

William G. Martin, 43rd Virginia Cavalry

William G. "Willie" Martin first enlisted in the Confederate Army on May 29, 1861. He was enlisted by Captain John R. Bagby at Stevensville, King and Queen County, Virginia. He was mustered into Captain Bagby's Company (King and Queen Artillery), 4th Regiment, Virginia Heavy Artillery by H. B. Tomlin on May 30, 1861 at West Point, Virginia. His enlistment record shows his age as 18 years.ⁱ

Willie Martin appears as "Present" on 4th Virginia Artillery Regiment muster rolls through February 1862. He re-enlisted in the 4th Virginia Artillery on February 7, 1862 for a period of two years by Colonel P. R. Page at Gloucester Point, Virginia. Martin continued to appear as "present" on muster rolls until May 17, 1862 when he was admitted to Chimborazo Hospital No. 3 in Richmond with pneumonia. There is no record of the date of his return to duty.ⁱⁱ

The 4th Virginia Artillery Regiment was assigned to infantry duty on May 23, 1862 by Confederate Adjutant & Inspector General Office special order No. 118. Martin's unit became Company K of the 34th Virginia Infantry Regiment. He was present on subsequent muster rolls through February 1863. He was paid \$26.40 on March 13, 1863 for service covering the period December 31, 1862 to March 12, 1863.ⁱⁱⁱ

There is no record of Willie Martin's service with the 34th Virginia Infantry after he was paid on March 13, 1863. There are post-war records of his service in Company E, 5th Virginia Cavalry Regiment but no war-date records exist to substantiate that service.^{iv}

Willie Martin's first recorded contact with the 43rd Virginia Cavalry did not come until March 10, 1864. Martin and about 50 other partisans, led by 1st Lieutenant Adolphus E. "Dolly" Richards, attacked an outpost of the 1st New York Veteran Cavalry, which was located near the intersection of the Kabletown Road and the Bloomery Turnpike in southwestern Jefferson County, West Virginia. Hearing the firing at the outpost, a Union relief force under command of Major Jeremiah A. Sullivan was sent to overtake the rangers. The Union cavalymen initially captured Willie Martin who was straggling behind his comrades. Near Kabletown, Sullivan's force overtook six of Richards men who turned and charged the Federals causing a rout of the blue coats back towards Charles Town. As soon as the Federal rout was fully underway, Willie Martin wrestled a carbine from his guard, and taking the gun by the barrel, stood in the road and battled the escaping Federals as they passed by him.^v

Willie Martin joined with 22 other rangers on a scout to Stafford County, Virginia in mid-May, 1864. On May 12, 1864, the partisans captured a train of 50 wagons passing between Belle Plain and Fredericksburg.^{vi}

Martin participated in Mosby's July 4, 1864 raid on Point Of Rocks, Maryland. After this raid, the Union army was out searching for the partisans. At the same time, Mosby was looking for the Union cavalymen who were trying to find him and his men. On July, 6, 1864, the rangers found their prey, 250 troopers of the 2nd Massachusetts and 13th New York Cavalry Regiments commanded by Major William H. Forbes. The Federals were found resting just east of Mt. Zion Church on the Little River Pike about 2 miles east of Aldie. The Rangers charged the blue coats and a running battle ensued. Willie Martin was in the thick of the battle and had his horse shot out from under him early in the fight. Ranger John W. Munson recorded: "Willie Martin was so closely surrounded by Forbes' men that they were obliged to club him into insensibility because there was no room to fire a carbine with safety to their own men." When all the smoke cleared, Martin was riding a fine horse but was severely bruised.^{vii}

The next day, while scouting the battlefield, Martin captured the chaplain of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry, Charles A. Humphreys while Humphreys, was tending to wounded soldiers. In his memoirs published in 1918, Humphreys was not at all complimentary of his captor. He referred to him as a "rough-looking guerrilla," a "typical free-booter," and a "highway robber." Humphreys' attitude could have been partly due to the fact that he was forced to walk to Rectortown, where the other prisoners were being kept, was relieved of all his personal articles

and valuables, and was forced to endure the singing of Rebel songs and ballads by the young partisan.^{viii}

The next recorded action of William G. Martin with the 43rd Virginia Cavalry came just 12 days later on July 18, 1864 at Snickersville in Loudoun County. Captain Dolly Richards, Willie Martin and nine other rangers encountered a detachment of Union cavalry near that location. In the engagement, the Southerners completely routed the Union troopers.^{ix}

Lieutenant Colonel John S. Mosby was sufficiently impressed with the bravery and gallantry of Willie Martin that he had him “elected” 3rd Lieutenant of his 5th company (Company E) which was organized on July 28, 1864. Surprisingly, the only surviving war-date record of William G. Martin’s service with the 43rd Virginia Cavalry Battalion is a Company E muster dated December 25, 1864 which was for the period of July 28 to August 31, 1864. The roll showed Martin as “present.”^x

Martin was busy with the Rangers during the month of August, 1864. He was involved in the Berryville Wagon Raid which took place August 13, 1864. Two days later, he joined with Captain Dolly Richards and 27 other rangers in scouting along the Berryville Turnpike near Charles Town. The rangers located and attacked a detachment of six Federal cavalrymen heading to Harpers Ferry, completely routing them.^{xi}

Martin again joined with Captain Dolly Richards and Company B on August 19, 1864, in scouting the Union 19th Corps encamped around Rippon along the Harpers Ferry Turnpike. Richards had developed a plan to capture Union General Philip H. Sheridan. The partisan captain with Martin and 10 other picked men entered the camp of the 19th New York Cavalry. As the partisans passed a sentinel, Martin told the guard to “hold his gun properly,” and added, “That’s no way for a man to stand on duty.” The soldier promptly set about acting in the proper manner of a soldier. Richards and his little band were unsuccessful with their plan, not being able to locate the Union cavalry leader in the throng of the 19th Corps.^{xii}

Upon the return of Dolly Richards and Company B to Loudoun County on August 20th, an incident occurred that deeply saddened the Battalion. Willie Martin was accidentally shot by one of his comrades who were riding next to him. According to Ranger, James J. Williamson, the “ball passed through his breast from left to right.” 3rd Lieutenant William G. Martin was buried in the Upperville cemetery the next day, August 21, 1864. Mosby attended the funeral. It was recorded that he was deeply moved when the coffin containing the young ranger was covered with dirt.^{xiii} It should be noted that one unsubstantiated account, possibly written by a ranger, had Willie Martin accidentally shooting himself.^{xiv}

Post-war biographers of the 43rd Virginia Cavalry Battalion had glowing praise for William G. Martin. James J. Williamson noted, “He was a brave young soldier – his daring at times seeming reckless. He had many friends, both in the command and among the citizens, and his death was a regret to all.” Ranger J. Marshall Crawford wrote: “On the battle-field he was the bravest of the brave, and in the charge his impetuosity knew no bounds. Being a splendid shot, he was always in the front with Colonel Mosby; and when the charge was sounded, his soul seemed fired; and away he would go frequently ahead of his commander, right into the enemy, firing right and left, every shot telling; and when his ammunition was exhausted, he has been frequently seen using the butt-end of his pistols over the heads of the enemy, and always with telling effect. John W. Munson recorded: “Death had snatched away another one of our shining marks, and left a vacant place that seemed never to be filled. There were men and boys among us who had become so prominent by their individual bravery that when they left us we did not know who to stand up in their gaps, and so we left the gaps open. Willie Martin was one of them.”^{xv}

William G. Martin was born about 1842 in either King William County or King and Queen County, Virginia, the son of William Martin and Harriett S. Littlepage. By 1850 the family was living in King William County. Between 1853 and 1860, the family removed to King and Queen County, Virginia and was enumerated in the 1860 Census as residing in the vicinity of King and Queen Court House.^{xvi}

The exact location of the remains of William G. Martin in the Upperville, Virginia Cemetery is unknown.

Let us never forget the sacrifice of William G. Martin.

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ⁱ National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 109, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records, Compiled Military Service Records of the Officers and Men who served in the 34th Virginia Infantry Regiment, Microfilm #324, Roll #810.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Bagby, Rev. Alfred, A.B., D.D. *King and Queen County, Virginia*. New York and Washington, D.C.: The Neal Publishing Company, 1908, page 147; Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. "Virginia Confederate Rosters" (unofficial) compiled between 1904 and 1918, On-line ed., Vol. 8, page 501.

^v Scott, John. *Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby*. New York, N.Y.: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1867, pages 205-6.

^{vi} Ibid, pages 221-2.

^{vii} Ibid, pages 247-8; Crawford, J. Marshall. *Mosby and His Men: A Record of the Adventures of that Renowned Partisan Ranger, John S. Mosby, Colonel C.S.A.* New York, N.Y.: G. W. Carleton & Co., Publishers, 1867, page 229; Munson, John W. *Reminiscences of a Mosby Guerilla*. New York, N.Y.: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1906, page 97.

^{viii} Humphreys, Charles A. *Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison in the Civil War 1863 – 1865*. Boston, MA.: Press of Geo. H. Ellis Co., 1918, pages 108-111.

^{ix} Keen, Hugh C. and Mewborn, Horace, *43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command*. Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1993, page 146; Scott. *Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby*, pages 251-2.

^x National Archives, Washington, D.C. Record Group 109, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records. Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 43rd Battalion, Virginia partisan Rangers, Microfilm 324, Roll 209, record #907.

^{xi} Scott. *Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby*, pages 272-4, 277; Keen and Mewborn, *43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command*, pages 159-160.

^{xii} Scott. "Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby," pages 282-4, 277; Keen and Mewborn, *43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command*, page 164.

^{xiii} Williamson, James J., *Mosby's Rangers*, Second Edition, New York, Sturgis & Walton Co., 1909, page 217; Scott. *Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby*, pages 286; Keen and Mewborn, *43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command*, page 164.

^{xiv} From Mosby's Command, Mosby's Command – It's Onslaught on the Yankees at Berryville, Clarke County, Virginia – Capture of Prisoners, Horses and Mules – Destruction of Wagons, & c, & c. *Richmond Inquirer*, Richmond, Virginia. September 1, 1864.

^{xv} Williamson, *Mosby's Rangers*, page 217; Crawford, *Mosby and His Men: A Record of the Adventures of that Renowned Partisan Ranger, John S. Mosby, Colonel C.S.A.*, page 222; Munson, *Reminiscences of a Mosby Guerilla*, page 202

^{xvi} Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. International Genealogical Index, Vol. V. On-line ed. (www.familysearch.org). Family Group Record #500075, Burnley Thelmachus Martin; National Archives, Washington, D.C., RG 29. Records of the Bureau of the Census. 1850 Federal Census, King William County, Virginia, Micro. 432, Roll 955, page 259; National Archives, 1860 Census, King and Queen County, Virginia, Micro. M 653, Roll 1357, page 470.