

## **Herndon's 1910 Mosby's Ranger Reunion**

By Barbara Glakas

Col. John Singleton Mosby was known as one of the greatest guerillas in American history.

One hundred and three years ago, on Sept. 10, 1910, 96 of Mosby's Rangers gathered in the Town of Herndon for their 16th annual reunion.

The surviving band of elderly Rangers came to Herndon, with their canes and crutches, to meet old friends and to share their stories of their wartime adventures.

A *Washington Post* article published the day after the reunion ("Mosby Men Meet," Sept. 11, 1910) described the event well.

Sadly, the most important Ranger, Col. John Singleton Mosby, did not attend, having attended just one reunion over the years—the first one. In his early 70s in 1910, Mosby was in the process of writing his memoirs.

Known as one of the greatest guerillas in American history, Col. Mosby had attended the University of Virginia and was practicing law in Washington County, Virginia, when the Civil War broke out.

He enlisted as a private in a cavalry unit commanded by J.E.B. Stuart and was later promoted and allowed to organize his own partisan command.

His unit was known as the 43rd Battalion, Virginia Cavalry.

Mosby and his Rangers were known to be fearless and famous for their daring exploits, using hit-and-run tactics to conduct raids, capturing Yankees, breaking up supply trains, and interrupting Union operations.

One such exploit was Mosby's raid at the Herndon station, which took place on St. Patrick's Day in 1863. At that time, Mosby and his men surprised and captured 24 Union soldiers from the First Vermont Cavalry.

Mosby earned the undying admiration and respect of his men.

One veteran at the reunion stated, "Every man of us would have given him our lives then, and we would do the same thing now."

The reunion in Herndon was an all-day affair. The morning session was conducted in Herndon's then-Town Hall and was dedicated mostly to business. Capt. W. Ben Palmer of Richmond presided.

The men named officers and passed a resolution to form an organization called the Sons of Veterans of Mosby's Command. They also accepted an invitation from the Manassas Mayor and Town Council to hold their next reunion in that town the following year.

In the afternoon, the veterans and their families gathered among the trees in Darlington's Grove, the property of J.J. Darlington, a prominent Washington, D.C. lawyer who had a large Victorian summer home in the area surrounded by Van Buren, Monroe and Elden Streets.

Hundreds of other veterans, who had camped in their tents, also attended.

The day was described as being ideal, with the grove providing a beautiful place to hold the celebration. The men recounted stories of their daring days, remembering nights they all slept together under the open night sky and bragging about who was the best among Mosby's men, and who could "pick the most Yankees."

Col. William H. Chapman of Richmond, who was a Lt. Col. of the Battalion during the war, presided over the afternoon activities. Herndon Mayor Claude G. Stephenson gave a welcome address. Additional remarks were made by other Civil War veterans and dignitaries, including Congressman C. C. Carlin of Virginia, who noted that the union could only be preserved permanently if the sovereign rights of the states were preserved.

Several Herndon residents served on a Town committee to prepare for the reunion, addressing such issues as finance, reception, provisions, and entertainment. Mrs. W. I. Robey, Dr. Russell, Mrs. Lynn, Mrs. A. G. Hutchison, and Mrs. Huddleson were among those who served on the committee. Some of the women of the Town served the men an elaborate luncheon.

There were originally eight companies in the 43rd Battalion. At the close of the war, Mosby's unit numbered between 700 and 800 men.

Some claimed that about 200 of those men still survived at the time of the 16th reunion. But Col. Mosby, who was interviewed in November of 1910 by the *Baltimore Sun*, stated that he intentionally had not attended recent Confederate reunions because "there were too many frauds." He explained that between 100 and 200 men claimed to be his men, but he doubted if there were even 100 remaining.

He continued, "Every time they have a reunion there are some 100 or more who register as Mosby's men, and they are looked on as heroes. I bet a lot of them have been born since the war began. If I had had as many men as they now say there were with me, I could have driven Grant out of Virginia."