



HARPERS FERRY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO BOX 1079, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 34 January 2015 No. 06

DATE: Wednesday, February 11th, 2015

TIME: Dinner 7:00 PM; Program 8:00

PLACE: Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV

SPEAKER: John Fox

SUBJECT: Stuart's Finest Hour: The Ride Around McClellan

The Speaker:

John J. Fox grew up in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated from Washington & Lee University with a B.A. in U.S. History in 1981 and then served on active duty in the U.S. Army for seven years as an armor officer and aviator. His 2004 book, *Red Clay to Richmond: Trail of the 35th Georgia Infantry Regiment*, received the "2005 James I. Robertson Jr. Literary Prize for Confederate History" and a 2006 research award from the Georgia Secretary of State. His 2010 book, *The Confederate Alamo: Bloodbath at Petersburg's Fort Gregg on April 2, 1865*, received a 2011 IPPY Award for non-fiction. His articles have appeared in numerous Civil War magazines and newspapers. His newest book, *Stuart's Finest Hour: The Ride Around McClellan, June 1862*, was released in September 2013 and just won a 2014 IPPY Award. When he is not writing, Fox is a pilot for American Airlines. He lives in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

The Subject

John Fox will speak on the subject of his award-winning book, *Stuart's Finest Hour: The Ride Around McClellan*. At the beginning of June 1862, George McClellan's huge Union army stood poised to decimate the Confederate capital of Richmond. The city faced chaos as thousands of civilians fled. Confederate army commander Robert E. Lee wanted to launch his own attack but he needed to know what stood on McClellan's right flank. John Fox will place the audience in the dusty saddle of both the hunter and the hunted as Stuart's men sliced deep behind Union lines to gather information for Lee. He will follow the Confederate horsemen on their 110-mile ride all the while chased by Union troopers commanded by Stuart's father-in-law, Philip St. George Cooke.

The Meal

A family-style meal will be served at 7:00 PM prior to the program. The cost of the meal is \$15.00 per person. Reservations for the meal **must be made no later than Sunday, February 8th**, with Kyle Wichtendahl at kfwichtendahl@gmail.com or 301-639-8855. The meal will consist of Fried Chicken, Cole Slaw, Macaroni & Cheese, Applesauce or Fruit Cup, Iced Tea, Coffee, Rolls, Butter, & Dessert.

Mosby Raids Culpeper

The Gray Ghost Attacks Fleetwood Hill
By Clark "Bud" Hall

Some men were born only to be great soldiers. And certainly if the Civil War never occurred, the names of Lee, Grant, Custer, Stuart, Longstreet and Stonewall would be mostly unknown today. But aside from these renowned West Point officers revealed to history via our fratricidal conflict, there emerged in 1861 a modest country lawyer absent military education who became one of the most famous soldiers in the annals of war. And although we think of "Mosby's Confederacy" as comprising Loudoun and Fauquier Counties, it is a fact that John Singleton Mosby once led "Mosby's Rangers" in a nighttime attack atop the most famous military ridge in this country.

One cannot examine John Mosby's career without first recognizing the martial genius of Gen. Jeb Stuart. There was no better judge of fighting talent than that retained by Lee's cavalry commander, and Stuart spotted merit in precise intelligence reports amassed by a quiet, serious scout from Abingdon. About 5'7", and weighing 125 pounds, the wiry Mosby was easy to look past, but the intuitive Stuart saw steel behind his piercing eyes. One of Mosby's men wrote, "the secret of his power over his men...were his eyes...deep blue, luminous, piercing." Deadly, cold eyes: those of a killer

Prompted by Stuart, John Mosby formed an independent command, mustered in as "Company A, 43rd Battalion, Virginia Partisan Rangers." (His only instructions: "Obey my orders. And fight!") In this creative tactical alignment, the bold Rangers operated behind enemy lines, with Mosby reporting directly to Stuart. Almost overnight, the Rangers became famed and feared for daring raids north and south of the Potomac,

rendering the hapless Yankees "besides [sic] themselves with fury." Mosby soon devised a raid that brought his Rangers south of the Rappahannock.

On November 26, 1863, the Army of the Potomac departed Culpeper County to initiate the Mine Run Campaign. At the same time Yankee soldiers splashed across Jacob's Ford, the Gray Ghost gathered 125 troopers in Rectortown. Unaware of their objective—the secretive Mosby never disclosed plans—Mosby's Rangers proceeded to Coons' Mill on Muddy Run (near Don and Chris Stockton's home today). The opportunistic Mosby knew that as the Yankees vacated Culpeper, the remaining supply depot at Brandy Station offered a tempting target.

Mapmaker Robert Sneden and several clerks were left behind at Henry Miller's house on the south end of Fleetwood Hill. (Thomas Strode's Colonial home, "Fleetwood," once nobly stood near a recently appearing, massive mansion on the southern crest of the ridge.) Just beneath Fleetwood Hill, a large wagon train pulled in. About twilight, Private Sneden looked up the ridge and ominously observed a "line of horsemen...that did not look like our cavalry...reconnoitering our position." He alerted his colleagues these riders were likely "Mosby's gang." Sneden's mates, "laughed at my fears." A worried Private Sneden shivered against a "cold fog" gathering over Fleetwood Hill. He was soon fast asleep.

A "rough tap on the head with a pistol barrel" rudely awakened Private Sneden, and with pistol cocked, a Ranger informed Sneden that Mosby demanded his presence. Taken outside to Mosby—Sneden described the Partisan leader as "an undersized, thin visage looking fellow"—Sneden was harshly questioned, but proved unhelpful. Thwarted by the brave Sneden, the Rebel commander nevertheless had a richer target in mind than rearguard clerks, to wit: the loaded wagons at Fleetwood's base.

Pistols at their heads, Sneden and his comrades led Mosby down Fleetwood to the sleeping wagon camp. Mosby's men moved stealthily about the snoring teamsters, cutting mules loose from their tethers. Mosby then ordered his men to burn the wagons. And only when confronted with being burned alive did the teamsters finally awaken and realize their peril. But the tepid reaction by the aroused wagon guards was too little, too late.

Leaving forty burning wagons behind, Mosby's Rangers escaped toward Woodville with 23 prisoners, 112 mules and 7 horses. Mosby's casualties: One Ranger shot in the thigh; Mosby's horse shot in the chest. As for Private Robert Sneden, Libby Prison awaited.

General Stuart glowingly applauded, "Mosby's Culpeper Raid." And such compliments were certainly good enough for John Mosby, who wrote, "Praise from Stuart was all the reward I ever wanted."

On This Day, Wednesday, February 11, 1862

Gen. John McClelland's Federals led the advance from Fort Henry across towards Fort Donelson as Grant's army began its march. Foote's Federal gunboats were moving from the Tennessee to the Ohio at Paducah and thence up the Cumberland. For the Confederates, Brig. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner arrived at Fort Donelson as more troops came in. All of this was in preparation for the attack on Fort Donelson Feb. 13, 1862. (Excerpted from *The Civil War Day by Day*, E. B. Long, published by Doubleday).