

Francis Marion Yates, 43rd Virginia Cavalry

Francis Marion Yates was born between 1847 and 1848 in Rappahannock County, Virginia. He was the son of Charles W. and Sarah L. Yates. The Yates family was enumerated in the 1860 census of Rappahannock County as residing in the town of Sperryville, where Charles Yates was a school teacher.¹

Sometime in 1864, Francis M. Yates joined Company B of the 43rd Virginia Cavalry Battalion. The only official record of his service with the 43rd is his inclusion on a 4th quarter 1864 clothing receipt roll for the battalion.²

On September 4, 1864, a detachment of Mosby's men from Companies A and B was lounging in the woods near Myer's Ford on the Shenandoah River in Jefferson County, Virginia. (now West Virginia). They were resting near the road from the ford to Wilson's Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Rangers, commanded by Lieutenant Joseph H. Nelson, were surprised by a detachment of Captain Richard Blazer's Independent Scouts. In the ensuing fight, the Confederates were overwhelmed by the Union cavalymen, the result being two of Nelson's men killed, several wounded including Francis M. Yates, and five Rangers captured. Yates was shot from his horse and left for dead on the field. He later regained consciousness and helped revive another Ranger who was left for dead near the Shenandoah River.³

Yates joined with about 50 other Rangers, mostly from Company D, on a scout to Fairfax County in March 1865. On March 12, the Rangers, led by Captain Alfred Glascock, struck a detachment of the 13th New York Cavalry Regiment about 2 miles from Vienna on the road to Lewinsville near Gantt's House. The partisans completely routed the Union cavalymen. Glascock had two men wounded and one killed in action; that being Francis Marion Yates. Ranger James J. Williamson indicated in his history of Mosby's Rangers that Yates was "accidentally killed by our own men in the charge."⁴

The final resting place of the remains of Francis M. Yates is unknown. Let us never forget the sacrifice of Francis Marion Yates.

© Hugh Keen, August 2007

¹ National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 29, Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1850 Federal Census, Rappahannock Co., VA, Series M432, Roll 972, page 93; 1860 Federal Census, Rappahannock Co., VA, Series M653, Roll 1374, page 235.

² 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 #1563a.

³ Keen, Hugh C. and Mewborn, Horace, *43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command*. Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1993, pages 171-2.

⁴ Scott, John. *Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby*. New York, N.Y.: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1867, pages 455-6. Williamson, James J. *Mosby's Rangers*. 2nd ed., New York, N.Y.: Sturgis & Welton Company, 1909, pages 266-7.