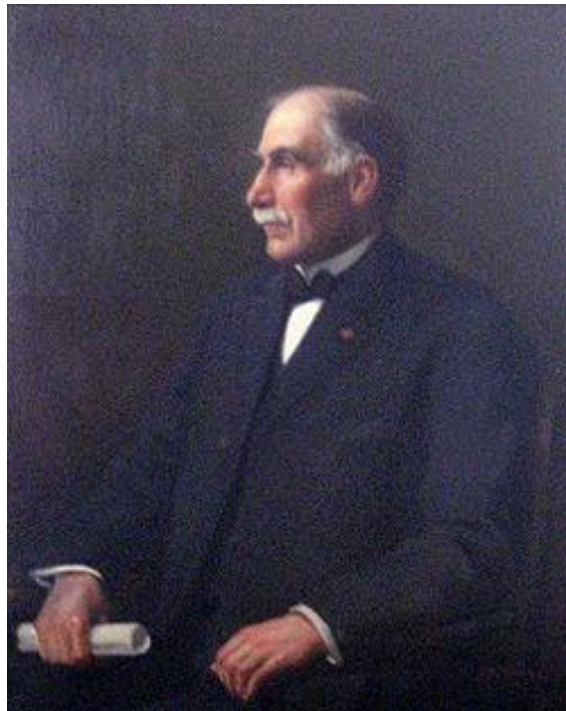


Josiah Grout, John Singleton Mosby and the skirmish at Miskel Farm

Allen Yale

Introduction

In the Derby Historical Society is a portrait of Josiah Grout, Governor of Vermont as well as a combined biography entitled *Memoirs of General William Wallace Grout and Autobiography of Josiah Grout* (1919). It was while reading the chapter on Josiah's experiences in the Civil War that I became aware of the topic of today's talk.



Portrait of Gov. Josiah Grout

Josiah Grout - Early Years

Josiah Grout was born of American parents in Compton, Canada East (Quebec) in May 28, 1841. [Compton is about fifteen miles north of Norton, Vermont; half way between Norton and Sherbrooke.] My favorite aspect of his account of his growing up in the wilderness of Compton is how his mother used the fur of cats to make the cuffs and collars of her children's clothes.

When five, his family returned to the family homestead in Kirby, Vermont.

At the open of the Civil War, in April 1861, Josiah was a student at the Orleans Liberal Institute in Glover, Vermont.

In September, 1861, he was scheduled to attend St Johnsbury Academy. But after attending a meeting in St. Johnsbury at which Governor Erastus Fairbanks called for volunteers, Josiah decided to join the army. With his father's consent, Josiah went in search

of a unit to join. In Danville, he found Colonel Preston's company was full. Next to Glover, only to find the sixth regiment was full. Finally, in Barton, he found a slot in the Company I of the First Vermont Cavalry.



Josiah Grout

Grout's Civil War experience before Miskel Farm:

The Vermont First Cavalry trained at Camp Ethan Allen in Burlington. When the companies organized, Josiah was selected as second lieutenant of Company I.

December 12, 1861 the First Cavalry left for Washington, D.C.

In the summer of 1862 the Vermont First Cavalry was under General Banks in the Shenandoah Valley when Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson threatened to cut off Banks' forces.

During the winter of 1862-3, the First Vermont Cavalry was part of Defense of Washington.

By the winter of 1862-3 most of the Union army was out of Virginia with the exception of a perimeter around Washington. The "Defense of Washington" consisted of series of about seventy forts/batteries that surrounding the City. Outside these forts there was a "string of mounted posts in advance of the infantry from Dranesville in the west to the Potomac River below Mount Vernon in the east." (Hoffman, 80)



Defenses around Washington D.C.



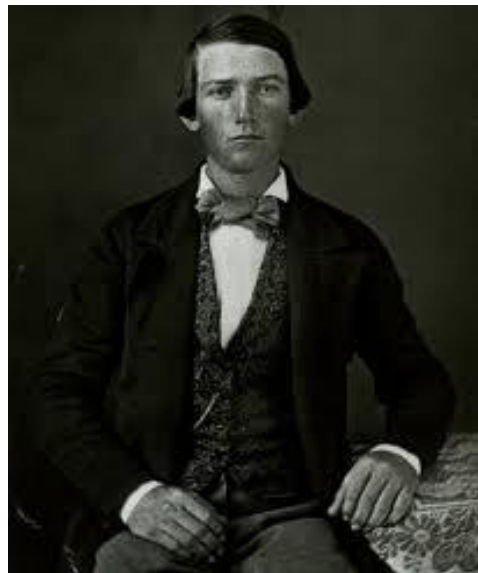
Josiah Grout

Grout writes: “Late in the winter of 1863, a part of our regiment was stationed on picket duty at Dranesville. Here we were annoyed by the rebel guerilla, Mosby. He carried on quite a business for several weeks, in capturing and killing pickets and otherwise raiding our outposts.”

(Josiah Grout, *Autobiography of Josiah Grout*, p 233)

John Singleton Mosby

John Singleton Mosby was born on December 6th, 1833 in Powhatan County Virginia. When a child, family moved to Charlottesville. At sixteen, Mosby attended the University of Virginia. Majoring in Greek and mathematics, he graduated in 1853. After graduation he studied the law and became a lawyer. In 1855, Mosby opened a law office in Bristol, Virginia



Young John Singleton Mosby

Mosby was definitely not a rabid secessionist. During the election of 1860, Mosby was an avowed unionist and voted for Democrat Stephan Douglas. However, like Robert E. Lee, once Virginia had voted to secede, Mosby supported the Confederacy.

Early Civil War Experience

In 1860, Mosby acquiesced when William Blackstone, a former UVA classmate, asked him to join a cavalry company Blackstone was helping to raise. As Mosby recalls: "To oblige him I allowed my name to be put on the muster roll; but was so indifferent about the matter that I was not present when the company organized. William E. Jones was made captain." To attend the first drill in January, 1861, Mosby had to borrow a horse.

The company into which Mosby enlisted became part of J.E.B Stuart's First Virginia Cavalry. For the first year of service Mosby was a private. His first action was at First Mannasas. In February 1862, Mosby was promoted to Company adjutant, which put him on the regimental staff where he became acquainted with Stuart. . The conspicuousness of this position made him uncomfortable.

So what made Mosby such a fearful adversary after a rather mundane beginning of his military career?

After once volunteering to do some scouting for Stuart. Stuart invited Mosby to come to his headquarters and act as a scout.

Mosby recounts an incident that got him further notice: "One morning (June 10th 1862) I was at breakfast with Stuart, and he said that he wanted to find out if McClellan was fortifying on the Totopotomy, a creek that empties into the Pamunkey. I was glad to go for him and started off with three men. But we found a flag of truce on the road and turned off to scout in another direction - I did not want to go back without doing something. We did not get the information for which we were sent, but we did get intelligence of even more value. [Page 111](#) We penetrated McClellan's lines and discovered that for several miles his right flank had only cavalry pickets to guard his line of communication with his depot at the White House on the Pamunkey. Here, it seemed to me, was an opportunity to strike a blow. McClellan had not anticipated any such move and had made no provision against it." . . .

When Mosby returned he reported to Stuart: "He (Stuart) listened to my story and, when I had finished, told me to go to the adjutant's office and write it down. At the same time he ordered a courier to get ready to go with him to General Lee's headquarters. I did as he requested and brought him a sheet of paper with what I had written. After reading it, Stuart called my attention to its not being signed. I signed it, although I had thought he only wanted a memorandum of what I had said - General Lee had never heard of me. Stuart took the paper and went off with a courier at a gallop. As soon as he returned, orders were issued to the cavalry to be ready."

On the morning of June 12th Stuart left with 1200 cavalry and two field pieces. Over the next two days Stuart force rode completely around McClelland's headquarters, during which the burned captured schooners and wagon trains. "The wagon, prisoners, and stores were then secured and among them were found forty splendid Colt's pistols with holsters, besides boots, shoes, blankets, etc., etc" During this whole episode, Mosby was scouting in front of Stuart's forces.

A few weeks later Mosby, on hearing Union General Pope's claim that he would only be looking forward and not worry about his rear, proposed that if Stuart would give him a dozen men, he would harass Pope's line of communications. Stuart gave Mosby one lame man and a letter commending him to General Jackson. Mosby and the other man had just headed out when

Mosby was captured by Union forces as he attempted to board a train at Beaver Dam station. Mosby was incarcerated in the Old Capital prison in Washington.

After ten days he was taken with other Confederate prisoners down the Potomac to Fortress Monroe . “Here we waited four days for others to arrive, that we might go up the James River to the place of exchange. When we arrived at Hampton Roads, I saw a large number of transports with troops lying near. As a prisoner I kept up my habits as a scout and soon learned that they were Burnside's troops who had just come from North Carolina. If they were reinforcements for McClellan, it would indicate that he would advance again on Richmond from his new base on the James. On the other hand, if they sailed up the Chesapeake, it would show that they were going to join Pope, and that McClellan would be withdrawn from the peninsula.”

From a steamboat captain with Southern sympathies, Mosby learned that Burnside's troops were heading for Aquia Creek near Washington. Once the prisoner exchanged was completed Mosby hurriedly walked the twelve miles to Richmond to report to General Lee that McClelland's Army would not be heading for Richmond.

Hearing this news, Lee sent a courier to Jackson, instructing him to strike Pope before Burnside's reinforcements arrived.

In mid-November, Stuart sent Mosby and nine men on a scout in the vicinity of Manassas. There was a Union regiment there. Seeing ten Union soldiers, Mosby men attacked, screaming. The entire Union regiment fled thinking they were being attacked by Stuart.

In December, 1862 both armies went into winter quarters.

Describe the defense of Washington.

Mosby's Partisan Rangers

In January 1863, Stuart, with Lee's concurrence, authorized Mosby to form and take command of the 43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Partisan Rangers to harass Union troops around Washington.

Document: Letter authorizing formation of Mosby's Rangers

March 23, 1863,

Capt. J. S. Mosby,

Captain:

You will perceive from the copy of the order herewith enclosed that the President has appointed you captain of partisan rangers. The general commanding directs me to say that it is desired that you proceed at once to organize your company, with the understanding that it is to be placed on a footing with all the troops of the line, and to be mustered unconditionally in the Confederate service for and during the war. Though you are to be its captain, the men will have the privilege of electing the lieutenants so soon as its members reach the legal standard. You will report your progress from time to time, and when the requisite number of men are enrolled, an officer will be designated to muster the company into the service.

(Signed) W. W. Taylor, A. A. G.



What exactly were the partisan rangers?:

Guerrilla – one of an irregular combatant band often operating in the rear of the enemy; a partisan

Partisan – a member of a body of detached or irregular troops, especially in certain occupied areas

Some of Mosby's men were irregulars (volunteers), but Mosby regiment was organized along military lines, he regularly sent written reports to JED Stuart, and he and his officers were promoted by the Confederate Secretary of War. Today we would call this type of unit Special Forces

Exploits and tactics of Mosby's Rangers

One tactic of Mosby was to ride up to a Union picket at about the time it was to be relieved. Mosby's men would be dressed in Union blue and were mistaken for the Union relief until they drew the revolvers and ordered the pickets to surrender. This is what he did at Herndon Station on March 17, 1863

Capture General Stoughton

One of Mosby's greatest feats happened on March 8-9, 1863. Mosby & 29 men left Dover Va. For Fairfax Courth House 25 miles distant. Object was to capture Colonel Wyndham. Commander of the 5th New York Cavalry. Unfortunately, Wyndham was in Washington. Mosby's men did capture two of his officers, his horses, and uniform.

Mosby proceeded to the resident of Brigadier General Edwin Stoughton, commander of the Second Vermont Brigade. Mosby entered General Stoughton's bedroom, stripped back the bedclothes and spanked on his bare behind

“I asked if he had ever heard of “Mosby.” He said he had

I am Mosby I said Stuart's cavalry has possession of the Court House. Be quick and get dressed”

Meanwhile, Josiah Grout and the Vermont First Cavalry was operating around Dranesville, near the Potomac River approximately thirteen miles northwest from Washington.

Skirmish at Miskel Farm

Lead up to Skirmish at Miskel Farm.

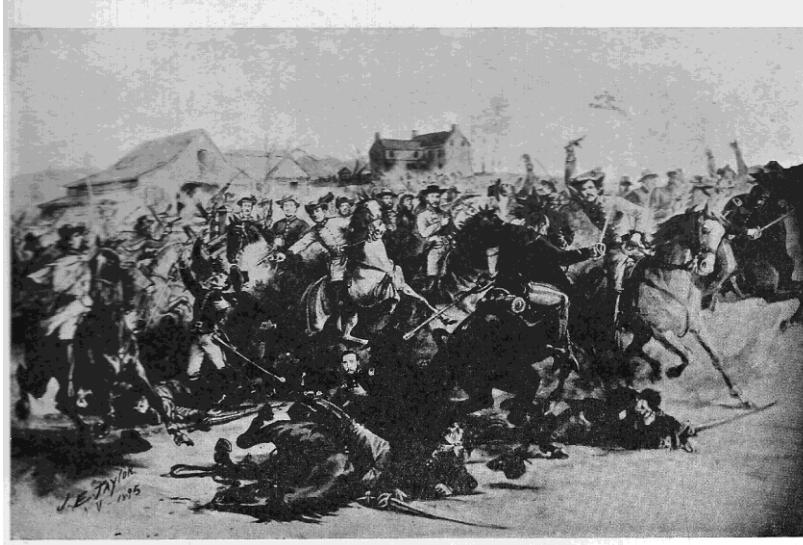
On March 30th 1863, for security purposes, the Union picket post at Dranesville pulled back about eight miles to Union Church at Difficult Creek on the Leesburg Pike. The next day, March 31, Mosby with 70 Rangers leads a raid on the Union picket post in Dranesville. Finding it abandoned, he returns northwest along the Leesburg Pike. At 10 PM Mosby turned of the Leesburg Pike just before Broad Run and travels up a lane to the farm of Thomas and Lydia Miskel. Mosby and officers bedded in the house, his soldiers in the barn.

Miskel farm is located on the eastern bank of Broad Run near its confluence with the Potomac River., a few miles north of the Leesburg Pike. The farmyard was surrounded by a high fence with only a single gate opening out to the lane running to the road to the Leesburg Pike. The lane, in turn was bounded on both sides by two fences.

A local woman rushed to Union lines and reported Mosby was camped at Dranesville. At midnight, details of six companies of Union cavalry under Captain Flint of the First Vermont Cavalry were dispatched to capture Mosby. When Union forces attacked Dranesville, they found Mosby was not there. Having snowed, the Union forces could see where Mosby had left Dranesville northwesterly along the Leesburg Pike

About three miles west of Dranesville, just before Broad Run, Mosby's tracks headed north toward the Potomac on the east side of Broad Run. At this point Flint stopped at a house to inquire the location of Miskel Farm. It so happened, that one of Mosby's men, Dick Moran, was staying at this house. As soon as the Federals left, Moran mounted a horse and took off across the fields to warn Mosby.

The skirmish at Miskel Farm



Painting of skirmish at Miskel Farm

Events in Skirmish

The men of the First Vermont Cavalry traveled along narrow lane to Miskel Farm by twos. On the way to the fight, Capt. Flint had assigned Lt. Grout to lead the advance in charge of the carbiners. Capt. Bean of Company G was to act as support in charge of the rest of the command.

At about dawn, they passed through a self-closing gate, which they fastened open. To the right about a quarter mile was the farm house and barn. Mosby was trapped: the Potomac to his north, Broad Run to his west and Union forces to the south and east.

At this point, Dick Moran arrived at the farmhouse and warned Mosby that “the Yankees are coming.” Mosby dashed from the farmhouse, and sleepy men began tumbling from haylofts and porches. Most of Mosby’s horses were unbridled and some unsaddled.

In the farmyard, Mosby urged his men to bridle their horses and mount. Without closing up the column or making any formation, Captain Flint immediately ordered a charge. Although armed with pistols and some carbines, Flint ordered sabers. (Mosby considered sabers archaic and armed his men only with Colt revolvers)

Capt. Flint ordered Lieutenant Grout to join the carbiners and move quickly to the farmyard. The union officers tried to reform the men from column of twos to a line of attack without stopping. By the time they did, they were too close to Mosby’s men (within pistol range.) The Union charge was frustrated by the barnyard fence. Capt. Flint came forward and ordered his men to tear down the fence. He was shot and killed

At this moment, Mosby, afoot, swung open the barnyard gate through which his men poured, threatening the union flank and rear. Union forces fell back, only to find that someone had closed the gate to the lane.

In the melee that followed, Lieutenant Grout was shot. “The ball entered the body between the 8th and 9th rib on the right side and passed down and back to the sciatic nerve, lodging there where it remained. The pain was in the right foot and intense for a long time.”

Many union soldiers surrendered in the farmyard and Union forces panicked and struggled to break through the locked gate. Capt. Bean was one of the first to flee through the gate. A vast majority on Federals, trapped in the barnyard lane surrendered. Those who escaped were pursued by the victorious Rangers for several miles.

Wounded Lieutenant Grout asked Mosby if two of the Union prisoners could remain behind to care for the Union wounded. The Miskels cared for the Union wounded in their house. That afternoon the First Vermont Cavalry came out and removed the Union dead and wounded

Document: Union General Stahel's report of April 2, 1863

It appears that on the evening of the 31st ultimo, Major Taggart, at Union Church two miles above Peach Grove, received information that Mosby, with about sixty-five men, was near Dranesville. He immediately **dispatched Capt. Flint, with 150 men of the First Vermont**, to rout or capture Mosby and his force. . . . Turning to the right they followed up the Broad Run to a place marked J. Meskel [sic]. Here at a house, they came upon Mosby, who was completely surprised and wholly unprepared for an attack from our forces. Had a proper disposition been made of our troops, Mosby could not, by any possible means, have escaped. It seems that around this house was a high board fence and stone wall, between which and the road was also another fence and ordinary farm gate. Capt. Flint took his men through the gate, and, at a distance from the house, fired a volley at Mosby and his men, who were assembled about the house, - doing but slight damage to them. He then ordered a sabre charge, which was also ineffective, on account of the fence which intervened. Mosby waited until the men were checked by the fence, and then opened the gate of the barnyard, where his men were collected, saddling and bridling their horses, and opened fire upon them, killing and wounding several. The men became panic-stricken, and fled precipitately through this gate, through which to make their escape. The opening was small; they got wedged together, and a fearful confusion followed; while Mosby's men followed them up, and poured into the crowd a severe fire. Here, while endeavoring to rally his men, Capt. Flint was killed, and **Lieut. Grout, of the same Company, mortally wounded (will probably die to-day).**

Mosby, who had not had time to mount his horse, personally threw open the barnyard gate and ordered his men to charge through it, which they did with a terrific yell
Headquarters Army of Northern Virginia,

Document: Mosby's report to General Stuart

Fauquier County, Va., April 7, 1863.

General:

. . . On Monday, March 31, I went down in the direction of Dranesville to capture several strong outposts in the vicinity of that place. On reaching there I discovered that they had fallen back about 10 miles down the Alexandria pike. I then returned 6 or 8 miles back and stopped about 10 o'clock at night at a point about 2 miles from the pike. Early the next morning one of my men, whom I had left over on the Leesburg pike, came dashing in, and announced the rapid approach of the enemy. But he had scarcely given us the information when the enemy appeared a few hundred yards off, coming up at a gallop. At this time our horses were eating; all had their bridles off, and some even their saddles - they were all tied in a barnyard.

Throwing open the gate I ordered a counter-charge, to which my men promptly responded. The Yankees never dreaming of our assuming the offensive, terrified at the yells of the men as

they dashed on, broke and fled in every direction. We drove them in confusion seven or eight miles down the pike. We left on the field **nine of them killed - among them a captain and lieutenant** - and about **fifteen too badly wounded for removal**; in this lot two lieutenants. **We brought off 82 prisoners**, many of these also wounded. I have since visited the scene of the fight. The enemy sent up a flag of truce for their dead and wounded, but many of them being severely wounded, they established a hospital on the ground. The surgeon who attended them informs me that a great number of those who escaped were wounded. The force of the enemy was six companies of the First Vermont Cavalry, one of their oldest and best regiments, and the prisoners inform me that they had every available man with them. There were certainly not less than 200; the prisoners say it was more than that. **I had about 65 men in this affair**. In addition to the prisoners, **we took all their arms and about 100 horses and equipments**. Privates Hart, Hurst, Keyes, and Davis were wounded. The latter has since died. Both on this and several other occasions they have borne themselves with conspicuous gallantry. In addition to those mentioned above I desire to place on record the names of several others, whose promptitude and boldness in closing in with the enemy contributed much to the success of the fight. They are Lieutenant Chapman (late of Dixie Artillery), Sergt. Hunter and Privates Wellington and Harry Hatcher, Turner, Wild, Sowers, Ames, and Sibert. There are many others, I have no doubt, deserving of honorable mention, but the above are only those who came under my personal observation. I confess that on this occasion I had not taken sufficient precautions to guard against surprise. It was 10 at night when I reached the place where the fight came off on the succeeding day. We had ridden through snow and mud upwards of 40 miles, and both men and horses were nearly broken down; besides, the enemy had fallen back a distance of about 18 miles.

(Signed) John S. Mosby,
 Captain Commanding.
 Maj.-Gen. J. E. B. Stuart.

Conflicting Reports

	Mosby	Grout	Union Gen.Stahel	Ide*
Number of Union men	200+	120	150	
Number Mosby's men	65	150	65	
Union wounded	15			22
Union killed	9	14		8
Union Captured	82			80
Rangers killed		3		1
Rangers wounded				3
Horses captured	100			

Miskel Farm Footnote: Escape of Horace Ide

Sargeant Horace Ide was one of the members of the First Vermont Cavalry captured at Miskel Farm. That night Mosby took his prisoners about sixty miles until they camped at a large house near Rectortown Va.

The next morning Ide noticed that many of Mosby's men were dressed in blue overcoats, black hats, with pants tucked into boots, just as he was. Reasoning that he did not know every man in his unit by sight, he figured the same might be true of Mosby's men. He simply walked away from Mosby's encampment. Avoiding roads he made his way traveled for two days until he found himself within the lines of the 25th Maine.

Document: Union General Joseph E. Hooker's testimony on effectiveness of Mosby's Rangers

I may here state that while at Fairfax Court House my cavalry was reinforced by that of Major-General Stahel. The latter numbered 6,100 sabres. . . . The force opposed to them was Mosby's guerrillas, numbering about 200, and, if the reports of the newspapers were to be believed, this whole party was killed two or three times during the winter. From the time I took command of the army of the Potomac, there was no evidence that any force of the enemy, other than the above-named, was within 100 miles of Washington City; and yet the planks on the chain bridge were taken up at night the greater part of the winter and spring. It was this cavalry force, it will be remembered, I had occasion to ask for, that my cavalry might be strengthened when it was numerically too weak to cope with the superior numbers of the enemy.

Josiah's Civil War experience's after Miskel Farm

Despite General Strahel's assumptions to the contrary, Lieutenant Josiah Grout did not die of his wounds. Grout was so badly wounded that six months later he was unable to pass physical examination for duty and was discharged.

After the St. Albans Raid, the government established the 26th New York Cavalry made up of companies from New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont to protect the Northern Frontier. Grout enlisted in the Vermont Frontier Cavalry as a captain on January 10, 1865. He was soon promoted to major. Was mustered out on June 27, 1865.

John Singleton Mosby's War experience after Miskel Farm

Mosby continued to serve as a partisan under Stuart until Stuart's death. After that he reported directly to Lee. He harassed Sheridan's lines of communications in the Shenandoah Valley.

In Oct 1864 a Union work crew went out to repair the Manassas Railroad, He attacked them at Salem, defeating them, capturing fifty prisoners, all their baggage, camp equipage, stores, etc., and killed and wounded a considerable number. His loss, two wounded. The enemy is now entrenched at Rectortown, with two long trains of cars. The railroad is torn up and bridges burned in their rear, and all communications cut. In an attack upon a train, Mosby & his men captured two paymasters with over \$170,000. This cash Mosby distributed evenly among his men.

His partisans consisting of six –eight companies continued to harass Union lines of communications between 1863-1865. The threat of Mosby's raids tied up thousands of union troops. For example, from a Union commander stated: "I think a train of 200 wagons should have an escort of one thousand infantry and 500 cavalry going to the front. The train going out this morning will have nearly 1500 escort."

Disbanded rangers on April 20, 1865, a week after Lee's surrender at Appomattox. He did this rather than have them surrender. Mosby was finally pardoned 1866.

Josiah Grout's life after Civil War:

1863-4 studied at Lombard College, Galesburg, Illinois

July 1865 entered brother's law office to study law. Passed bar in December 1865

1866-1872 U. S. Customs Service in Island Pond, St. Albans, & Newport

1868 married Harriet Hinman, granddaughter of Benjamin Hinman, one of the Derby's early settlers.



1872-1875 Practiced law in Newport, Vt.

1872 & 1874 represented Newport in the Vermont House , 1874 Speaker of the House

1875-1878 practiced law in Chicago

President of the Moline Scale Company, in Moline, Illinois.

1881 reestablished home in Vermont, in Derby on the Hinman homestead. The farm was known as Clydeside.

1884, 1886, & 1888 Represented Derby in Legislature. Speaker 1886 & 1888

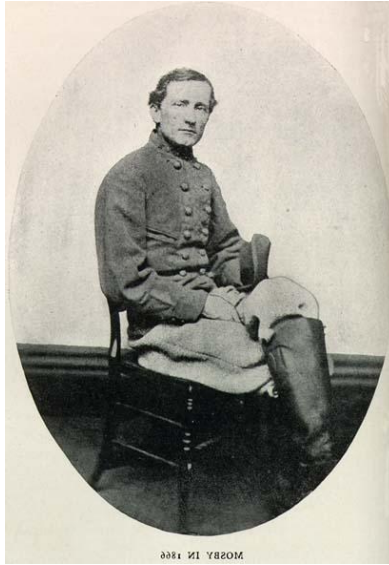
1892 Senator for Orleans County

1896-1898 Governor of Vermont

1916 moved to Newport City

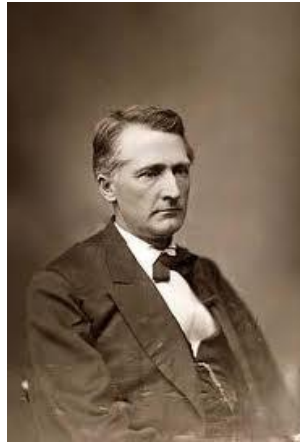
Died July 19, 1925 in Derby Line, Vermont

John Mosby's life after the Civil War



John Singleton Mosby

Returned to Warrenton, Va. to re-establish his law practice
Became a Republican, endorsed and voted for Grant in 1868 and 1872.



John Singleton Mosby

1878-1885 U. S. Consul to Hong Kong
1885-901 - Lawyer for the Southern Pacific Railroad in San Francisco



1896 - Mosby and Grout met again at McKinley's inauguration
Department of Interior enforcing fencing laws in Omaha

Assistant attorney in the Department of Justice at Washington from 1904 to 1910
Died at home in Washington, D.C., May 30, 1916.

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