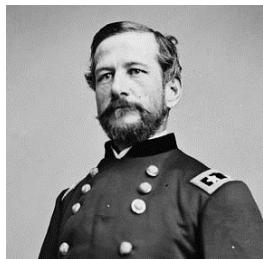


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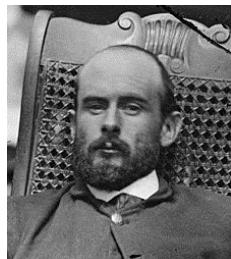
A DRIVING TOUR OF  
THE CAVALRY BATTLES OF ALDIE,  
MIDDLEBURG, AND UPPERVILLE,  
JUNE 17-21, 1863



PUBLISHED BY  
THE MOSBY HERITAGE AREA ASSOCIATION



*Alfred Pleasonton*



*Charles Francis Adams Jr.*



*Louis P. di Cesnola*

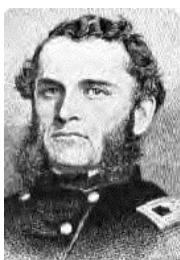


*Calvin Douty*

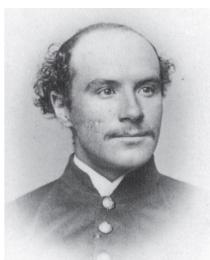
# Union Faces of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville



*Alfred Duffie*



*Strong Vincent*



*Nehemiah Mann*



*Judson Kilpatrick*

## **Visiting the battlefields of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville in the Mosby Heritage Area**

*“The names of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville were raised from obscurity and made historic. These fields, especially the last named, will figure in all time to come as the scenes of as desperate cavalry fighting as the world has ever seen.”—Capt. Charles T. O’Ferrall, 12<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cav.*

### **June 1863 was a critical turning point in American history.**

The Civil War dividing the nation entered its third summer, and no end seemed in sight. In the war’s eastern theater, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee turned his army northward, his eyes set on crossing the Potomac River in his second invasion of the North.

Over five days in June 1863, the horsemen of both armies clashed in the lush and scenic Loudoun Valley, a core piece of the Mosby Heritage Area. Union troopers sought to discover the Confederates’ whereabouts; Southern soldiers tried to block the curious Federals.

Incredibly, many of the same roadways, stone walls, and landscapes that witnessed those great cavalry clashes remain intact. On this driving tour, you will traverse this very historic-looking landscape, almost as if it were still 1863.

**The Mosby Heritage Area Association** created the **Mosby Heritage Area** in 1995 to help preserve and educate about the historic landscape in Loudoun, Fauquier, Clarke, Warren, and western Prince William counties. The Mosby Heritage Area Association is a non-profit, citizen-run 501(c)3 educational organization devoted to the preservation of the Mosby Heritage Area.

*This booklet has been made possible by a grant from the Loudoun Preservation Society and by donations to the Mosby Heritage Area Association in memory of former MHAA board member Ed Gill.*

## Prelude to the Battles of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville

Following his army's stunning success at Chancellorsville in May 1863, Gen. Robert E. Lee began preparations "to transfer the scene of hostilities beyond the Potomac." Lee started sliding his army away from the Fredericksburg area in early June, and Union commander Joseph Hooker suspected something was amiss.

Hooker relied on his cavalry—the eyes and ears of Civil War armies—to locate Lee's army and scatter the build-up of enemy cavalry in Culpeper County. The resulting June 9, 1863, Battle of Brandy Station is the largest cavalry battle fought on the North American continent. Union cavalry chief Alfred Pleasonton achieved neither of Hooker's goals as Lee's soldiers continued trudging west and north.

One week later, the Federal commander remained blind to Lee's location. Desperate for information, Hooker sent his cavalry out to find any information they could. "It is better that we should lose men than to be without knowledge of the enemy, as we now seem to be," wrote Hooker. Federal horsemen prepared to enter the Loudoun Valley on June 17, looking for that information.

Meanwhile, J.E.B. Stuart's Confederate troopers monitored the Loudoun Valley while Lee's army moved west of it on the other side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Lee tasked Stuart with keeping the Federals away from the Blue Ridge, and thus ignorant of his movements.

The opposing cavalry headed towards another titanic, mounted clash, this time in the Loudoun Valley, over five days in June.

The area where the Battles of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville occurred had experienced war before the summer of 1863, but never on a scale like what it would see that June. "[T]he rich and beautiful county of Fauquier...as yet showed but little signs of suffering from the war," remarked one southerner. The same applies to southern Loudoun County to your east. This "rich and well-cultivated section of the beautiful Piedmont country of

Virginia” was intersected by country roads, streams and stone fences, all of which made it “ill adapted for cavalry movements.”

Regardless, the whirlwind of war soon cast itself upon this beautiful country and placed obscure towns like Aldie, Middleburg, Rector’s Cross Roads and Upperville under the watchful eye of two warring sections of the country. “We all think here we are on the eve of a great battle,” one Union trooper wrote. “It will be one of the most severe the country ever witnessed.”

*Begin your tour at Aldie Mill Historic Park, 39401 John Mosby Highway, Aldie, VA 20105.*

## **STOP 1—Aldie Mill**

Behind you is a mill over two centuries old! The Aldie Mill was ideally situated. The Little River (to your right) powered the twin waterwheels to grind grain, which could then be transported to the port of Alexandria and international markets to your east using the Little River Turnpike (present-day US-50).

About 0.2 miles to your right is Aldie Gap, a critical mountain pass that Confederates hoped to defend to keep their army’s movement a secret from the Federal cavalry that sought to take the gap. From Aldie, two roads, the Little River Turnpike, or Ashby’s Gap Turnpike, leads west to the road’s namesake gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains while the Snickersville Turnpike leads northwest to Snickers’ Gap. If the Federals could take either gap, they could unveil the intentions of the Confederate Army.

The Confederates reached Aldie before the Union cavalry. Soldiers and horses had to march through scorching heat, causing some men and horses to fall out of the ranks and even others died from sunstroke.

On the afternoon of June 17, Union and Confederate cavalry finally clashed and engaged in a series of mounted fights that roared back and forth right in front of you. The Federals gained the upper hand and forced the Confederates to the heights west of Aldie. One of the largest cavalry fights ever seen on the North American continent had begun.

## **STOP 2—Adam Farm**

*Directions: Turn left onto US-50 and drive 0.7 miles to a pull off on the right side of the road with a Civil War Trails sign. The pull off is just beyond the intersection of US-50 and VA-734, the Snickersville Turnpike.*

50 Virginians under Reuben Boston sought cover amidst the haystacks on the ridge to your left-front. Boston's commanding officer instructed him to hold the knoll "at all hazards."

Ohioans and New Yorkers assailed Boston's outnumbered men from three sides. The bloody contest for the knoll lasted about twenty minutes when Boston's men eventually gave way and retreated farther to the west towards the Adam Farm, where they were forced to surrender. They did so reluctantly but must have felt some satisfaction at having unhorsed 67 Federals during the fight.

During the battle, Aldie's townspeople were left peeking out of their windows, watching the scene in "great bewilderment," not daring to venture out of their homes during the fight. Now, dead horses and war materials littered the Adam Farm fields. Many citizens helped themselves to these souvenirs. Scattered amongst the haystacks were the personal items of soldiers representing what they had left behind: "family letters, pictures, and small pocket items" lay abandoned, recalled one soldier. Some Union soldiers even impressed a local wheelwright to make coffins for the dead throughout the night of June 17.

## **STOP 3—1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry Monument**

*Directions: Make a U-turn out of the Adam Farm stop onto US-50 East. Drive 0.2 miles and turn left onto VA-734, Snickersville Turnpike. Drive 4.8 miles until you reach the pull off on the right, where you will see several interpretive signs and a granite monument. The pull off is on a curve just after passing Oatlands Road.*

As the fighting sputtered to a close south of you (where you just came from), both sides focused their attention on this curve in the Snickersville Turnpike. Dismounted Confederate cavalry huddled behind the stone wall behind the monument and awaited the Federals.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry made repeated assaults against this strong, natural position and paid dearly for it, losing 198 of the 294 men it entered the battle with (two of every three soldiers). “My poor men were just slaughtered and all we could do was stand still and be shot down,” wrote Charles Francis Adams Jr. (great-grandson of John Adams and grandson of John Quincy Adams) of the First. “The men fell right and left and the horses were shot through and through... How and why I escaped I can’t say, for my men fell all around me,” Adams wrote in horror. All told, he lost 60 of the 90 men he charged into battle with.

Italian-American Col. Louis Palma di Cesnola also led his men of the 4<sup>th</sup> New York Cavalry into the fray. Arrested earlier that day by his superior, di Cesnola requested to join his men. His superior officer handed di Cesnola his sword and supposedly told him, “Bring it back bloody!” Di Cesnola was wounded in the struggle and eventually captured, but his heroics did not go unnoticed; he received the Medal of Honor for his actions at Aldie.

Virginians counterattacked back down the road. Harvey Vinton and several other Massachusetts men tried to erect a barricade to slow the Confederate onslaught. Before leaving, Vinton struck down a Confederate officer, but the Virginians were soon upon him, giving him saber blows to the head and wrist before capturing him. Soon, the tide turned again, and the arrival of more Union cavalry freed Vinton. Harvey Vinton was wounded again in 1864

and captured for good. He died in a Confederate prison camp in Savannah, Georgia on October 31, 1864. The monument in his hometown bears his name.

In the ensuing seesaw action, Union forces mounted a second charge against the Confederate position at the stone wall. Fifty-year-old Calvin Douty led the 1<sup>st</sup> Maine Cavalry through the field behind the monument. Near where you stand, Douty fell, pierced in the heart by two bullets. Douty was a martyr in the attack that pushed the enemy back from Aldie.

This curve witnessed some of the most intense cavalry fighting of the Civil War. The road became “blockaded” with dead men and horses. A member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Maine remembered that the Snickersville Turnpike “was literally filled with dead and dying men and horses.” One southerner remarked that he never saw so many dead Federals in such a small space anywhere else during the war than he did right where you stand.

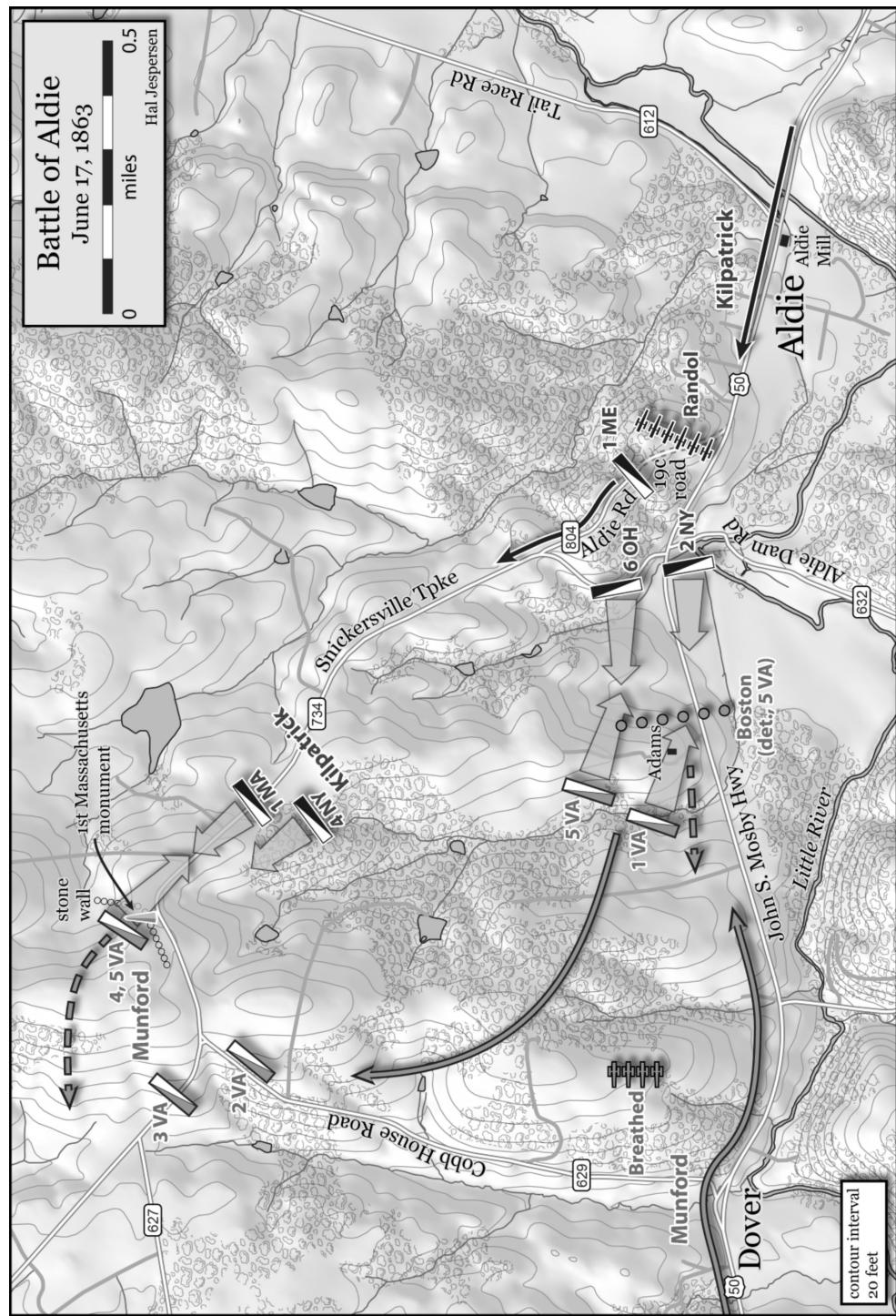
The intensity and severity of the fighting here made the veterans of this fight want to remember it so that the memory of their dead comrades would not fade. Hence, in 1891, veterans of the 1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts gathered here to dedicate this monument on land donated by a Confederate veteran. “This monument bears upon its panels a roll of honor that will be read by future generations, and teach lessons of patriotism and reverence for the flag to the youth of America when we are forgotten,” said one of the veterans. *You* are here to remember what they did and read the names of the fallen. Take time to do this and contemplate the horrors that this curve witnessed so many years ago.

A Confederate veteran of the battle called the fighting at Aldie “the heaviest cavalry engagement of the war—the contending parties were constantly engaged in hand to hand combat.” The two armies suffered about 420 casualties overall in this hard fight, but there was still two more days of fierce fighting left.

## Battle of Aldie

June 17, 1863

0 miles  
0.5 miles  
Hal Jespersen



contour interval  
20 feet

## **STOP 4—Middleburg**

*Directions: Carefully exit from the pull off onto Snickersville Turnpike, heading in the same direction you were before reaching the pull off. In 0.3 miles, turn left onto Cobb House Rd. Travel 1.1 miles to turn right onto US-50 West. In 3.3 miles, the Red Fox Inn will be on your right just before the traffic light. Pull into a parking spot near the Inn.*

During the Battle of Aldie, this building, known as Beveridge's Hotel at the time, served as J.E.B. Stuart's headquarters. Here, Stuart met with John Mosby, who provided the general with information throughout the battles in the Loudoun Valley.

On the afternoon of June 17, Union cavalry (1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island) under Alfred Duffié came riding into town unexpectedly from the south, nearly capturing Stuart and his staff. The sudden incursion compelled the general "to make a retreat more rapid than was consistent with dignity and comfort." Stuart fled towards Rector's Cross Roads, gathered reinforcements, and sent them back to retake the town.

Meanwhile, the Federals barricaded the streets to Middleburg with anything that could stop a bullet. It was not enough, however. The Confederates charged through the town and over the barricades and scattered the Federals to a position south of town.

### **OPTIONAL EXCURSION: 1<sup>ST</sup> RHODE ISLAND CAVALRY**

*This part of the tour will cover the ordeal of the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island Cavalry during June 17-18. If you wish to complete this optional excursion of approximately 8 miles, follow the directions below. Should you want to continue the main tour, please skip ahead to "STOP 5."*

## **STOP A—The National Sporting Library and Museum**

*Directions: Return your vehicle to US-50 West (Washington St.). From the Red Fox Inn, drive on US-50 West for 0.2 miles and take*

*a left on The Plains Rd. Make the first right hand turn into the parking lot of the National Sporting Library and Museum. Bear left, and you will soon see a Civil War Trails marker on the left.*

The same stone walls that line The Plains Rd. today lined this road in 1863! As the sun faded on June 17, 1863, North Carolina cavalrymen rode south from Middleburg to find the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island Cavalry, which they had just expelled from the town. When they reached this point, the Rhode Islanders arose from behind these walls and opened fire at point-blank range, knocking many of the southerners from their mounts.

The North Carolinians tried two more times to dislodge Duffie's cavalry but met with similar results. Before they could try a fourth time, the Rhode Islanders realized their exposed nature and fell back to Halfway, about three miles to the south.

On June 18, a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island passed back along this road and, perhaps embellishing his men's fighting prowess, noted, "On the way [we] passed the stone wall where we were fighting the night before... Between forty and fifty horses were lying there dead, showing the fatal aim of our men." Though probably true, the numbers may be high, as the Confederates reported only three troopers killed and 11 wounded.

## **STOP B—Long Branch Baptist Church**

*Directions: Continue straight ahead and return to The Plains Road. Turn right. Travel 3.6 miles and turn right onto Long Branch Ln. Pull into the parking lot of Long Branch Baptist Church.*

This church was erected in 1776 and is one of the oldest Baptist churches in Virginia. On the banks of the Little River behind the church, Duffie's scattered command gathered on the tense night of June 17. Alone, isolated and outnumbered, the surviving members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island bedded down here within eyesight of nearby Confederates, the darkness being their only protection.

When the sun rose on June 18, 1863, several Confederates sent to forage a nearby barn stumbled upon Duffie's soldiers and soon brought the rest of their command with them. The opposing sides slugged it out in a wheat field, the owner of which cursed the horsemen as they trampled his crop.

In the midst of the wheat field fight, a Confederate soldier aggressively approached Rhode Island flag bearer Lawrence Cronan about surrendering his flag. Cronan refused, the rebel fired his revolver, and the ball passed through Cronan's body. Weak from blood loss, Cronan gave up the flag to a comrade before falling from his horse and being taken back to Middleburg as a prisoner.

Seeing Cronan lying in a home in town, the Confederate who shot him asked him why Cronan did not give up the flag. "It was not given me for that purpose," said Cronan. "Well, you are tough," said the Confederate before moving on.

Toughness could be a trait of many of the men of 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island. Sent into Middleburg alone the night before, these men endured a terrible ordeal. Of the 280 troopers it brought into the fight the previous afternoon, approximately 60 made it back to Union lines while many others headed south to Confederate prisons. "It is only marvelous that any of the command escaped death and capture," recalled one veteran. "We were literally thrown into the jaws of war."

*This concludes the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island Cavalry Optional Excursion. To proceed to Stop 6 on the main tour route, return to the National Sporting Library and Museum. This time, pause in front of the War Horse Memorial at the entrance to the museum.*

## **STOP 5—National Sporting Library and Museum**

*Directions: Return your vehicle to US-50 West (Washington St.). From the Red Fox Inn, drive on US-50 West for 0.2 miles and take a left on The Plains Rd. Make the first right hand turn into the parking lot of the National Sporting Library and Museum. Pause in front of the War Horse Memorial at the entrance to the museum.*

Without horses, Civil War armies made up of thousands of men would not have functioned. Besides bearing the weight of officers and cavalrymen, horses pulled artillery and wagons that carried food for the soldiers of both armies.

Mid-June 1863 saw tens of thousands of horses passing through this area. Just the Union Army had 30,000 horses overall.

Unfortunately, many of them were killed or maimed. On June 22, the Union Cavalry leader, Alfred Pleasonton, wrote, “It will take at least 1,500 horses to supply the losses of the last fourteen days.” These losses came from the fight at Brandy Station on June 9 and the battles that you are now touring. In the fight at Upperville on June 21, the 7<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry lost 48 horses killed or wounded.

Those horses that did survive suffered from the heat or their injuries just as much as the soldiers. One Federal artilleryman described his horses as “pretty well jaded out” and noted one died of exhaustion. Another soldier pointed out that in battle, “The horses were as excited as the men, and instantly as wild.” Some “did not feel their wounds until the affray had ended, when dozens sank to their knees in the grass, and toppled over.”

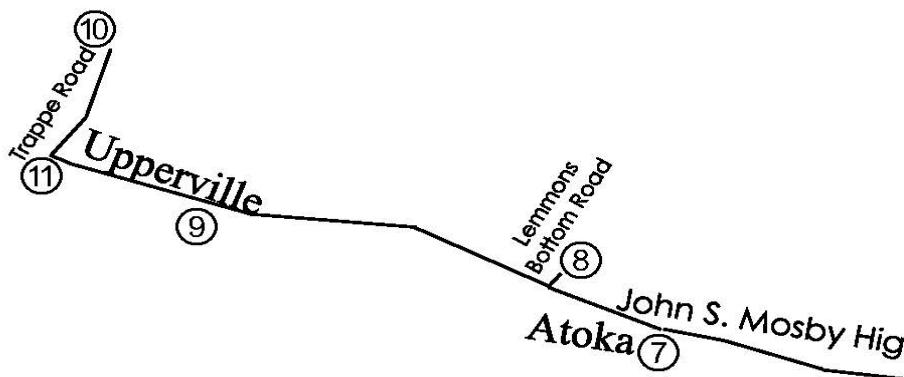
During the war’s four years, for every one soldier who died, two horses met a similar fate. The total amount of horses that died during the war is estimated to be 1.5 million.

This three-quarter size statue was the first of its kind (though two others exist today). English sculptor Tessa Pullan made it at the request of Paul Mellon. It was completed in 1997 and is in a fitting place, directly in the middle of this continent’s second largest cavalry action.

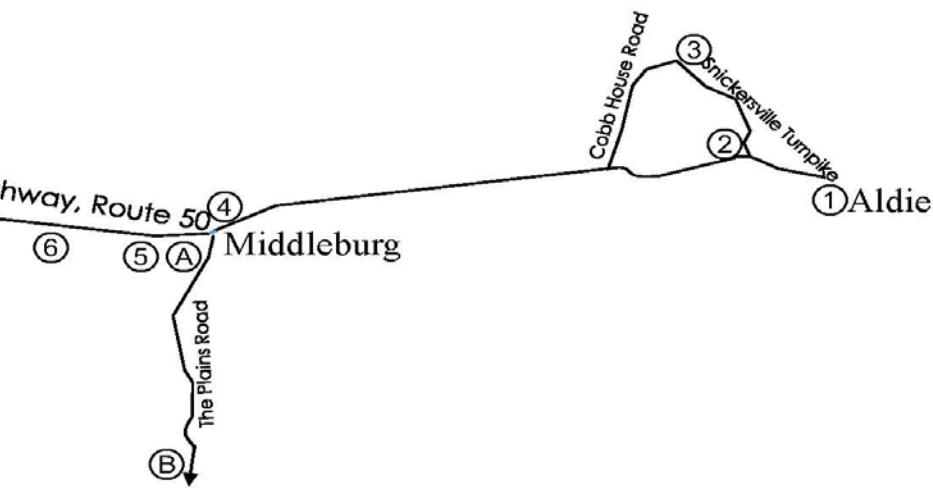
## **STOP 6—Mt. Defiance**

*Directions: Turn left out of the parking lot back onto The Plains Rd. and return to US-50. Turn left, travel 1.3 miles, and make a left turn (the first turn AFTER Zulla Rd.) Use extreme caution. US-50 can be very busy. Carefully cross through the median and across the eastbound lanes into the driveway straight ahead for*

- ① Aldie Mill
  - ② Adam Farm
  - ③ 1<sup>st</sup> Mass. Cav. Monument
  - ④ Middleburg
  - Ⓐ National Sporting Library
  - Ⓑ Long Branch Baptist
  - ⑤ National Sporting Library



- ⑥ Mt. Defiance
- ⑦ Atoka/Rector's Cross Roads
- ⑧ Goose Creek Bridge
- ⑨ Vineyard Hill
- ⑩ Trappe Road
- ⑪ Trappe Road and Ashby's Gap Turnpike Intersection



*Mt. Defiance. Pull up in the driveway near the Civil War Trails marker on the left.*

On June 18, Confederate partisan John Mosby captured Union dispatches outlying their plans and intentions for the coming days. The Federal cavalry's job was to pierce the screen the Confederates established east of the Blue Ridge Mountains (approximately 14 miles west of you) and figure out where the main body of the Confederate Army was and what it was doing. Armed with this knowledge, J.E.B. Stuart determined to deny the Federals access to the passes of the Blue Ridge.

Following his withdrawal from Aldie, Stuart chose the high ground where you now stand as the next place to offer battle. Stuart's cavalry stood facing Middleburg on both sides of US-50, utilizing stone walls, roadbeds (like the Zulla roadbed to your right) and woodlots whenever possible. Several artillery pieces stood near the blacksmith shop that is still standing, hidden in the trees to your right front.

The fighting around the old cut of the Zulla Rd. and the blacksmith shop lasted all day and was especially intense and back-and-forth. At one point, it became so intimate that a wounded Union soldier sitting up against a tree resorted to hurling rocks at the southerners who came near him following the use of all of his ammunition. Several Confederates eventually ended this stand with the use of their revolvers.

The second wave of Union troops charged into the fray. "Don't go into those woods, Waters; it's a slaughter-pen," warned one of the Federals retreating from the field. "I have the orders to go, and I am going," replied Maj. Alvah Waters of the 10<sup>th</sup> New York Cavalry. One member of the Tenth remembered what happened next: "We found the slaughter-pen on entering the woods. The dismounted rebels poured the bullets into us like rain. To go forward meant death to every one of our little band." They went forward regardless and nearly twelve hours after the fighting began, Mt. Defiance was in Union hands, and the Confederates retreated westward.

The fight that swirled around where you stand was extremely close quarters and intense. The combat “was sharp and bloody” according to one soldier while another said, “Such fighting I never before witnessed.”

As Stuart fell back to his main line, more Federal cavalry attacked him from the north. Both sides fired at each other, but neither was interested in resuming combat similar to that seen at Mt. Defiance. Despite the ferocity of the fight, only about 200 casualties were collectively suffered by both sides on June 19.

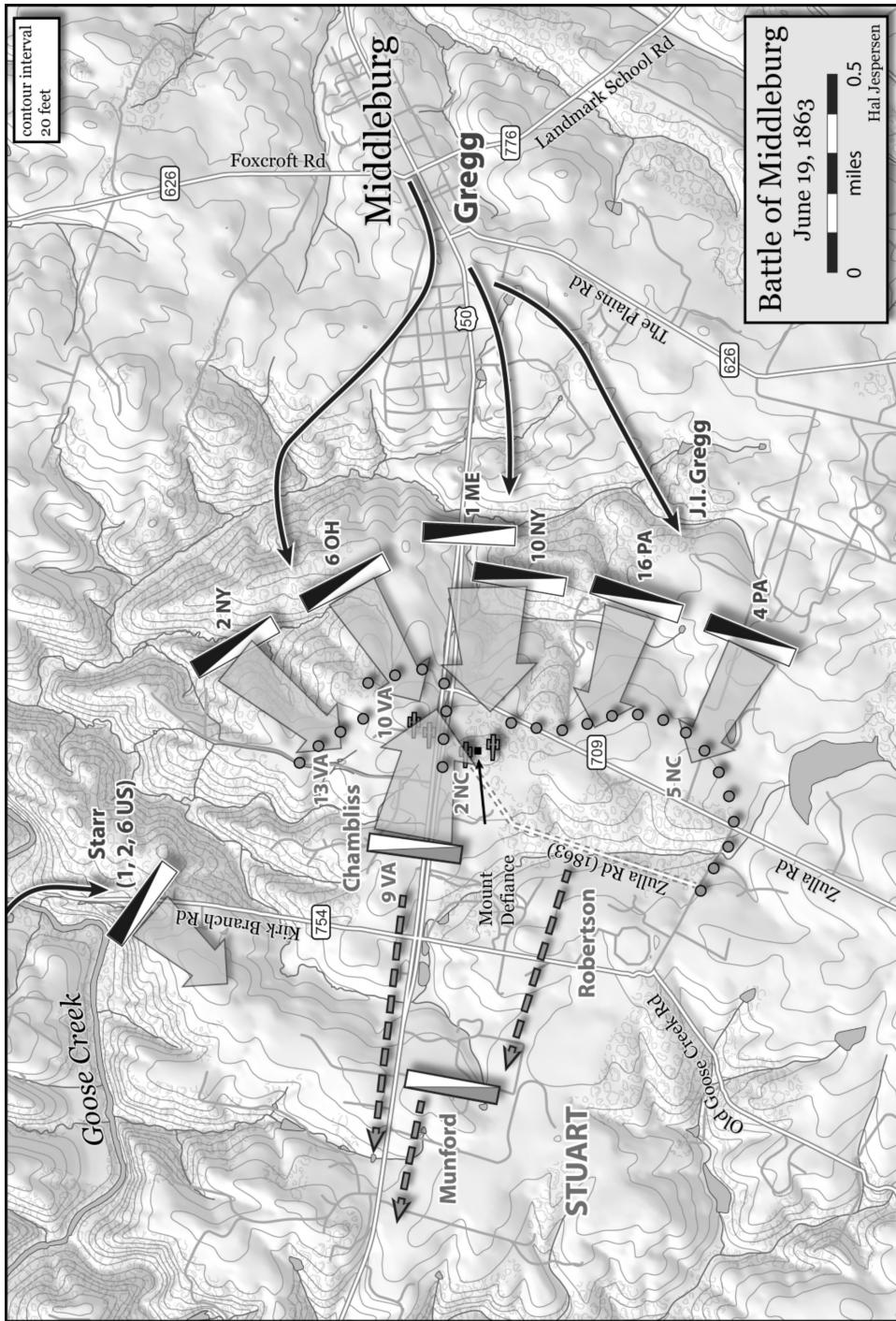
## **STOP 7—Atoka/Rector’s Cross Roads**

*Directions: Turn around and drive to the exit you came in. Carefully go straight over the eastbound lanes into the median, and cautiously turn left onto US-50 West. Drive 2.5 miles before making a left onto Rt. 713, Atoka Rd. Turn immediately left into the Civil War Trails sign parking area.*

J.E.B. Stuart did not intend to fight on Sunday, June 21, 1863. The rain, which left soldiers of both sides “as wet as if we had been dipped in a river,” gave way in the early morning hours of the Sabbath to cannon fire and the neighing of thousands of horses, a stark contrast to the peaceful Sundays the citizens of the Loudoun Valley once knew and those which Stuart tried to preserve.

At 8 a.m., 1.7 miles east of you on the Bittersweet Farm, Union artillery, cavalry, and infantry attacked the Confederate horsemen. Following a half hour of fierce fighting, Federal artillerists struck a Confederate ammunition chest, igniting the remaining shells and “for several minutes the locality...was a volcano of bursting shells.” Then, the Union infantry, rushed forward to add power to the Federal movements west, surged towards the Confederate defenders.

The infantry belonged to Col. Strong Vincent’s (of Little Round Top fame at Gettysburg) brigade of the Union Fifth Corps and soon hit the Confederate lines. In hurrying forward, Capt. Judd Mott from Michigan was shot through the abdomen and died several hours later. He could have avoided such a fate by



remaining under arrest, but pride compelled him to ask for his sword and permission to lead his men into the fight.

On the opposite side of the line, Capt. William Houston from North Carolina worked hard to extract his men from a worsening situation. A student at Wake Forest and Columbia College and a member of his state's secession convention, Houston found a brief respite upon a stone wall following the fall of the Confederate position. Upon resuming his walk farther to the rear, a bullet passed through his head and killed him almost instantly. That bullet "blighted forever...a bright prospect of future honors and usefulness [that] lay before him," read one obituary.

The collapse of the line at the Bittersweet Farm forced Stuart to move his men towards where you now stand, consistently using ridges and streams to prevent the Federals from reaching the passes of the Blue Ridge. Hoping to prepare a defense  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to your west (the direction you have been traveling along US 50), the southerners turned to 200 South Carolinians led by Angus Brown. Fighting swirled around you for a full thirty minutes until the Federals forced the gray-clad troopers back behind Goose Creek west of you. Brown himself was wounded and lay in the middle of modern-day Atoka Rd., where Federal soldiers attempted to trample him until a Union officer intervened.

Soon, thousands of Union soldiers surged past where you stand looking to gain possession of the mountain gaps.

## **STOP 8—Goose Creek Bridge**

*Directions: Exit the parking area to the right, and turn left onto US-50. In 0.9 miles, turn right onto Lemmons Bottom Rd.*

*Continue straight until the road dead ends. You may either walk onto the bridge itself or stand beside the Civil War Trails marker that overlooks the bridge.*

The bridge in front of you was completed in 1803 while Thomas Jefferson sat as President of the United States! It carried the Ashby's Gap Turnpike over Goose Creek until 1957. The heights

on your left were perhaps the strongest position the Confederate cavalry held on June 21, 1863.

Artillery protected the approaches to the bridge from the high ground to your left while Confederate cavalry massed where you are to oppose a crossing. Union forces arrived opposite the east end of the bridge, and another artillery duel ensued, this time for two hours! One of the first Federal shells to hurl in your direction took out nine Confederate horses at once.

The initial Union foray against the bridge failed to make any headway following the intense artillery barrage. Capt. Guy Fuller from Michigan tried to rally the Federals around, saying “Give me the horses to mount twenty-five men, and I’ll take the bridge.” After someone had denied his request, he said, “Then I’ll take the bridge any way.”

Joining Fuller’s infantry was a host of Federal cavalry. Capt. Nehemiah Mann led his cavalrymen on foot. Mann’s troopers hesitated during the charge. Seeing this, Mann, a Quaker who put the defense of his country and the abolition of slavery above the pacifist teachings of his religion, dismounted, “took a carbine, and led the men over the bridge in three minutes.” Other units aided Mann’s charge, but an eyewitness of the Quaker’s actions wrote, “Such men as John Paul Jones and Ethan Allen were made of the same stuff as he.”

While defending the bridge, Georgian R. Cecil Johnson fell “with his rifle at his shoulder.” Johnson’s commanding officer tried to console both himself and Johnson’s father, also serving in the Confederate Army. Speaking to his youth, the officer wrote of Johnson, “I regret he did not live to realize the honors that awaited him and to find a greater sphere for usefulness and distinction. As his friend, I mingle my sorrow with yours at the bereavement,” the officer tearfully wrote the father. Johnson died at this bridge a mere boy; he was in his early twenties.

The fight for possession of Goose Creek Bridge was long and ferocious. In its aftermath, one Union soldier passing over the bridge noted, “Dead and dying horses were thickly strewn about on the banks of the stream, and in the marsh.” Ellis Spear of the 20<sup>th</sup>

Maine stopped to bury one of the men he recruited to join the army on the bluffs overlooking the bridge. Can you imagine the responsibility he must have felt when he performed this gruesome task?

## **STOP 9—Vineyard Hill**

*Directions: Drive back to US-50 and again turn right. Drive 2.8 miles to turn left (follow the Civil War Trails road sign) into Upperville Park, also home to a baseball field. Get out of your vehicle at the Civil War Trails signs. You are standing atop Vineyard Hill.*

This prominent rise of ground just east of Upperville was the next place where the Confederates determined to hold off the Federals. As the crow flies, Ashby's Gap is only five miles behind you. The Confederates had their backs against the wall.

In front of you in June 1863 lay open, marshy ground occasionally intersected by a fence. These open fields became the scene of a desperate mounted cavalry fight for ninety minutes on that Sunday as horses and men struggled on either side of US-50.

The first Northerners to spur ahead towards the Confederate positions on Vineyard Hill belonged to the same units who had stormed Goose Creek Bridge hours earlier. Capt. Nehemiah Mann urged his New Yorkers to follow him into the fray, but he went in too fast and engaged nearly a dozen Confederate soldiers at once! One southerner swung his saber at Mann and cut his cheek, knocking the brave captain to the ground. Suddenly, another mounted Confederate shot Mann in the left shoulder. Miraculously, Mann survived these wounds and rejoined his unit only to be killed in battle the next year.

Confederate General Wade Hampton sent each of his units counterattacking into the fight three times each by some accounts. J.E.B. Stuart, Wade Hampton, and Federal cavalry General Judson Kilpatrick all participated personally in the ensuing melee. Stuart later told his wife that four Federal officers leveled their pistols at him, but the lucky Stuart escaped unscathed.

Thanks to the Confederate stand on Vineyard Hill, Southern cavalry elsewhere on the field reached the road intersection west of Upperville and could now safely fall back closer to the dominating mountains. Acutely aware of that, Stuart ordered his battered, gray-clad riders off Vineyard Hill. They passed west through Upperville, though their Federal pursuers were close behind.

## **STOP 10—Trappe Road**

*Directions: Head back to the park entrance and turn left onto US-50. Drive 1.0 mile and turn right onto Trappe Rd. In another 1.0 mile, pull onto the left side of the road at the pull off with the Civil War Trails sign.*

While fighting raged along US-50 for much of the day on June 21, more Federal troops moved north from Middleburg in an attempt to get around the main Confederate positions you just toured. A running fight ensued moving east to west between Confederate and Union troopers—the Confederates delaying the Federals and slowing them up before falling out of range and repeating the same tactics.

Late in the afternoon, Confederate forces arrived at Trappe Road, where you now stand, and began heading south to reunite the Confederate cavalry west of Upperville at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In the meantime, Union riders rushed in your direction to cut off this Confederate force before it could reach the Ashby's Gap Turnpike.

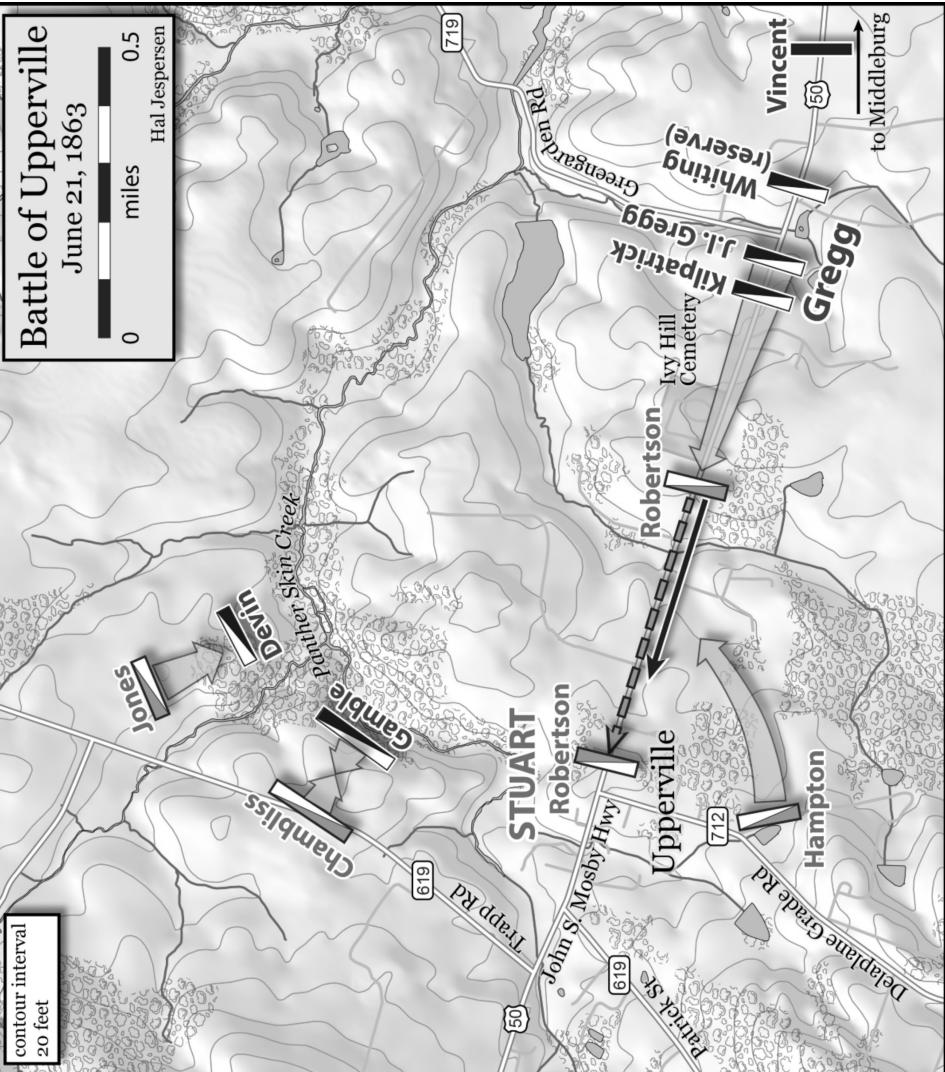
The first Union charge through the fields on the other side of Trappe Road from where you stand met intense Confederate artillery fire, knocking the two Federal commanders leading the charge from their horses. The blue-clad horsemen still pressed on and came very near to capturing several Confederate guns before Southern reinforcements swept in and deprived the Yankees of their prize.

Federal soldiers found cover in a sunken road bisecting the farm fields opposite you. Hand-to-hand fighting swirled across that ground, but neither side found an advantage. Soon, the local 7<sup>th</sup>

# Battle of Upperville

June 21, 1863

0 0.5 miles



contour interval  
20 feet

Virginia Cavalry charged into the fray. It came out of the fight with 22 men killed, wounded or missing and lost 21 horses killed and 28 more wounded.

One of the men killed in the 7<sup>th</sup> Virginia's attack grew up less than 15 miles from the battlefield. J. Warren Brent and his two brothers each had their horses killed beneath them in the charge, and J. Warren Brent died, felled by four bullets. A Union officer witness to Brent's bravery buried him on the field. "The family is in great distress," noted Brent's commander following the battle. It would take some time for their horses to be replaced, but their brother could never be replaced. "It is unnecessary for me to state their character as soldiers. The Confederacy has none superior."

Once the supply wagons of the Confederates fighting along Trappe Road reached the Ashby's Gap Turnpike (US-50) to the south, the Southern troopers also pulled out of the fields in front of you and made their way to the Blue Ridge Mountains.

## **STOP 11—Trappe Road and Ashby's Gap Turnpike Intersection**

*Directions: Turn your vehicle around and return down Trappe Rd. the way you came. Proceed straight across both lanes of US-50 into the pull off with the Civil War Trails signs.*

Shortly following the withdrawal of Confederates from the fields east of Trappe Road (where you just came from), the Southern line on Vineyard Hill also began pulling back to the west through Upperville. Union troopers pursued the fleeing enemy, with orders to "Charge the town, drive out the enemy, and, if possible, get beyond" ringing in their ears. A Confederate gun planted in the center of Upperville greeted the Federals, though it shot over their heads and was quickly in Union hands.

Blue-clad cavalry continued moving west, inching closer and closer to their objective—Ashby's Gap. They plunged into the intersection of Trappe Road and the Ashby's Gap Turnpike. A short but sharp fight ensued here, leaving the intersection strewed with the casualties of battle and the Union troopers in control.

Col. Peter Evans of the 5<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Cavalry watched his comrades give way with disgust. He implored Gen. Stuart to allow him to charge the enemy position. Stuart unenthusiastically approved. “Now, men, I want you to understand that I am going through!” yelled the saber-wielding Evans as he turned his horse and led his men towards the waiting Union cavalrymen. Moments later, confusion set in, and only a handful of Tar Heels trailed their leader. The few made it to the intersection, and another sharp fight ensued. Peter Evans managed to knock down one enemy soldier before being shot in the back and captured. He later died of disease as a prisoner of war.

The rifle cracks and saber clanks that echoed through this intersection were the last to be heard in the five-day fighting across the Loudoun Valley, through the fields, across the creeks, and down the roads around the towns of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville.



*A contemporary sketch of the opening fighting at Bittersweet Farm on June 21, 1863*



*A scene of the fighting at Vineyard Hill in the shadow of Ashby's Gap and the Blue Ridge Mountains on June 21, 1863*

## Aftermath of the Battles of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville

All told, the five days of fighting in the Loudoun Valley produced nearly 1,400 human casualties (killed, wounded, missing, or captured) and an untold number of horses. Approximately 21,000 soldiers fought over the stone walls, roadways, and fields you have traversed. Could any one of those soldiers return to these battlefields today, they might still recognize much of the 1863 landscape.

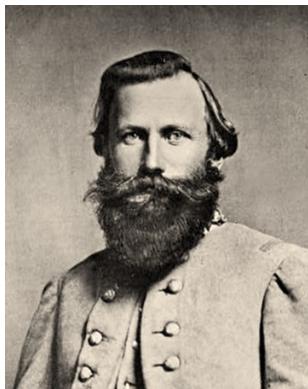
Ultimately, Alfred Pleasonton's Unionists fell short of solving the riddle, "Where was Lee's army?" Some Federals did manage to ascend the Blue Ridge Mountains, but whatever they saw remains debatable. Regardless, Pleasonton moved his cavalrymen back east the next day, trotting through the recently fought over land. "All along the wounded and dead and the horses scattered on the road attest the severity of the conflict and that the ground was hotly contested," wrote one Pennsylvanian.

For the Confederates, the march of Lee's army north continued unimpeded. In fact, by the time these Loudoun Valley cavalry battles began, some of the Confederates had already crossed the Potomac River. J.E.B. Stuart embarked on his ride north shortly after the Union troopers vacated the Loudoun Valley.

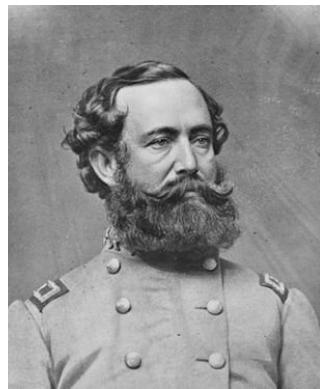
Now separated, the campaign continued, and the disparate portions of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and the Union Army of the Potomac collided once more over the first three days in July at the crossroads town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

*Kevin Pawlak is the author of this booklet. The Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville battle maps are courtesy of Robert Orrison and Hal Jespersen.*

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*J.E.B. Stuart*



*Wade Hampton*

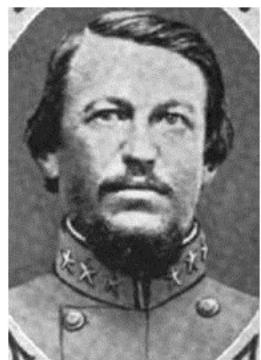
## Confederate Faces of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville



*R. Cecil Johnson*



*William Houston*



*Peter Evans*



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