

M. W. Flannery, 43rd Virginia Cavalry

M.W. Flannery was enlisted for the war as a Private in Co. A on Aug. 20, 1863 by John S. Mosby in Fauquier Co., VA¹. Along with Channing M. Smith, Richard H. Lewis, and William A. Brent, he attempted to derail an Orange & Alexandria train near Catlett's Station about October 5, 1863². Flannery appears as "present" on the August – December Muster Rolls. He was involved in the January 1864 raid on a Federal cavalry camp at Vienna, VA³. Flannery was killed in action April 13, 1864 while attempting to capture a picket post of the 13th Pennsylvania Infantry near Nokesville, VA⁴.

M.W. Flannery was born in Ireland in 1838, immigrated to the United States about 1853 entering at Mobile, AL⁵ and became a naturalized citizen there on December 4, 1858. In June 1860, he was boarding with George R. Marquis, a bookbinder, and his family in Mobile City. Flannery was also listed as a bookbinder⁶. In the fall and winter of 1863-4, he boarded in the neighborhood of Paris, Fauquier Co., VA being a frequent visitor to "Belle Grove" and "Mt. Bleak" where he was known for playing the banjo. Flannery was nicknamed the "Plug Count" by fellow rangers⁷.

According to ranger and post-war author James J. Williamson, referring to Flannery's death, he "had already been twice in the Federal camp, and was approaching a picket with the intention of capturing him when the picket ordered him to halt. While parleying with the soldier a sudden gust of wind blew open his overcoat, exposing his gray uniform, and the soldier fired at him, the ball entering his breast. Flannery thrust his handkerchief into his bosom to staunch the flow of blood, and drawing his pistol, fired twice at the picket, and raised the weapon to fire a third time, but fell to the ground before he could pull the trigger. He was a determined man and a brave soldier."⁸

Flannery was a favorite at "Belle Grove," the home of Mrs. Elizabeth "Betsy" Edmonds. Edmonds daughter, Amanda Virginia "Tee" Edmonds, recorded in her diary upon hearing of the death of Flannery, "Oh! Oh! Oh! What a bad, unlooked for, unwished for news the boys bring this morning. Poor Mr. Flannery has been killed. Nearly two weeks ago he left Belle Grove expecting to return in a day or two, but alas Belle Grove will see him no more. Oh! How sad to think of it when we see his loved instrument (banjo) sitting in the corner waiting; silent and mute as the soldier in his grave. Oh! Will the anguish, trouble and sorrow of war ever cease."⁹

Editor's Comments: Flannery consistently identified himself as "M.W. Flannery" from the time he entered the U.S. at Mobile, through his naturalization proceedings, and apparently through his guerilla career in Northern Virginia. No record or reference has been found to date of what the initials "M.W." represent.

There is no record of previous service for M.W. Flannery in the Confederate Army prior to his enlistment with the 43rd Battalion. But, the question begs to be asked: How does a "city boy, bookbinder" in Mobile, AL become a guerilla fighter in Northern Virginia, running with cavalymen of the caliber of Channing Smith and Richard Lewis and being identified by Federal forces as a "notorious guerilla"? What was he doing during the first two years of the War? We probably will never have the answers to these questions as they likely rest in lost Confederate records. Flannery apparently immigrated to the U.S. by himself as a young teenager. There is evidence though that he may have had family in the Mobile area at the time as there are Irish "Flannery" families enumerated in both the 1850 and 1860 census of Mobile. Of note is one Thomas E. Flannery who was enumerated close to M. W. Flannery in the 1860 Federal Census of Mobile and who served during the war in the 56th AL Partisan Rangers.

Let us never forget the sacrifice of M. W. Flannery.

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¹ National Archives, Washington D.C., Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 43rd Battalion, Virginia Partisan Rangers, Microfilm #324, Roll #208, record #483.

² Brent, William A., memoirs, typescript, p. 29.

³ Scott, John, *Partisan Life with Mosby*, p. 183.

⁴ *War of the Rebellion – Official Records – Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume XXXIII, NO. 1, p. 269, “April 13, 1864 – Affair near Nokesville, Va., Report of Capt. James F. Grimes, Seventeenth U. S. Infantry”.

⁵ King, Clinton P. and Barlow, Meriem A., *Naturalization Records Mobile, Alabama 1833-1906*, p. 40.

⁶ 1860 Federal Census of the United States, Mobile Co., AL, p. 225.

⁷ Baird, Nancy Chappelle, *Journals of Amanda Virginia Edmonds – Lass of Mosby Confederacy 1859-1867*, pp. 169, 173, 184, 187-9.

⁸ Williamson, James J., *Mosby’s Rangers*, 2nd Edition, p. 155.

⁹ Baird, Nancy Chappelle, *Journals of Amanda Virginia Edmonds – Lass of Mosby Confederacy 1859-1867*, pp. 191-2.