

May, 1995

A Proposal for the John S. Mosby Heritage Area

We live in an area of extraordinary natural beauty and historic significance. It is unique in that it still retains so much of the landscape and landmarks of over two hundred years of our past.

All around us we see the superb handiwork of those who have come before us. The stone houses and mills, old walls and arched bridges, the lovely meeting houses, stately mansions, quiet cemeteries and old oak groves - these are all monuments to those who shaped our country and made its history. People from many different backgrounds - Quakers, Scotch-Irish, Germans, Africans, Tidewater planters - came together in this place and created a magnificent heritage of architecture and landscape beautifully blended in a quiet harmony of man and nature.

The area's backbone, Route 50, was first formed by the buffalo trail which native Americans followed across the Blue Ridge to the Shenandoah Valley. Route 15 is the successor to the Indians' north-south trail, the Old Carolina Road, and where it intersects with Route 50 near Aldie we can find arrowheads and stone tools and the ashes of ancient camp-fires.

George Washington slept here, at the Maidstone Ordinary in Rectortown and Yew Hill near Delaplane. He surveyed for Lord Fairfax and owned land here and we can still visit his farm office at Flint Hill Farm. From his property on Lost Mountain he crossed Ashby's Gap to visit Lord Fairfax at White Post and later, to command troops at Winchester during the French and Indian War.

History-makers Chief Justice Marshall, General George Marshall, President James Monroe, General Daniel Morgan, agriculturist John Binns, Charles Fenton Mercer, as well as descendants of the Washingtons, Lees, and Carters made this their home. We can still visit their houses today. A remarkable number of freedmen's villages still survive intact: Thoroughfare, Antioch, Howardsville, St. Louis, Bowmantown. This area, too, was once the great granary of the new United States, to which innumerable mills and prosperous towns still bear silent witness.

The Civil War turned the peaceful area into battlefields for the opposing armies. Stonewall Jackson brought his men through Thoroughfare Gap to fight at Manassas, and Jeb Stuart's Cavalry fought stubbornly against Federal Cavalry from Aldie to Upperville in 1863. Perhaps most significantly of all, this was home to John Singleton Mosby and his men as they spent over two years here harassing and attacking their enemy whenever and wherever opportunity arose. Mosby and his Rangers fought virtually throughout this area, and history will forever mark such places as Mt. Zion Church, Aldie, Middleburg, Upperville, Marshall, Rectortown and Paris as locations where Mosby encountered and engaged portions of the Union Command. Not just the towns but many of the farms such as Oakley where he countered a Union charge, Belle Grove where some of his men hid in the basement, Oakham where he received his command from Jeb Stuart, Hathaway Farm where he jumped from his bedroom window to a tree to hide from a searching patrol, and Lakeland Farm where he was nearly fatally shot. These sites and many others exist and can be seen today.

Whether one is interested in the Native American era, the 18th, 19th, or 20th Centuries, we have in this area a virtual living museum filled with history. It is an open classroom that can be used to broaden knowledge and appreciation of our region's culture, history and architecture.

As a first step, we propose that a coalition of citizens' groups seek to designate this region as the "John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area" and that we each use our particular skills to promote an education campaign. For example, the Goose Creek Association has been sponsoring speakers on such topics as Mosby's campaigns, protecting wildlife and strategic planning for rural towns. We hope that the schools, the Chamber of Commerce, garden clubs, natural history groups and the counties' historical societies will join in a mutually supportive effort to promote the John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area in Fauquier and Loudoun counties.

We hope you will find this proposal exciting and worthy of your support. With your help, we will circulate it to other groups throughout this area. We also will have available a more detailed prospectus, a slide show and a large historic map of the region we propose for inclusion.

Let us know if you can help, and give us your suggestions, too.

Mosby Symposium Draws National Audience

Almost 100 Civil War buffs from as far away as California and Texas attend our day-long Mosby Symposium at the Middleburg Community Center in October. Speakers included almost every major Mosby historian. A special map prepared by Eugene Scheele guided participants to the sites of Mosby's exploits. A one-time-only museum displayed Mosby memorabilia, generously lent by John Gott, Jean Nash, Stuart Cooper and Bob Daly. The day concluded with a banquet at Mosby's Tavern.

The handsome map of Mosby's Confederacy is available for sale now at the Greenhouse in Marshall and The Book Chase in Middleburg.