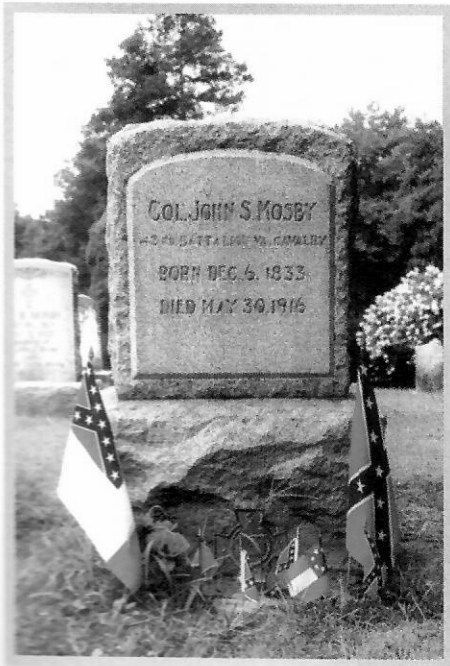


# Mosby

## THE LEGEND LIVES ON



COL. JOHN SINGLETON MOSBY  
IS BURIED IN WARRENTON.

**ON** a cold December day in 1862, John Singleton Mosby met up with nine men at Oakham, a home just off what is now Route 50 between Middleburg and Aldie in Loudoun County. Their meeting put into motion what was to become one of the most enduring and fascinating legends of the Civil War.

The independent Virginian did not fit the profile of the average soldier. Mosby had been chafing under the tight harness of traditional military operations, serving as a private in the 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Cavalry under Col. William E. "Grumble" Jones. He was loyal to the Southern cause and had an idea to create a guerilla band of men who would blend into the countryside, come and go with stealth, and consistently harass Union troops at vulnerable points. Mosby wanted a company of "rangers" who were disciplined fighters with purpose, but who operated with highly irregular and practical habits of combat.

Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart took Mosby on as a scout, giving him his first few men. The commander of the armies of Northern Virginia, Gen. Robert E. Lee, approved of Mosby's concept.

What grew from that first meeting in Loudoun would certainly have a significant impact on the remaining years of the Civil War. It provided a rallying point of pride and another hero for the South, while producing stories of daring that achieved a kind of swashbuckling mythology. Historical accounts are filled with stories of Mosby and a handful of his rangers routing much larger Union troop units, and of other units taking flight in chaotic retreat at the mere mention of Mosby's name.

In short order, Mosby's Rangers became a force to be reckoned with in the Northern Virginia theater of the war. Col. John Singleton Mosby became known as "The Gray Ghost" for the success of his tactics and what sometimes seemed like his supernatural ability to simply vanish into the surrounding landscape with his men.



HUNTLANDS STABLES. Sportsman Joseph P. Thomas spared no expense in expanding New Liberty, a Barton Lewis horseplace, 1902-1911. Thinking through details with utmost care, he designed this tall, 120' rectangular compound and main structure.



PILGRIMAGE STORE AND POST OFFICE, constructed of sculptured concrete blocks for Albert Pop. Mitchell in 1913, the building crowns the village square. At that time, there were more than fifty area wood-bored post offices and stores. Today there are three: near Leesburg, and Hillsboro.

WOODBURN...  
Benton for physical  
can gain his...  
theoretical...  
sweet and fresh...  
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BY JEFF COWART  
IMAGES COURTESY OF DAVID GOETZ



ARTIST'S RENDITION OF MOSBY'S ATTACK AT CATLETT STATION IN FAUQUIER COUNTY.

Lower Loudoun and upper Fauquier counties became known as the heart of "Mosby's Confederacy"—an area bounded on the east and west by the Bull Run and Blue Ridge Mountains, and on the north and south by Snickersville Turnpike in Loudoun and what is now Route 55 in Fauquier.

Mosby and his partisan band of rangers would have an enduring influence on the nature and culture of the county, the surrounding area and even the nation.

For example, travelers coming west from Fairfax County on Route 50 today find themselves riding on the John S. Mosby Highway. That road cuts a swath across the officially designated John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area, a six-county district dedicated to the preservation of the historic, cultural and scenic qualities of the region. Those who grew up in the late 1950s may recall the "Gray Ghost" television series or the later Disney

movie or the comic books. Mosby was a charter inductee into the U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame and his military tactics are still taught today in U.S. Army Ranger training school. The list of the impact made by Mosby and his Rangers goes on.

Adding to the intrigue surrounding the legend, Mosby was the last officer of the Civil War to surrender. After the Civil War, following his own beliefs and politics as he had all his life, Mosby became a close friend and political ally of Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. He also served in a variety of posts for the U.S. government—including Ambassador to Hong Kong—prior to his retirement to Warrenton, VA.

Mosby was born in 1833 about forty miles west of Richmond and grew up near Charlottesville. He attended the University of Virginia, but was expelled after involvement in the shooting of another student. Fighting off boredom in a jail cell, Mosby asked the lawyer who prosecuted his case

for law books to read, and after educating himself, he passed the Virginia bar and took up the practice of law. He met and fell in love with Pauline Clarke of Franklin, KY and they were married in 1857, settling in Bristol in southwest Virginia.

When Virginia seceded from the Union in 1860, Mosby reluctantly decided to enlist in support of the South. He was assigned to a local infantry company and was drawn to the cavalry. Stuart's cavalry unit was of particular interest and Mosby eventually transferred to it, where he honed his scouting techniques.

"Mosby really epitomizes what Americans believe about citizen soldiers," says Jeffrey D. Wert, author of *Mosby's Rangers*, about the exploits of Mosby and his men. "He simply found himself at war. There is really nothing about him up to that point that would suggest he would become the kind of leader and soldier that he became."

Mosby was certainly happier in the cavalry than the infantry, but by 1862 he had become restless in the regular army. Stuart had just completed his famous Christmas Day raid at Burke Station in Fairfax County and headed out to Dover in Loudoun County, just a little west of Aldie. Mosby met there with Stuart and asked permission to organize a small detail of men to scout the Fed-

LOWER LOUDOUN AND UPPER FAUQUIER  
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OF "MOSBY'S CONFEDERACY" ...



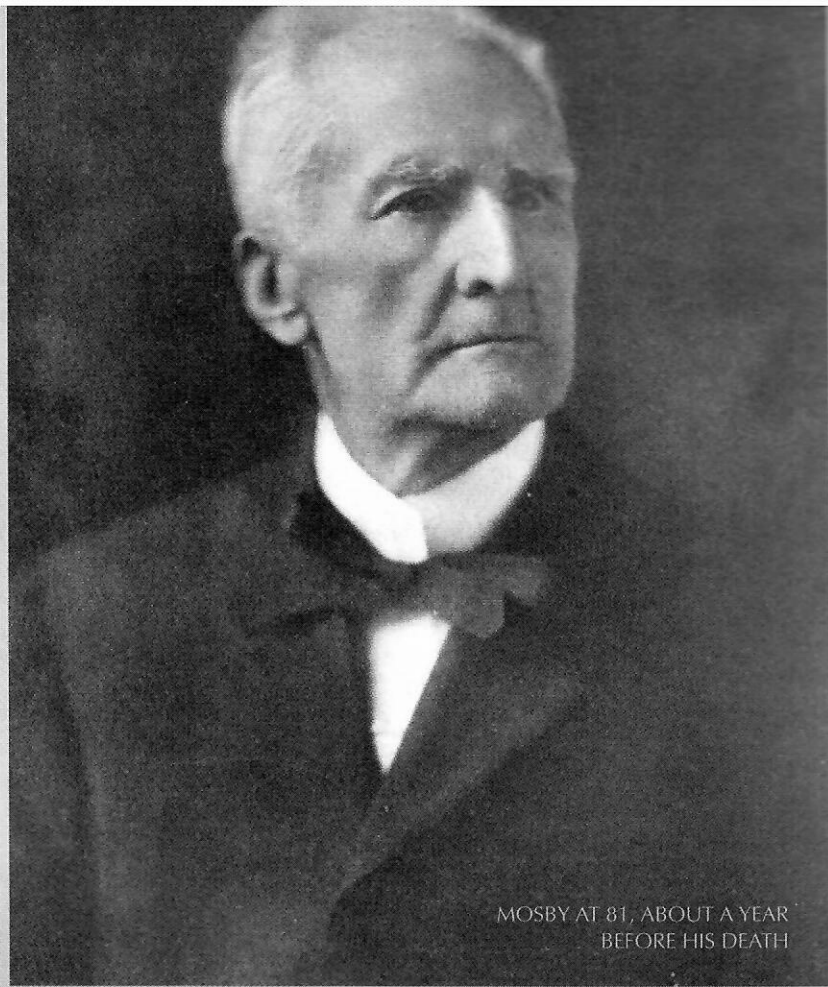
eral troops. Stuart agreed and Mosby formed his Rangers on December 30, 1862 at Oakham, the home of Col. Hamilton Rogers just west of Aldie. The operations proved successful and a few weeks later Mosby asked Stuart to extend the appointment. Stuart did and Mosby's Rangers became known as the 43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Virginia Cavalry.

Dover, it turns out, would be one of the most important names in Mosby historic lore. It was the gathering point for 29 men who pulled off what is considered to be one of the most remarkable and impressive raids of the entire Civil War.

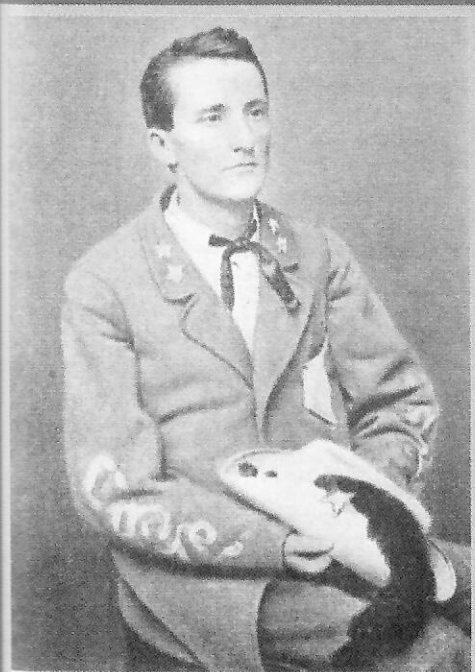
Within the first few months of its formation, Mosby's Rangers were already proving to be a thorn in the side of Union troops in northern Virginia. Their raids disrupted troop movements, severed communications and cut supply lines, with the plunder of food, horses and weapons being redirected to Confederate troops. Exasperated Union Col. Percy Wyndham thought Mosby's tactics were unseemly and branded Mosby "a bushwhacker and a horse thief."

Mosby was furious at the characterization and decided to undertake a bold raid into Fairfax, in the heart of Union army operations, to capture Wyndham.

On the drizzling and misty night of March 8,

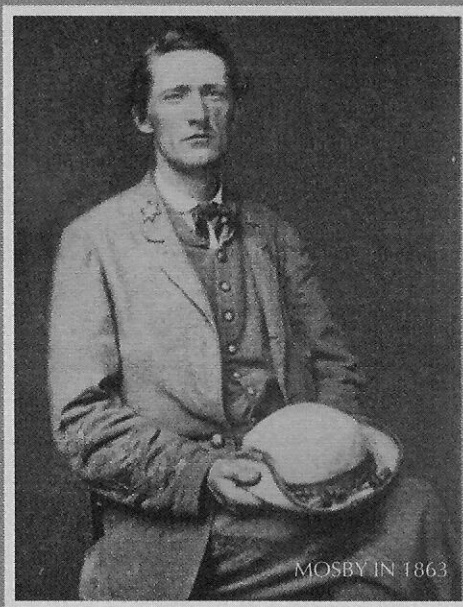


MOSBY AT 81, ABOUT A YEAR BEFORE HIS DEATH



MOSBY AS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL

*John S. Mosby*



MOSBY IN 1863



MOSBY AT AGE 55

COL. JOHN S. MOSBY HAD A LONG AND ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER. ALTHOUGH HE WAS THE BANE OF THE UNION ARMY DURING THE CIVIL WAR, AND WAS THE LAST CONFEDERATE OFFICER TO SURRENDER, HE WENT ON TO SERVE FOUR U.S. PRESIDENTS FOLLOWING THE CONFLICT.



MOSBY DISBANDED HIS UNIT ON APRIL 20, 1865, FOLLOWING THE CONFEDERATE SURRENDER. HE, HIMSELF, DID NOT SURRENDER BUT WAS PARDONED IN 1866.

1863, Mosby met 29 of his men at Dover, having told the mayor of Middleburg at an earlier dinner, "I shall mount the stars tonight or sink lower than plummet ever sounded."

Mosby and his small band headed for Fairfax, where roughly 8,000 Union troops were head-

quartered, deftly guiding their horses through posted sentries on the outskirts of town. They learned that Wyndham was not there, but found that Brigadier General Edwin Stoughton was in town.

With legendary boldness, Mosby knocked on

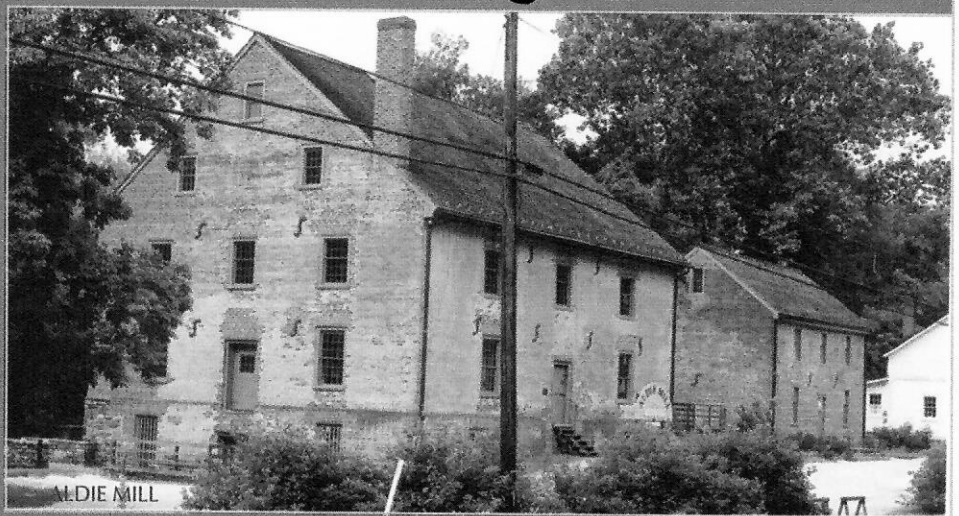
the door of Stoughton's house. When asked who was there, as Mosby recounted in his memoirs, he answered: "Fifth New York Cavalry with a dispatch for General Stoughton.' The door was opened and a staff officer, Lieutenant Prentiss, was before me. I took hold of his nightshirt, whispered my name in his ear, and told him to take me to General Stoughton's room." Mosby recounts that he found Stoughton sleeping, "drew up the bedclothes, pulled up the general's shirt, and gave him a spank on his bare back, and told him to get up." The general, grumbling, asked what was going on. Mosby writes: "I then asked him if he had ever heard of 'Mosby', and he said he had. 'I am Mosby,' I said."

At the end of the evening, Mosby and his handful of Rangers had captured a brigadier general, two captains, 30 prisoners and 58 horses without firing a shot. Word of this unbelievable raid spread like wildfire among both the Union and the Confederate armies. Within three months of being brought together, the reputation of Mosby and his men became larger than life. Mosby earned the praise and admiration of Robert E. Lee. When Stuart was eventually killed, Mosby was the only colonel in the Confederate army who reported directly to Lee.

## Learn More About the Legend

The legends of Mosby live on in Loudoun and the surrounding communities. As part of its educational work to promote preservation in the region, the John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area has begun a learning series with local schools, using the proximity of Mosby raids as a hook to get children interested. More information is available at [www.mosbyheritagearea.org](http://www.mosbyheritagearea.org). The heritage organization, founded and maintained by volunteers, sells driving tour tapes and CDs for those wishing to get a firsthand look at prominent Mosby venues in Loudoun and the surrounding region. Also available are excellent maps of key sites developed by Loudoun mapmaker Eugene Scheel. Historical information is available at the heritage area's website.

Another excellent source of historical information can be found at the independent website [www.mosbysrangers.com](http://www.mosbysrangers.com), which is maintained by Kathryn Combs, a lifelong Mosby fan and amateur historian, in association with Jeff Smith, who has been portraying Col. Mosby for six years in living history events and presentations.



Dave Goetz arranges customized and family tours through his Mosby's Confederacy Tours and can be reached through [www.mosbystours.com](http://www.mosbystours.com). Scheduled tours by a variety of other area historians can be found by browsing the mentioned websites. The John Singleton Mosby Museum operates in Warrenton at the home once occupied by Mosby.

One is left to wonder what Mosby himself

might have thought about all of this continuing attention to accomplishments. In life, he shied away from honors and accolades saying all he really required was just a simple "thank you" for his service.

He certainly got that attention from Gen. Robert E. Lee. Records show that Mosby was among those most often mentioned by Lee in his records of the war.



"Think about it," says author Jeffrey Wert. "For weeks the Federals lifted the planks on the bridge to Washington fearing that this guy and his 29 men were going to sneak into Washington and capture the president. This raid is noteworthy not just for its boldness but certainly for the morale boost that it gave to the South."

From that time until the end of the war, Mosby and his Rangers continued to wreak havoc among Union troops operating in Mosby's Confederacy and in the Shenandoah Valley. Their strategy, operations and men were staged primarily from Loudoun and upper Fauquier counties.

"One thing that is quite interesting about Loudoun is that you have this strong Union sentiment and yet Mosby was able to extract from the residents support and supplies," says Wert.

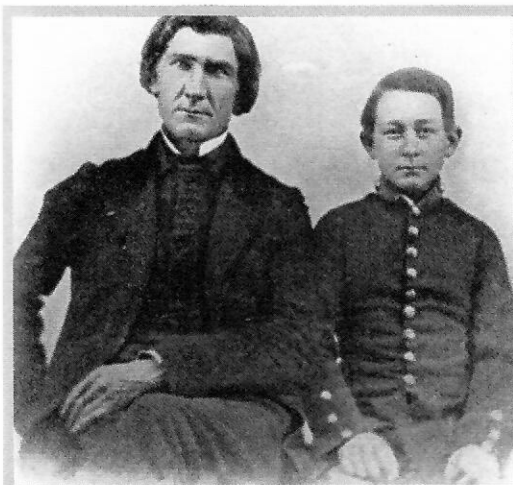
sense, Mosby served as the kind of civil authority in the region."

In the just over two years that Mosby and his Rangers operated, an estimated 2,100 served the unit, though no one really is sure of the count since the Rangers had a tendency to come and go with less than strict military standards. Generally, Mosby averaged somewhere between 70 and 110 men on a raid.

During the war Mosby was wounded four times, the most severe being when Union troops surprised him in December 1864 at a safe house in Rectortown, in western Fauquier County. Mosby was shot in the abdomen but Union soldiers, not realizing whom they had fired upon, left him at the house figuring he would die from his wounds. By the time they realized their mis-

who refuses her, and then she goes to see Gen. Grant, who does see her. She pleads her case and Gen. Grant handwrites a pardon for John Mosby. She walks out with a pardon for her husband. This was the beginning of a 20-year friendship between John Mosby and Ulysses S. Grant."

Goetz says that both men deeply wanted reconciliation between the North and South. Confederate soldiers were not allowed to vote or hold public office and Mosby urged Grant to support an amnesty act restoring those rights. Grant did.



### FAMILY TIES

ABOVE: MOSBY'S FATHER AND YOUNGER BROTHER, TAKEN SHORTLY BEFORE THE WAR. RIGHT: MOSBY'S MOTHER, VIRGINIA JACKSON (McLAURINE) MOSBY.

"Loudoun and Fauquier served as the primary base for safe houses for Mosby and his men."

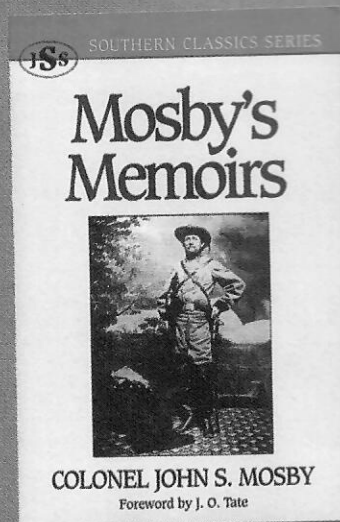
Remarkably, Wert notes, except for one devastating burning raid the Union conducted across Loudoun in reprisal for support for Mosby, Loudoun was not ransacked and destroyed in ways that occurred in other parts of Virginia. "One thing that Mosby did, I think, was that he gave protection to a very vulnerable section of Virginia. The Federals, when they came into Loudoun, were more concerned about Mosby and his men than they were about raiding and plundering, particularly as the war goes on. In some

take, the Gray Ghost was gone again. He went on to recover from the wound and fight again.

After the Confederate surrender came in 1865, Mosby called his men together one last time and simply disbanded his unit. Mosby himself evaded surrender for some time. Following the war, Mosby was arrested three times, mostly for violating federal bans on the wearing of Confederate insignias. His last arrest occurred in Leesburg in January 1866.

"By this time, his wife Pauline had had enough," says Dave Goetz. "She takes the train to Washington to try to see President Johnson,

## Books on Mosby



Numerous books and publications have been written about Col. John Singleton Mosby. Here are a suggested few to get you started on the trail of The Gray Ghost:

- *Gray Ghosts and Rebel Rangers: The Daring Exploits of the Confederate Guerillas* by Virgil Carrington Jones
- *Mosby's Memoirs (Southern Classics)* by John S. Mosby, John O. Tate
- *Mosby* by Thomas J. Evans and James M. Moyer
- *Mosby's Confederacy: A Guide to the Roads and Sites of Col. John Singleton Mosby* by Thomas J. Evans and James M. Moyer
- *Mosby's Rangers* by Jeffrey D. Wert
- *Partisan Life with Mosby* by Major John Scott
- *Ranger Mosby* by Virgil Carrington Jones
- *Rebel* by Kevin Siepel
- *43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command* by Hugh Keen and Horace Mewborn

Mosby eventually joined the Republican Party and became a political ally of Grant.

"What was going on with Grant and Mosby was a connection between men of kindred spirits when it came to war," says Wert. "Grant was a pretty honest man and Mosby was one of the most honest men you are ever going to come across. What you found here were men with mutual respect for each other and who shared the spirit of warriors."

Needless to say, this alliance led many Southerners to repudiate Mosby, but he never wavered. In 1878, President Hayes appointed Mosby as ambassador to Hong Kong, where he served for nine years.

On his return to the States, Mosby took a job with the Southern Pacific Railroad in California. There he met a young boy who showed

interest in his war stories and he not only found time to share them but, even at age 60, he and the boy would re-enact Mosby's raids. The lessons were never forgotten by young George S. Patton, who would later make his own military mark in history as a general in World War II.

Mosby finished his career serving in several federal posts, including with the U.S. Justice Department. On May 30, 1916, John Singleton Mosby died at the age of 82 and was buried in Warrenton.

L.M.

WILLIAM SMALLWOOD WAS THE ONLY MOSBY RANGER KILLED IN ACTION IN A BATTLE AT MOUNT ZION CHURCH IN JULY 1864.



## Mosby in Loudoun

The Loudoun connections with Mosby are extensive. Although there are many local sites associated with Mosby, some of the most important include:

- **Mount Zion Church**, on Route 50, just east of its intersection with Route 15

The church served as a common crossroads on the Old Carolina Road and what is now Route 50. In January of 1863, shortly after the formation of his Rangers at Oakham, Mosby increased his numbers to what is commonly referred to as "The First 15." It was also here in July 1864 that Mosby and his Rangers fought a decisive fight with about 150 Union troops that were out looking for him. At the end of the battle, the Union had lost about two-thirds of those soldiers and Mosby reported one of his men killed.

- **Aldie Mill**, at Aldie on Route 50 between Route 15 and Middleburg

"Around March 1, 1863, Percy Wyndham, with about 200 troops, went to the mayor of Middleburg and said that if the people did not stop giving support to these Mosby guerillas the Federal troops would lock up the leaders and burn the town down," says Dave Goetz, a Mosby Confederacy tour guide from Warrenton. "Mosby was furious and he took 17 men and went riding out after these guys from the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Calvary, who had camped at Aldie Mill. Here comes Mosby in a cloud of dust and the Federal troops think this



is a vanguard of a Confederate brigade and they panic and scatter. Mosby loses control of his horse and gets thrown over the **Old Stone Bridge** into the water. The Federal troops were routed. Some of these Union soldiers looked like apparitions because the Confederate soldiers had to pull them out of the flour bins where they were hiding."

- **Oakham**, just west of Aldie off Route 50

This is the house where Mosby held his first meeting with nine original Rangers on Dec. 30, 1862 to create his unit.

- **Chancellor House**, in Middleburg

This house belonged to the mayor of the town. Mosby had dinner here the night he and 29 other men embarked on the historic Fairfax raid. He also once hid in its attic to evade capture.

- **Red Fox Inn**, in Middleburg

This inn was where Mosby met J.E.B. Stuart on June 17, 1863. Together they set strategy for the upcoming battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville, which served as diversionary tactics to contain Federal troops in northern Virginia and provide time for Gen. Robert E. Lee to move Confederate troops up the Shenandoah Valley toward Gettysburg.

- **Goose Creek Stone Bridge**, west of Middleburg just north of the current Route 50

On June 21, 1863, Stuart engaged Union troops here and successfully kept them from pursuing Lee, who was on his way to Gettysburg.