

## Norman E. Smith, 43<sup>rd</sup> Virginia Cavalry

Sixteen year old Norman E. Smith joined the Confederate Army's 'Warrenton Rifles' with his uncle, Edwin Smith on April 22, 1861. They were enrolled by Captain John Q. Marr. The Smith's were mustered into Company K, 17<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry Regiment on April 27, 1861 at Dumfries, Virginia. Interestingly, Norman Smith's older brothers, William Rowley Smith, enlisted in the 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry on April 25, 1861 and Thomas Towson Smith joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry on July 20, 1861.<sup>i</sup>

Company muster rolls show Norman E. Smith as "Present" for the period July through October 1861. He was transferred to Company H, 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry Regiment on December 16, 1861 by Special Order No. 534, approved by General Joseph E. Johnston. Several Smith relatives were already serving in the 'Black Horse Troop' including brother 3<sup>rd</sup> Lieutenant William R. Smith; uncles: Anderson Doniphan Smith, Benjamin Franklin Smith and Isaac Eustace Smith; and cousins William Aquilla Smith, William Smith Hunton and Henry Smith Hunton.<sup>ii</sup>

Norman Smith appears on a 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, Company H muster roll as "Present" for the period January – February, 1862. His status is not noted for company muster rolls for the periods November – December 1862 and March – April 1863. He appears on a muster roll for the period July – August 1863 as "absent detached courier for Gen. Ewell."<sup>iii</sup>

Virginia congressman and future governor, William Smith, nominated Norman E. Smith on April 19, 1862 for a cadet warrant representing his District of Fauquier County. There is no evidence that the nomination was approved or that the nominee ever attended Virginia Military Institute.<sup>iv</sup>

Norman Smith and Francis Edgar 'Ed' Wright, also of the Black Horse Troop, and Lieutenant Frank M. Myers of the 35<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, scouted together about May 23, 1862. They were supporting General Richard Ewell's movement of his division to join General Thomas J. 'Stonewall' Jackson to drive Union General Banks from the Shenandoah Valley.<sup>v</sup>

The first evidence of Norman E. Smith working in consort with Mosby's Command occurs on April 29, 1863. On this date, Mosby instructed Thomas W. Richards and several men, including Alfred Glascock and Norman E. Smith, to scout General Julius Stahel's command as the Union expedition proceeded from Upperville to Hopewell Gap in northern Fauquier County.<sup>vi</sup> Smith joined with Mosby's Command again on May 30, 1863 in a raid on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad that occurred just east of Catlett's Station in Fauquier County. Smith along with Mosby and Ranger Charlie McDonough were some of the last to leave their mountain howitzer at Grapewood Farm near Greenwich. According to a post-war memoir of Samuel F. Chapman, the three "were hemmed in by high fences and barely got away."<sup>vii</sup>

Major Mosby focused on gathering intelligence during the cavalry battles at Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville. On June 18, 1863, Mosby, along with Joseph H. Nelson, Charles Landon Hall and Norman E. Smith, was scouting along the Little River Turnpike when they observed three horses in front of the Almond Birch home near the old Arcola post office. The Rangers captured an orderly guarding the horses and a major and captain on the inside. They were carrying important dispatches to General Pleasanton. Mosby recognized the importance of the papers and even though it was near midnight, asked Norman Smith to take them immediately to General Stuart. Smith had to traverse through the entire cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac to reach Stuart's headquarters. The documents were in Stuart's possession by dawn the next morning.<sup>viii</sup>

While General Meade's Army was located in the vicinity of Warrenton in mid-July 1863, Mosby focused on scouting the various Union corps, and picking off Federal scouting parties and stragglers. On one occasion, near Mrs. Lewis' house, Mosby and 18 Rangers including Norman Smith charged a detachment of Union cavalry. In the ensuing chase, the Rangers captured a major, a lieutenant and several others.<sup>ix</sup> About this time, Norman Smith entered a house that had

been the headquarters of Union General Oliver O. Howard. He had just missed capturing the Union general but did capture a major who was found sitting at a table writing a letter.<sup>x</sup>

Norman Smith apparently had been petitioning the Confederate Army high command to allow him to recruit a company of cavalymen. The following message was issued by the Confederate Secretary of War on August 13, 1863:<sup>xi</sup>

A. G. Issue authority to Norman Smith to raise a company for the  
Provisional Army for the war from persons within the lines of the enemy.  
Aug. 13/63  
James A. Seddon  
Secretary of War

It is not known whether Smith intended to build his own independent command or join Mosby's 43<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Battalion as a captain of his own company. Based on the contacts he had had with Mosby in the previous months, the latter seems more plausible.

On August 24, 1863, Norman Smith joined Major Mosby and about 34 other rangers for a raid into Fairfax County. After reaching the vicinity of Annandale, Mosby selected Smith and John H. 'Jack' Barnes to accompany him in scouting the area. After rejoining the other men, they discovered a detachment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry driving a herd of horses down the Little River Turnpike. The Rangers attacked the Federals near Billy Gooding's Tavern on the turnpike. In the ensuing fight, Mosby was shot in the side and thigh and had to be led away from the area. The other Rangers, not understanding Mosby's actions, followed their leader allowing many of the Union horse herders to escape.<sup>xii</sup>

In the Gooding's Tavern fight, the Rangers sustained several casualties including three men wounded besides Mosby, Charles E. Shriver killed and Norman E. Smith mortally wounded.<sup>xiii</sup> Smith was taken by Federal troopers to Centreville, Virginia and admitted August 25 to the U.S. Cavalry Brigade Hospital #22. He died there at 7:30 AM the morning of August 26, 1863.<sup>xiv</sup>

In Mosby's report to General Stuart dated September 30, 1863, he makes the following mentions of Norman E. Smith:

"Lieutenant Smith, of the Black Horse, then on duty with me, acted, as he always does, with conspicuous gallantry."<sup>xv</sup>

In the same report and with reference to the Gooding's Tavern fight of August 24, 1863, Mosby noted:

"Among the killed was Norman E. Smith, who, thus early terminating a career of great usefulness and of brilliant promise, has left the memory of a name that will not be forgotten till honor, virtue, courage, all, shall cease to claim the homage of the heart."<sup>xvi</sup>

After his death in Centerville, Norman E. Smith's body was presumably taken and buried in the family cemetery, 'Alton', adjacent to his father's residence located near Bethel in Fauquier County. No documentation has been found to prove that Norman E. Smith was buried at Alton Cemetery but a four-sided monument was erected in the little cemetery commemorating four Smith cousins, including Norman E. Smith, who gave their lives for the Confederacy. They are:

Lt. David Smith  
William Aquilla Smith  
Capt. William Rowley Smith  
Norman E. Smith<sup>xvii</sup>

William R. Smith and Norman E. Smith were brothers. David and William Aquilla Smith were first cousins to William R. and Norman Smith and sons of William Smith and Mary Glascock.<sup>xviii</sup> Inscribed on the monument under Norman E. Smith's name was the following passage:

"He has left a memory of a name which will not soon be forgotten..." Mosby<sup>xix</sup>

Norman E. Smith was born May 24, 1845 at Bethel, Fauquier County, Virginia. He was the son of Joseph 'Blackwell' Smith and Eleanor Jane Towson. He resided at Bethel with his family which included three brothers and four sisters up until the time of the Civil War.<sup>xx</sup> Older

brother, William Rowley Smith, was also killed while serving with the 43<sup>rd</sup> Virginia Cavalry Battalion.<sup>xxi</sup> Older Brother, Thomas ‘Towson’ Smith ended his career in the Confederate Army as a captain and regimental quartermaster for the 8<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment.<sup>xxii</sup>

**Editor’s Comments:** Major John S. Mosby, during the war, and several post war chroniclers mention Norman E. Smith with the reference to a rank of ‘Lieutenant’. The monument to the four Smith cousins in Alton Cemetery refers to Norman Smith as a ‘Captain’. There is no evidence in the compiled service records for Smith in the 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry Regiment that he was ever promoted to or elected as a lieutenant, much less a captain. But, Mosby would likely have not referred to Smith as a ‘Lieutenant’ in his report of September 30, 1863 if he personally wasn’t aware that Smith had been promoted to that rank. Additionally, it would be hard to understand how Secretary of War James A. Seddon would have approved Smith recruiting a company of cavalry if he had been a private soldier. In all likelihood, he was a lieutenant but no records exist today to prove that point.

Norman E. Smith is a classic example of a soldier that was detached from his regular unit and was either officially or unofficially serving with the 43<sup>rd</sup> Virginia Cavalry Battalion. A significant percentage of the men who were identified with the 43<sup>rd</sup> were serving in a similar manner. Several of these men, including Norman E. Smith, didn’t survive the experience. Let us never forget the sacrifice of Norman E. Smith.

©Hugh Keen, January, 2006

---

<sup>i</sup> National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 109, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records, Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 17<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment, Microfilm Series M324, Roll #594, record #1577; Stiles, Kenneth L. *4th Virginia Cavalry*. Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1985, page 136; Wallace, Lee A. *17th Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1990, page 137; *Descendants of Anthoney (emigrant) Steptoe*. Online <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~warejamesbakercalder/steptoe0001.htm>, page 18 of 38.

<sup>ii</sup> National Archives, Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 17<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment, record #1577; National Archives, Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry Regiment, Microfilm Series M324, Roll #46, record #1890; Stiles, Kenneth L. *4th Virginia Cavalry*. pages 135-6; *Descendants of Anthoney (emigrant) Steptoe*. Online, pages 18, 24 & 25 of 38.

<sup>iii</sup> National Archives, Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry Regiment, record #1890.

<sup>iv</sup> National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 109, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records, Unfiled Papers and Slips belonging in the Confederate Compiled Service Records, Microfilm Series M347, Roll #369, “Norman Smith.”

<sup>v</sup> Myers, Frank M. *The Comanches: A History of White’s Battalion Virginia Cavalry*. Reprint ed.: Gaithersburg, Md.: Butternut Press, Inc., 1987, page 58; Divine, John E. *35th Battalion, Virginia Cavalry*. Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1985, page 5.

<sup>vi</sup> Scott, John. *Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby*. New York, N.Y.: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1867, page 81.

<sup>vii</sup> Mewborn, Horace. Editor. *From Mosby’s Command*. Baltimore, Md.: Butternut and Blue, 2005, page 100.

<sup>viii</sup> Keen, Hugh C. and Mewborn, Horace, *43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby’s Command*. Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1993, pages 68-9.

<sup>ix</sup> Scott, “Partisan Life with Mosby.” pages 111-112.

<sup>x</sup> Williamson, James J. *Mosby’s Rangers*. 2nd ed., New York, N.Y.: Sturgis & Welton Company, 1909, pages 81-2.

<sup>xi</sup> National Archives, Unfiled Papers and Slips belonging in the Confederate Compiled Service Records, “Norman Smith.”

<sup>xii</sup> Keen and Mewborn. *43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Virginia Cavalry*. pages 78-9.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid*, page 79.

---

<sup>xiv</sup> National Archives, Unfiled Papers and Slips belonging in the Confederate Compiled Service Records, "Norman Smith."

<sup>xv</sup> War of the Rebellion - Official Records - Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Volume XXIX, No. 1, page 80, "August 24 – September 30, 1863. – Mosby's Operations in Virginia. Report of Maj. John S. Mosby, C. S. Army."

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xvii</sup> Baird, Nancy Chappelle and Jordan, Carol, *Fauquier County Virginia Tombstone Inscriptions*. Athens, GA.: Iberian Publishing Company, 1994, page 1.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Descendants of Anthoney (emigrant) Steptoe*. pages 24 & 25 of 38.

<sup>xix</sup> Baird and Jordan. *Fauquier County Virginia Tombstone Inscriptions*. page 1.

<sup>xx</sup> *Descendants of Anthoney (emigrant) Steptoe*. page 24; National Archives, Washington, D.C., 1850 Federal Census, Fauquier County, Virginia, Series M432, Roll 943, page 297; 1860 Federal Census Fauquier County, Virginia, Series M653, Roll 1344, page 91.

<sup>xxi</sup> Keen and Mewborn. *43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Virginia Cavalry*. pages 101-2, 369-370.

<sup>xxii</sup> Divine, John E. *8th Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1984, page 81.