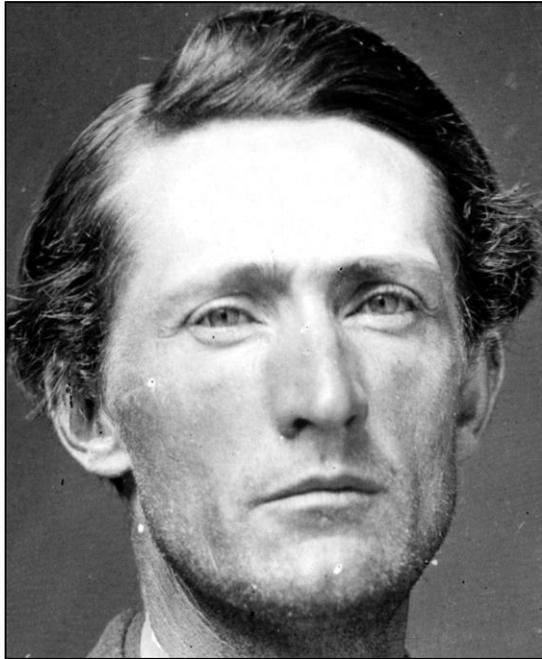


Hunting the Gray Ghost *In Northern Virginia's* Mosby Heritage Area



A MOSBY Motoring Guide.

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Visiting the battlefield of Mosby— the *Mosby Heritage Area* . . .

“I have been almost repaid for my march here in enjoying the scenery of this beautiful country. It is decidedly the finest part of the Old Dominion I have yet seen, both as regards fertility of soil and the beauty of scenery . . .”

--*South Carolina Volunteer J.N. McLure, 1861*

“I won’t get in that thing! I have always been afraid and won’t get in one . . .!”

--*Colonel Mosby on the idea of motoring in an automobile, 1911*

One hundred and fifty years ago on the winding back roads in Northern Virginia’s Mosby Heritage Area, America’s ultimate cat and mouse game was acted out during the last two years of the Civil War. John Singleton Mosby and his high-spirited militarily talented band of “rangers” waged psychological warfare on Union troops assigned to defend Washington and control the northern Shenandoah Valley. In the shadow of the Blue Ridge, legends were created both by the special operations of the Rangers and by their gallant federal pursuers. Mosby came to be remembered as “the Gray Ghost”—the man impossible to capture, but most likely to appear when least expected. Storytelling began in earnest when the War ended. Mosby stories have been written and told ever since.

Today, the region Mosby dominated is largely intact, now resting on the fringes of exurban Washington. Indeed, it has been noted that “it may be the best preserved antebellum landscape left in America.” Often dubbed “hunt country,” this handsome region of historic villages, courthouse towns, farms, winding roads, and the Blue Ridge with its foothills contains one of the largest areas preserved by individual conservation easements in the East. Here, hostleries let you stay where history played out, restaurants recall our dining past, and shops grace streets dense with age.

The Mosby Heritage Area was created in 1995 by the Mosby Heritage Area Association to help preserve and educate about this historic landscape in Loudoun, Fauquier, Clarke, Warren, and parts of Prince William counties. The heritage area is still administered by the Mosby Heritage Area Association, a non-profit citizen-run 501c(3) educational organization devoted to historical preservation.



Colonel John S. Mosby, photographed in Richmond, late January 1865, shortly after being honored for his military feats by the Virginia General Assembly. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress collection.

Notice how gaunt Mosby looks; five weeks earlier he had been severely wounded at Lakeland by federal troops who left him for dead. Mosby seldom carried a saber, vociferously championing the Army Model 1860 Colt .44 revolver, readily available for the taking from federal troops. Mosby, at five feet seven inches, was a small, wiry man, weighing 125 pounds.

This guidebook's auto tours will help you explore the Mosby Heritage Area's most famous story, that of the "Gray Ghost"--John S. Mosby. It is a marvelous prism through which to view the scenic region's historic landscape. We've divided sites in the core Mosby area into five themed tours, each connected to the others.

TOUR ONE—*The Mosby Mystique* provides an introduction to the Gray Ghost and how he and his command operated. If you have limited time, this tour is recommended. You will visit parts of Loudoun and Fauquier counties in the process—handsome country—ending at Mosby's most-favored place of rendezvous.

TOUR TWO—*Cat and Mouse in Mosby's Confederacy* takes you deeper into Mosby's lair, to the citizens' homes and work places where Mosby's Rangers hid between raids and nervous Union soldiers searched for them. Here in the Crooked Run and Loudoun Valleys, you'll see handsome houses and lovely vistas.

TOUR THREE—*A Different Kind of War* guides you into the darker side of the Mosby story—evolving guerilla warfare over three counties. You'll get a chill down some of these back roads.

TOUR FOUR—*Mosby, the End of the War, and After* shows you sites connected to Mosby and his Rangers from their disbandment through Reconstruction. Our Warrenton tour leads you to both Mosby's postwar homes and his grave.

TOUR FIVE—*The Brother's War: Mosby and the Unionists* helps you explore how long-standing divisions in Northern Virginia made the guerilla war Mosby led especially dicey and tragic. You will go to an area settled by Germans and Quakers with smaller farms to see the tragedy of civil war play out. It is also a region of the heritage area famed for village preservation.

Come discover this legendary piece of American history. In so doing, you will see why so many have worked so hard to preserve this lovely yet hallowed historical landscape.

Be sure to learn more and view a new interactive Mosby sites map on the heritage area web site www.mosbyheritagearea.org .

INTRODUCTION: Who Was Mosby?

Born in Powhatan County, Virginia and raised within view of Jefferson's Monticello, **John Singleton Mosby** was the ultimate Virginia citizen-soldier. University of Virginia-trained, he was a small town Virginia lawyer opposed to secession when the War broke out in 1861. But when his state called for her patriotic sons to respond, he enlisted, joining the 1st Virginia Cavalry.

He showed extra-ordinary ability as a cavalry scout. At the end of 1862 when Mosby was detached from General J.E.B. Stuart's



headquarters to operate behind enemy lines, he was a 29-year-old lieutenant raised on stories of Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox" of the American Revolution. Stuart's chief scout, he was given the chance of a lifetime, the chance to prove a pet theory formed through years of studying military history, such as *Napoleon's Maxims*. He believed that a minimal number of men staying at safe houses over a large rural area could launch surprise cavalry attacks

by day or night when a signal for a rendezvous was given--with devastating impact. Attacks on outposts of the Union cavalry screen around Washington, guard stations, U.S. Military Railroad junctions, depots, trains, and supply wagon trains could not only weaken the morale of the enemy invader—*fear* is a powerful weapon--but tie up thousands of his troops much needed for operations against the main Confederate forces.

Mosby's operations over 28 months proved he was right. He became known as "the Gray Ghost" by fearful federal forces, his raids became the stuff of legend, and nearly 14,000 Union troops were tied up by his operations. Some 1,911 men joined Mosby's Rangers. In Mosby's Confederacy, he was the law. After the War, stories of Colonel Mosby and his Rangers' exploits were balm to a defeated South.

Mosby moved on after the Civil War, returning to the practice of law, with his office at No. 1 Wall Street, Warrenton. There he lived

first outside of town at a house known as "Road Island" then moved in to town to "Brentmoor" at 173 Main Street. Brentmoor sits next to the Warrenton-Fauquier Visitor Center and can be viewed nicely from the outside. There are hopes it may yet be open to the public.

Mosby befriended Union General Ulysses S. Grant after the Civil War, and grew close to Grant when he was President. He became an active supporter of Grant when he ran for re-election in 1872, an unpopular thing to do in postwar Virginia, where Republicans were blamed for the "War of Northern Aggression," Reconstruction, corruption, and, of course, being anti-Southern white. When someone shot at him one day in Warrenton because he had become a Republican, Mosby decided it was time to leave Virginia for his safety and that of his children. He took an appointment from President Hayes as U.S. Consul to Hong Kong, serving from 1879-1885. Later, he was an attorney for the Southern Pacific Railroad in San Francisco, working for Leland Stanford until 1901. After that, he worked again in federal service for both the Interior and Justice Departments, being forced to retire in 1910. In his last years, he visited the sites of his many exploits in the new-fangled motorcar (sometimes driven by Henry C. Stuart, J.E.B. Stuart's nephew and Governor of Virginia 1914-18), starred in a movie about himself, and was generally his irascible, maverick old self. He died on Memorial Day 1916 in Washington, and after a funeral attended by 3000, was buried with his wife and children at Warrenton, Virginia. His grave is the last stop on Tour 4.

In retrospect, we certainly do know this of Mosby: a regular Confederate colonel by the end of the Civil War, he was certainly no horse thief but a master of legalized guerilla tactics. Mosby's understanding of cavalry, of reconnaissance and its value, and of the psychological aspects of war are among the most extraordinary ever to be seen in American military history. Himself inspired by the American Revolution's "Swamp Fox"—Francis Marion—Mosby went on to be the inspiration for the Second World War's General George S. Patton. In California, Mosby used to visit Patton's family and take young Georgie down to the beach below the house to re-enact some of his exploits beside the Pacific. Today, he still inspires Army Rangers with his "outside the box" thinking.

Mosby's Rangers

John Singleton Mosby started with 9 of Confederate Cavalry commander J.E.B. Stuart's cavalymen on detached duty in Loudoun and Fauquier counties in early January 1863. Stuart supplied several more two weeks later. Mosby had immediate success with surprise attacks against the Union cavalry screen and its many small outposts on the Loudoun-Fairfax county line. This led men home on leave to join them, boys ages 16 and 17 to beg to join them (*were they old enough, you ask--ever see a high school football game?*), infantry convalescent's to join them, and Stuart to allow limited transfers of men to the Rangers. The force grew in size, until some 1,911 men had served under Mosby.



Like land privateers, these "partisan" Rangers were allowed to keep what they took from Yankees. Mostly they took pistols, carbines (short repeating cavalry rifles), and *horses*.

Most of the Rangers possessed 4 pistols and 4 horses to be always ready and well-armed for a raid with a fresh horse. Other materiel was sold to the Confederate Army or given to homeowners who took the risk of boarding Rangers locally. *Real* coffee was welcome, of course—Mosby may well have been addicted—look at those eyes!

Mosby's unit was formalized as the 43rd Battalion (later *Regiment*) of Virginia Cavalry on June 10, 1863 in the parlor of the Rector House at Rector's Crossroads (today's Atoka). While one of only two units allowed to remain partisans in the Confederate Army, they took orders directly from President Davis, General Robert E. Lee, or Stuart. Raids were coordinated with other Confederate military activity.

The Rangers' Goal: Psychological Intimidation

To win a war when you are outnumbered and out-supplied, a mix of fine strategy and psychological tactics must be used—not unlike what the South's heroes of the American Revolution had once done. Mosby was himself a keen student of history—he knew well how the underdog revolutionaries in the American Revolution had won their independence from Great Britain. His overall strategy focused on lowering Union morale and tying up their troops uselessly.

Usually, the goals of the Rangers were to demoralize the Union cavalry screen west of Washington, to attack Union supply trains, wagon trains, communications, and outposts. In 1864-65, many of the Rangers' raids focused on the northern Shenandoah



Valley at the same time, aimed at disheartening General Philip Sheridan's invading Union army. Mosby realized a simple fact: the Yankees would have to tie up men guarding a thousand points, he would only have to attack one. In a classic poem written after visiting his cousin Colonel Henry Gansevoort of the 13th New York Cavalry on duty on the Union cavalry screen, *Moby Dick* author Herman Melville wrote a classic poem about Mosby, "*The Scout Towards Aldie*." The first three stanzas nicely capture Mosby's psychological effectiveness:

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.

Great trees the troopers felled, and leaned
In antlered walls about their tents;
Strict watch they kept; 'twas Hark! and Mark!
Unarmed none cared to stir abroad

For berries beyond their forest-fence:
As glides in seas the shark,
Rides Mosby through green dark.

All spake of him, but few had seen
Except the maimed ones or the low;
Yet rumor made him every thing--
A farmer--woodman--refugee--
The man who crossed the field but now;
A spell about his life did cling --
Who to the ground shall Mosby bring?

Mosby's value was not just on what he *did* to, but on what he was able to make his enemy think he *would* do. After Mosby's Fairfax Courthouse Raid of March 1863 in which he captured a Union general from amidst 3500 sleeping Union cavalymen, bridges at Washington, D.C. had boards pulled up and cannon rolled into place each night to prevent the kidnapping of President Lincoln.

The Local Connection: Rangers & Safe Houses

John Singleton Mosby knew that if his raiders had a camp, sooner or later federal troops would find it and capture his men. Instead, Mosby requested that patriotic Virginians board his men in their houses. At a time when most of their men folk were away in the



Confederate Army, and when slaves were often running away with the Emancipation Proclamation having been issued by the Union President, having the charm, brains, and brawn of young Mosby Rangers in the household was a distinct blessing. It also engaged civilians in *their* war. A teenaged girl might become a Paul Revere for the Rangers at the first indication of the presence of federal cavalry, a young boy might help hide

a Ranger's horse. Grandpa would get busy creating a Ranger "hidey hole" in the closet or beneath the dining room table. To the

teenage girls of these households, it also meant a considerable improvement in their flagging social lives—dances, card games, entertainments, moonlit walks and sleigh rides, and always, tales of bravery and bravado right out of *Ivanhoe* would now be their regular fare. Mosby's young Rangers loved to show off their simultaneous riding and shooting skills for the young ladies, who, desperately fanning themselves, felt young hearts go pitter-pat.

Yet there was great risk in hiding Mosby's men in your house. Harboring "partisan guerillas" was more than enough legal cause to have you arrested by federal troops. As the Civil War dragged on in "Mosby's Confederacy"—from the Snickersville Pike (modern day Virginia Route 734) to the Manassas Gap Railroad, from the Blue Ridge to the Bull Run Mountains—houses were searched again and again. Amanda Virginia Edmonds of Belle Grove in Fauquier County (Tour B, STOP 7) wrote of this in February 1864:

Much to our surprise, mortification and sorrow the slumbers of the house-hold were aroused by the rattling of swords and the clatter of horses, which fortunately made known to our dear soldiers that something was wrong. Bud jumped from his bed and there to his utter surprise were Yankees dashing up. Bud with Mr. Alexander and George dashed down the stairs where Ma and I met them nearly frightened to death. They dashed to their secret hiding place followed by overcoats, pistols and everything I could grab up...

Today in the Mosby Heritage Area, family stories abound of run-ins with federal troops by the Gray Ghost and his citizen supporters. They sparkle with the immediacy of tales not forgotten.

The Unforgettable Autumn 1864 Burning Raid: Union Payback for Mosby's Civilian Support

Mosby relied heavily on the local farmers of western Loudoun and Upper Fauquier's Loudoun Valley to supply forage for his men's nearly 1600 horses. Often leaving on two raids a day by the autumn of 1864, there was inevitably a detail led by Mosby's quartermaster, "Major" Hibbs going on a "corn raid" for forage. By that time, resources in southern Loudoun and northern Fauquier

were being exhausted, and the target became the non-participating Quaker families whose sons stayed home and whose farms accordingly prospered. Paid in Confederate money, scrip, and IOUs, these Quakers unhappily cooperated.

And so it was that exasperated federal troops decided to *burn* Mosby out, destroying his base of support—the local farmers. On November 28, 1864, on orders from General Sheridan, General



Wesley Merritt and some 5000 federal cavalymen came from Winchester over the Blue Ridge to destroy the Loudoun Valley—from the Blue Ridge to the Catoctin-Bull Run Mountains, from the to the Manassas Gap Railroad (paralleling modern-day

I-66). They had orders to burn every barn, shed, grain mill in this two-county area; to destroy all crops and farm machinery; to confiscate all horses, cows, sheep, pigs, and goats; and to arrest all men between the ages of 15 and 50 regardless of their wartime sympathies. Over the next five days they did just that. The damage was horrendous to Confederates and Unionists, white and black alike. Katoctin Church near Purcellville recorded in its minutes:

No congregation or preaching [be]cause some of the Federal cavalry were in the settlement ... Burnt nearly all our barns with their contents, much corn, all the wheat, oats, hay and straw they could find, many outbuildings and fencing besides several valuable dwelling houses with their contents and robbing many others. They also drove off all the horses, cattle, and sheep they saw making loss to that part of the county...from two to three millions of dollars. Therefore each and every person had as much as they could do on Friday and Saturday to get things in some kind of order . . .

If Mosby's form of psychological warfare made inroads to modernity, so did the horrific results it engendered. The fury of war seen in the Mosby Heritage Area in the last year of the Civil War would leave a lasting imprint on the region's memory. Other than our current massive growth and change in the demography of the region, it may be the biggest thing that ever happened here. People in the region with old homes still speak of whether their barn is "original" or "rebuilt." They still have their stories . . .

A Few Good Books on Mosby.

Evans, Thomas J. and James M. Moyer. Mosby's Confederacy: A Guide to the Roads and Sites of Colonel John Singleton Mosby. Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Co., 1991. [Softbound; ISBN 1-57249-278-3 and online]. *If you are a Mosby buff and want to design your own field trip, use this book.*

Jones, Virgil Carrington. Ranger Mosby. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944. [Softbound ISBN 0-939009-01-3] *The first of the modern Mosby books and oft reprinted, this classic is a great, easy, colorful read.*

Mewborn, Horace and Hugh C. Keen. 43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry, Mosby's Command. Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard Inc., 1993. [Hardback ISBN 1-56190-049-4] *A superbly reliable narrative of Mosby's operations; full roster included.*

Ramage, James A. Gray Ghost: The Life of Colonel John Singleton Mosby. Lexington, Ky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999. [Hardback; ISBN 0-8131-2135-3] *This work seeks to make sense of Mosby, to put him in context, to examine his mastery of psychological warfare. A provocative, engaging book.*

Siepel, Kevin. Rebel: The Life and Times of John Singleton Mosby. 2008, Bison Books. [ISBN 0-306-80775-0] *A more biographical look at Mosby.*

Wert, Jeffrey. Mosby's Rangers. New York: Touchstone, 1990. [Paperback; ISBN 0-671-74745-2] *This is a very good overall account of Mosby and his command, a good first read with great visual detail. It is also quiet affordable.*

Williamson, James J. Mosby's Rangers. New York: Ralph B. Kenyon, Publisher, 1896. [Available in a Time-Life Books *Collector's Library of the Civil War* reprint; hardback; ISBN 0-8094-4225-6] *The best Ranger memoir.*

A Few Suggested Online Mosby Resources.

www.mosbyheritagearea.org This is the web site of the organization that sponsored this booklet. A variety of programs and resources available here.

www.civilwar.visitloudoun.org This marvelous site fully introduces the Civil War experience and landscape of Loudoun through photos, chronology, articles, moving paintings, panoramas, and event listings.

www.fauquiercivilwar.com/history. This is the Fauquier County Civil War Sesquicentennial website.

www.virginiacivilwar.org/. The Commonwealth of Virginia Civil War Sesquicentennial web site has a variety of useful resources and event listings.

www.angelfire.com/va3/valleywar/people/mosby. Mosby resources!

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