

First Reunion of Mosby's Command

On Wednesday, January 16, 1895, the first reunion of Mosby's Rangers was held at the Odd Fellows Hall on Columbus Street in Alexandria VA. In spite of inclement weather, about 150 of the old veterans attended.

That afternoon, a meeting was held and a permanent organization known as the 'John S. Mosby Camp, Confederate Veterans' was formed. The following officers were elected:

Commander: John S. Mosby

First Lieutenant Commander: John H. Alexander

Second Lieutenant Commander: James William Foster

Third Lieutenant Commander: Fountain Beattie

Adjutant: William H. Mosby

Sergeant Major and Treasurer: John G. Beckham

Chaplain: Samuel F. Chapman

Surgeon: Dr. W.L. Dunn

Quartermaster: George R.L. Turberville

Executive Committee: J.W. Hammond, B. Frank Carter, Jr., J.F. Faulkner and George D. Hunt

At the evening banquet, Major A.E. Richards acted as toastmaster. To the first toast, 'The Forty-Third Battalion Virginia Cavalry', Colonel Mosby made the following comments:

"COMRADES: When on April 21, 1865, I told you that I was no longer your commander, and bade you what we then considered a long and perhaps eternal farewell, the most hopeful among us could not reasonably have expected ever to witness a scene like this. Nearly thirty years have passed away, and we meet once more on the banks of the Potomac and in sight of the Capitol, not in hostile array, but as citizens of a great and united country. Gun-boats no longer patrol the river—there are no picket guards on its banks to challenge our crossing. Your presence here this evening recalls our last parting. I see the line drawn up to hear read the last order I ever gave you. I see the moistened eyes and quivering lips. I hear the command to break ranks. I feel the grasp of the hand and see the tears on the cheeks of men who had dared death so long that it had lost its terror. And I know now as I knew then, that each heart suffered with mine the agony of the Titan in his resignation to fate:

'The rock, the vulture and the chain---
All that proud can feel the pain.'

"I miss among you the faces of some who were present that day, but have since passed over the great river, and memory brings back the image of many of that glorious band who then slept in the red burial of war.

"Modern skepticism has destroyed one of the most beautiful creations of the Epic ages—the belief that the spirits of dead warriors meet daily in the halls of Valhalla, and there around the festive board recount the deeds they did in the other world. For this evening, at least, let us adopt the ancient superstition, if superstition it be. It may seem presumption in me, but a man who belonged to my command may be forgiven for thinking that in that assembly of heroes—when the feast of the wild boar is spread—Smith and Turner, Mountjoy and Glascock, Fox and Whitescarver and their companions will not be unnoted in the mighty throng. I shall make no particular allusion to the part you played in the great tragedy of war. Our personal associations were so intimate, it would not become me to do so. But, standing here as I do amid the wreck of perished hopes, this much at least I can say, that in all the vicissitudes of fortune and in all the

trials of life I have never ceased to feel, as I told you when parting, a just pride in the fame of your achievements and grateful recollections of your generous kindness to myself.

“I remember—and may my right arm wither if I ever forget—how, when mournful tidings came from Appomattox that ‘Young Harry Percy’s spur is cold’, you stood with unshaken fidelity to the last, and never quit my side until I told you to go.

“A great poet of antiquity and, as descriptive of the Romans, that they changed their sky but not their hearts when they crossed over the sea. As long as I lived in far Cathay my heart untraveled, dwelt among the people in whose defense I had shed my blood and given the best years of my life. In the solitude of exile it was a solace to hear that my name was sometimes mentioned by them with expressions of good will. Nothing that concerns the honor and welfare of Virginia can ever be indifferent to me. I wish that life’s descending shadows had fallen upon me in the midst of the friends and the scenes I love best. But destiny—not my will—compels me to abide far away on the shore of that sea where

‘The god of gladness sheds his parting smile.’

“I must soon say to you again *farewell*, a word that must be and hath been. I shall carry back to my home by the Golden Gate proud recollections of this evening. And I shall still feel, as I have always felt, that life cannot offer a more bitter cup than the one I drained when we parted at Salem, nor any higher reward to ambition than that I received as commander of the Forty-Third Virginia Battalion of Cavalry.”

A second reunion was held August 14, 1895 at Marshall (formerly Salem), Fauquier County, VA in a grove in the rear of the field where Mosby’s Men were disbanded on April 21, 1865. Col. Mosby did not attend. However, his four daughters, Mrs. R.R. Campbell, Mrs. W.E. Coleman, Miss Pauline Mosby and Miss Ada Mosby did attend. At this reunion, a resolution was passed to start a fund for a monument to Mosby’s Men who were murdered by Gen. George A. Custer’s command at Front Royal, VA.