaplane, VA. 22025. For further information Mrs. Baird can be reached at 703-364-2052.

Society Observes Mosby Anniversary

In observance of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Colonel Mosby, the Fauquier Historical Society placed a wreath at his grave in Warrenton cemetery on Saturday, December 3rd.

On Sunday, December 4th, the Museum was opened to visitors from 11:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Coffee was served.

More than 100 visitors examined memorabilia on display. Among these were the Colonel's cigar holder from the Museum's permanent collection and an oil portrait of Colonel Mosby in his later years, loaned by Mrs. Stuart Cooper.



Photo by Isabelle Palmer

Mrs. Stuart Mosby Blackwell Cooper places a floral wreath at the grave of her great-grandfather, Colonel John Singleton Mosby.

Mrs. Blackwell

Mrs. J. Davenport Blackwell of Warrenton died November 11 at Oak Springs Nursing Home, where she had been a patient for several months.

The former Pauline Coleman, Mrs. Blackwell was born October 24, 1900, in Washington. She was the daughter of Watson Eugene Coleman and Stuart Mosby Coleman, and was the granddaughter of Colonel John S. Mosby, with whom she lived until his death in 1916.

Educated at Gunston Hall, she came to Warrenton with her mother in the 1920s, and married Mr. Blackwell in 1929. They lived at Pelham, on the Springs Road. She was immensely proud of her ancestry and deeply interested in Civil War history.

She was a charter member of the Fauquier Historical Society, contributing many items of memorabilia to the Old Gaol Museum.

In addition she worked with the Red Cross, serving with the Motor Corps, the Gray Ladies and for many years was head of the Pink Ladies of the Fauquier Hospital Auxiliary. Her interest in history led to her involvement in the Warrenton Antiquarian Society.

Mrs. Blackwell is survived by two daughters, Mrs. J. Mallory Nash and Mrs. Samuel E. Cooper, both of Warrenton; a brother Adm. Beverly Mosby Coleman USN (Ret.) of McLean, Va., and two grandsons, Davenport B. Cooper and Rex Scotland Cooper.

A graveside service was conducted on November 20 at the Warrenton cemetery by the Rev. C. Thomas Hayes, rector of Little Fork Episcopal Church, Culpeper County.

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P. O. Box 675
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Number in family membership

Name: _____

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Check appropriate membership category: () - Sustaining - \$25 and over
() - Individual or family - \$10 () - Student - \$3
() - Contributing - \$15 () - Business - \$25

How would you be willing to help the Society this year?

Random Ramblings

Mosby was mercilessly hunted by the Federals, but since his forces dispersed when danger threatened, he was never captured. When they thought they were about to capture him, he was not to be found.

In the last part of his campaign, Mosby used the wild caves on the west slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and an interesting story is told which illustrates the anxiety and deep disappointment when the plans for Mosby's capture fell through.

This is the story: "A Federal Cavalry Officer, one day, was riding down the west slope of the Blue Ridge when he came upon a mountain cabin with a spring nearby. A large colored 'mammy' was in front of the cabin. 'Aunty, will you get me a drink of water?' said the officer. 'Sure, I will get you a drink,' said Aunty, 'as soon as I go get a glass.' She got him a glass of cold water from the spring and the officer thanked her and said that was certainly good cold water. 'Yes, sir, it comes right out of the Blue Ridge Mountain,' she said.

As the officer was ready to take his departure, he asked: 'Aunty, do you live here alone?' 'Yes,' she replied. 'just me and Colonel Mosby live here.' 'Good day! Aunty,' he said as he took his hurried departure, going down the slopes of the Blue Ridge as fast as his horse could gallop, Aunty watching in astonishment at his hasty departure and rapid descent down the mountain slope.

When the officer reached his troops on the main highway, he said: 'I have every reason to believe that Colonel Mosby is in the cabin up the side of the Blue Ridge. Go as quickly as possible and surround the place.' When the officer returned with several regiments of his cavalry, he placed them all around the cabin and then asked: 'Now, Aunty, will you show me Colonel Mosby?' 'Sure,' she replied, 'I show you Colonel Mosby. He is in the house.'

The officer dismounted and fol-

lowed her into the house. As he stepped inside the dark room he called out: 'Colonel Mosby, I have my Federal troops all around the house. You have no means of escape. Will you now surrender peacefully? Now, Aunty, where is Colonel Mosby?' 'Sure, I show him to you. he is right back there in the room.' Then she passed the officer and went back and picked up her little son and carried him out proudly and said to the Union officer, 'Here is Colonel Mosby, I named him after a famous Confederate Officer.'

—L. Adolph Richards

Fauquier Democrat, January 3, 1957



Photo by Isabelle Palmer

RIPLEY ROBINSON of Midland, General of the re-enactment Army of Northern Virginia, places a wreath at the U.D.C. Mosby memorial at Courthouse Square in Warrenton, for the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society.

The Fauquier Historical Society

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