

David L. Hixson, 43rd Virginia Cavalry

David L. Hixson was born about 1841 at Dover, Loudoun County, Virginia, the son of Abner Humphrey Hixson and Harriett Reid Lynn. Dover was a small village founded by David Hixson's grandfather, Benjamin Hixson, about 1804 and is located approximately two miles west of Aldie.¹ David's great uncle of the same name was a long-time sheriff of Loudoun County. The Abner H. Hixson family was listed in the 1860 census of Loudoun County as residing in the Aldie Post Office area where both he and son David were listed as carpenters.²

On May 7, 1861, David L. Hixson enlisted in Company D, 8th Virginia Infantry by Captain William N. Berkeley at Aldie, Virginia.³ David's father, Abner, enlisted in the 8th Virginia Infantry 5 months later at age 50. Abner was detailed as a hospital nurse for most of the war but is believed to have remained at home during most of that period.⁴

David Hixson participated in the October 21, 1861 battle of Ball's Bluff in Loudoun County where he was involved in the fight all day. At the end of the day, he volunteered with a detachment from the 8th Virginia Infantry following Elijah V. White of the 7th Virginia Cavalry in an attack on a large group of Federals attempting to re-cross the Potomac River below Ball's Bluff.⁵ White was acting as a volunteer aide to Colonel Eppa Hunton at the time. Hixson was out until midnight taking prisoners from this engagement.⁶ David Hixson was wounded in the foot August 30, 1862 in the Battle of 2nd Manassas. He appears in muster rolls as absent from October 1862 to August 31, 1864 when he is dropped from the rolls as AWOL.⁷

Hixson joined with brothers Bushrod and Samuel L. Underwood from the 43rd Virginia Cavalry in capturing Colonel James M. Sanderson, Major William Russell, Jr., a sergeant and a private from the Union 1st Corps on July 20, 1863 at Benton's Ford on Goose Creek in Loudoun County.⁸ Hixson was identified as a member of Mosby's Rangers when captured at a house near Aldie on October 8, 1863 by a detachment of 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry. A correspondent of the "Alta Californian" newspaper, following the Californians with the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry, reported the details of Hixson's capture as follows:

"Thus far we had had poor luck, and again we mounted our horses. A gallop of half a mile brought us to the house of a Mr. Hixson; we were surprised to see lights burning, and soon surrounded the premises and entered the house. In the lower room the old man, wife, and four girls were sleeping – all of them were much frightened and stood looking in amazement at each other. We searched the lower part of the house, but found nothing we wanted, except a handsome bed quilt with the United States coat of arms in each corner, which was captured and now adorns the bed of your correspondent. Candles in hand we rushed up stairs, and there hid in a large feather-bed, we found a full-blown, genuine rebel.

"Get up, get up, say Ben Brown, at the same time punching him with a pistol, by way of emphasis.

"The Reb reluctantly obeyed, and when brought down stairs, proved to be Dave Hixson – one of the worst desperadoes of Moseby's guerrillas. As soon as we reached the lower room with our prisoner, the whole family burst into tears and vented their grief in loud lamentation.

"They are going to take Cousin Dave away, and we won't see him any more, cried the poor girls."⁹

With the Federal raiding party that night, was Charles H. Binns who had deserted from the 43rd a month earlier.

David Hixson was taken to Old Capital Prison in Washington, D.C. where he was held until February 3, 1864. He was then transferred to Point Lookout, Maryland Federal Prison. He was exchanged January 17, 1865 and appears on a January 1865 Richmond, Virginia Hospital roll as a 'Paroled Prisoner'. He was furloughed for 40 days from the Richmond Hospital on February 9, 1865. Hixson took a Federal parole although the date of the parole is unknown.¹⁰

David Hixson was mysteriously killed by Federal occupation troops at Aldie in June 1865.¹¹ The only details we know of his death were provided by his second cousin, Annie Klipstein Gore in an interview for her son in 1937. She notes: "James Hixson had a grandson named David

Hixson, who came home to Loudoun County during the War Between the States to see his widowed mother. The first night he got there the Federals came and pulled him out of the bed and shot him before his mother's eyes." Anne Gore was likely a little confused some 72 years after this tragedy took place. It was actually her great-grandfather James Hixson whose great-grandson was David Hixson and his mother, Harriet Lynn Hixson, was not widowed at the time.¹²

David L. Hixson is likely buried in the Hixson Family Cemetery at Dover although there is no record of his burial there and no identifiable headstone remains today.

Editors Comments: David L. Hixson is only one of a number of soldiers that were absent from their regularly enrolled organizations to be fighting with the 43rd Virginia Cavalry. Mosby consistently indicated that all his men were legally enrolled in the 43rd. A review of the compiled service records clearly indicates a number of men in the 43rd were AWOL from other organizations. The issue even extended to some of his officers.

The details of David Hixson's death are not known beyond Annie Klipstein Gore's account in 1937. There are no published Federal accounts of why he was hunted down and killed nearly two months after Lee's surrender. We do know that a few rangers had not given up the cause and had continued to raid and pillage businesses and properties in the area belonging to Union owners or Union sympathizers. Charles H. McDonough and Loughborough 'Nick' Carter are only two examples of former Rangers engaging in this type of activity. Whether or not David L. Hixson was involved in this activity is not known. It certainly would have been a reason for the Federal troops to be looking for him. An article in a local newspaper may be a piece to the puzzle. It read: "We learn that two men visited a store in Herndon in Fairfax County one day last week and relieved it of the money and other valuables they could find, and then decamped in the direction of Loudoun. They were pursued by six Federal soldiers who came up with them at a house near Aldie. A fight ensued in which one of the soldiers was killed and another wounded, after which the pursued made their escape. The next day a company of soldiers visited the neighborhood in search of them but they had not been arrested at last accounts."¹³

Whether David L. Hixson was one of the two men mentioned in the newspaper article, we may never know. We do know that his home was at Dover, which is two miles west of Aldie and the time of this event and Hixson's death all occurred in June 1865.

Let us never forget the sacrifice of David L. Hixson.

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¹ "W.P.A. Records, Fauquier County, Virginia", Aurelia M. Jewell. 1955, Book 2, page 278.

² National Archives, 1860 Federal Census, Loudoun County, Virginia, Series M563, Roll 1359, pages 547-8.

³ Divine, John E. "8th Virginia Infantry." 2nd Ed. Lynchburg, Virginia: H. E. Howard Inc., 1983. page 67.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Myers, Frank M. "The Comanches: A History of White's Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, Laurel Brig., Hampton Div., A.N.V." Reprint Ed. Gaithersburg, Maryland: Butternut Press, Inc., 1987. page 14.

⁶ Parkins, Mrs. Belle Lee. Un-named article in "Confederate Veteran." Volume #2, 1894, page 120.

⁷ Divine, "8th Virginia Infantry." Page 67.

⁸ Williamson, James J. "Mosby's Rangers." New York, NY: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1909. page 81.

⁹ Rogers, Larry and Rogers, Keith. "Their Horses Climbed Trees." Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 2001, page 221.

¹⁰ Divine, "8th Virginia Infantry", page 67.

¹¹ Jewell, Mrs. Walter Towner, "Death Records of Loudoun County, Virginia", N.p. N.d. page 78.

¹² Interview with Annie Klipstein Gore by Marvin D. Gore, June 1937, "W.P.A. Records, Fauquier County, Virginia", Aurelia M. Jewell, 1955, Book 2, page 54.

¹³ Leesburg, Virginia "Democratic Mirror", June 14, 1865, page 4, col. 1.