



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter
August 2016, Volume 13, Issue 9**

Speaker: Adrian Brettle
Topic: "Governor Henry Wise: Politician Turned Solider"
When: Monday, August 8, 2016
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm

Abstract on Adrian Brettle our Scheduled Speaker for Monday, August 8, 2016
By Jim Smithfield

(This information was unavailable at press time)

"CSA Major General Patrick R. Cleburne"

Presented by Ed Bearss

A Review of the presentation by Greg Mertz

(This information was unavailable at press time)

Remember: Please to contact Bob Jones to order your Dinner in advance
To Confirm Your Reservations: Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail cwrtddinner@yahoo.com



JOHN SINGLETON MOSBY

Known to history as The Civil War's "GRAY GHOST"
(Compiled and written by RVCWRT Historian Joyce Darr)

– Part one of a two part article –

John Singleton Mosby was born December 6, 1833, to Virginia McLaurine Mosby and Alfred Daniel Mosby of Powhatan County, Virginia. John was the second of eleven Mosby children. His father, Alfred, was a member of an old Virginia family of English origin, whose ancestor, Richard Mosby, was born in England in the year 1600. Then during the early 17th Century Richard came to America and determined to stay. he settled in Charles City, Virginia. Baby John was named after his paternal grandfather, John Singleton. As a youngster John was a very sickly child, in fact, he was so frail, that as a child, he was relieved of most of the normal chores around the family home including those necessary household duties that were being done by his siblings.

Unfortunately because of John's small stature and his obviously frail health, young John Mosby became the victim of bullies throughout his school career. However, young John always displayed exceptional self-confidence and he had learned to fight back at a very early age. Faced with constant humiliation or of his having to physically defend himself, John began learning how to use his smaller size and speed against his larger and more formidable bullying opponents. In fact in his memoirs Mosby made the statement that he ". . . *never won any of the fights in which I engaged.*" The only time John did not lose a fight was when an adult would come forth and step in to break up the fight.

Mosby began his formal education at a school called *Murrell's Shop*. In 1840, when his family moved to Albemarle County, Virginia, (located near Charlottesville), John then attended a school in *Fry's Woods* before transferring to Charlottesville school at the age of ten. Subsequently in 1847, John enrolled at *Hampden Sidney College*, where his father was an alumnus. Unable to keep up with the school's strenuous academics, Mosby left college after just two years. Then, on October 3, 1850, he entered the *University of Virginia*, taking Classical Studies and joining the Washington Literary Society along with the school's Debating Union. He was far above average in English, Latin, Greek, and Literature (all of these subjects he enjoyed), yet mathematics was his primary problem.

At this time in his life, John was still plagued with chronic illness. However, in his second and third years at the university he continued to excel in languages and literature and began studies in Chemistry and Moral Philosophy. Nonetheless, during a scuffle in the spring of 1851, Mosby assaulted a local constable. This event occurred during a street brawl in the town and for this offense Mosby was given a fine of ten dollars.

Then during his third year at the *University of Virginia*, once again, John ran up against bullies and a quarrel erupted between Mosby and a notorious local bully, named George R. Turpin. This, young man, Turpin, was a tavern keeper's son, he was very robust and physically impressive and imposing. When Mosby heard from a friend that George Turpin had openly made insulting remarks about him, Mosby sent Turpin a letter asking for an explanation. This specific action was one of the various rituals used in the *Southern Code of Honor*, to which so many Southern men adhered. Upon receiving Mosby's message, Turpin became enraged and declared that upon their meeting, he would "*eat him up raw!*" Hearing this, Mosby decided he had to meet Turpin despite any risk, for if John were to run away, this would be considered a dishonorable act of cowardice.

Thus on March 29th the two young men met, Mosby having brought with him a small pepper-box pistol in the hope of dissuading Turpin from his threatened physical attack. Nevertheless, when the two met and Mosby stated "*I hear you've been making assertions . . .*" Turpin put his head down and charged head first, directly at Mosby. At this point, John pulled out his pepper-box pistol and shot his adversary in the neck. The distraught 19-year-old Mosby then went home to await his fate. He was quickly arrested and arraigned on two charges: unlawful shooting (a misdemeanor with a maximum sentence of one year in jail along with a \$500 fine) and malicious shooting (a felony with a maximum sentence of 10 years in the state penitentiary). After a trial that very nearly resulted in a hung jury, Mosby was thus convicted of the lesser of the two offenses. However, Mosby received the maximum sentence, and he later discovered that he'd also been expelled from the university even before he was ever brought to trial for his discretions.

While serving his time, Mosby developed the friendship of his prosecutor, attorney William J. Robertson. It was during his imprisonment that Mosby became interested in the study of law. When Mosby expressed his desire to study law, Robertson offered him the full use of his law library. Mosby studied law during the rest of his incarceration. Young John's friends and family used political influence in an attempt to obtain a pardon. Governor Joseph Johnson, however, reviewed the evidence in the case and he then pardoned Mosby on December 23, 1853, this was right after John's twentieth birthday. Later in life, i.e., in early 1884, John's fine was rescinded by the Virginia State Legislature. The incident, the trial, and his subsequent imprisonment, had so traumatized John, that he never wrote about it, even in his very detailed memoirs of his life before, during and after the Civil War.

Mosby may have been somewhat frail looking but, as he would show during the Civil War, he had boundless and untiring energy, he appeared never to rest. Full grown, John Singleton Mosby stood just 5 foot 7 inches tall and he weighted approximately 128 pounds. He had a very fair complexion, with sandy colored hair and his most dominant feature was his piercing blue eyes. His character was such that he could never be indifferent towards any person with a cause – he was either completely for or completely against a man! Mosby was never one to be in the middle of the road on any issue!

After studying for months as a law clerk in attorney Robertson's law office, Mosby was admitted to the bar and he quickly established his own practice in nearby Howardsville, Virginia. About this time, young John met a young woman, Pauline Clarke, who was visiting from out of town. John was a Methodist and Pauline was a Catholic, but their courtship and love still ensued. Her father was an active attorney and he was also a well-connected politician, as he was also a former Congressman. On December 30, 1857, John and Pauline were married in a Nashville hotel and after living for a year with Mosby's parents, the couple settled in Bristol, Virginia, which was close to Pauline's hometown located across the state line in nearby Kentucky. The Mosby's had two children prior to the Civil War and another child born during the Civil War . . .

– NEXT MONTH . . . *John Singleton Mosby's Civil War years* –

Who we are?

The *Drum and Bugle Newsletter* is published monthly, by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Each month, The Drum and Bugle newsletter is also placed on our web-site, www.RVCWRT.org. Yearly membership dues are still just \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and it's still only \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the ongoing preservation of Civil War sites.

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