

John W. Mobberly and the Virts Families

Below is a story about John Mobberly, a notorious Civil War renegade. I have included this story because of its significant impact that Mr. Mobberly had on Virts families in the Lovettsville, Virginia area.

Some of Mr. Mobberly's raids directly affected this family. Once he attempted to rob my Great-grandmother, Eliza Virts, of her silverware. She in turned grabbed his hat and threatens to burn it up in the wood cookstove unless he returned her silverware. Mr. Mobberly did give her silverware back for his hat, but when he left he stole her milk and butter from the springhouse.

Mobberly was killed on the farm that my grandfather lived and farmed from 1904 -1936. I can remember my grandfather telling me that when it rained you could see his blood stain in the barnyard. After Mobberly's death his body was taken across the Short Hill via the old Church Road, which crosses the property where I grew up. This is probably the same road that Mobberly would have taken to the Potterfield farm where he was killed. Horse and wagon regularly used this road until the 1930's.

Also in this story it speaks of Mr. Jacob Boyer dying at a spring after drinking the water. That spring is the same spring that supplied the water for the house in which I grew up. Before, during, and after the Civil War my family used that spring. It exists today and supplies water for the house.

John W. Mobberly - Renegade Hero

by David H. Brown

The peaceful, picturesque hills of the Blue Ridge frame Loudoun Valley to the east and to the west. The waters of the Potomac bound it on the north, and to the south it fades into the distance of peaceful, green farming country.

And amid the rolling fields that form the floor of the valley sits Salem Methodist Church, a stone edifice erected in 1833. If it were not for the modern highway in front of it, Salem Church would appear nearly as it did at the time of its construction. Such is the unspoiled pastoral beauty of the valley.

On the northside of the church lies the cemetery, its rural setting, marble shafts and granite monuments mark the places where, "the rude forefathers sleep." Indeed, Sir Thomas Gray could well have written his "Elegy" here had he been an American. And if he had, what would he have said of a slim, white marble slab whose inscription reads:

*John W. Mobberly
Member of Company A, White's
Battalion of Va. Cavalry
was born
June 1, 1844
was assassinated
April 5, 1865
Aged 20 years 10
mos. & 4 days*

Were it not for these words, "was assassinated," there would be nothing to set it apart from many another stone that marks the final resting place of the thousands of victims of the Civil War who sleep throughout the land. But these words set Mobberly apart, and thereby hangs a tale. For these hills and this valley and nearby countryside have known war, and Mobberly was a part of it.

John W. Mobberly was born June 1, 1844, on the western slope of Short Hill Mountain, the eastern boundary of Loudoun Valley, about a mile south of the Potomac River. And was he was and what he did during the Civil War probably were determined largely by the place and the circumstance of his birth.

He was reputedly the illegitimate son of a Polly Mobley and a man by the name of Samuel Fine. Fine drifted westward before the War, and nothing further was ever heard of him.

Mobberly's childhood days were spent in poverty, and under the stigma of his illegitimate origin in an age that was extremely biased concerning such matters. And to add to his probable feeling of inferiority, he grew to young manhood nearly illiterate.

But despite his lack of education, he was capable of doing odd jobs for the farming community, and on occasion he was employed by Joe Hagan, a free Negro, to drive his meat wagon to Harpers Ferry.

A large and somewhat awkward youth, he was often the victim of the taunts and jokes of the boys of the neighborhood. It is small wonder then that this boy, eager to prove himself the equal of others less unfortunate than he, seized the opportunity to act as a scout for White's 35th Battalion of Virginia Cavalry.

Tradition has it that Mobberly enlisted during the latter part of 1861, at the age of 17. But service records in the National Archives put the date of his enlistment as September 15, 1862. The probable truth of the matter is that Mobberly was acting as a civilian scout prior to the date of his enlistment.

White or someone connected with his command knew that as a scout Mobberly would probably clash with the Federals from time to time. Therefore, it would be prudent to have him as a regular soldier rather than a civilian. In the latter capacity, he would have none of the rights and privileges traditionally accorded military personnel and might possibly be executed as a spy if caught. Further, as a member of the battalion he would be subject to direct orders and discipline.

In any event, the awkward Mobberly of childhood was now nearly a man, and growing speedily toward a powerful, well-built one, weighing about 200 pounds and standing 6 feet in height. His head was topped with dark hair, and his general appearance might well have earned for him the designation handsome.

White, wishing to take advantage of Mobberly's intimate knowledge of the nearby countryside, assigned him as a scout to observe the Federal army in and near Harpers Ferry. There can be no doubt that he learned his job rapidly and well, for Captain Frank Myers in his story of White's Battalion, "The Commanchies," mentions, "the famous John Mobberly," as early as September, 1862.

And if Mobberly had become famous in Southern eyes, he was fast becoming notorious in Northern eyes. For under date of April 24, 1863, Major Thomas Gibs reported: "I camped at Waterford awaiting the arrival of Captain Hall, who was sent to catch Mobberly, the guerrilla. Mobberly was not found." The last sentence in one form or another was to be the end result of many attempts to capture the wily Mobberly.

By this time, he was beginning to make himself felt, known and feared, not only by the Union forces, but by the citizens of Loudoun County as well, particularly those whose sympathy lay with the Union cause. The latter existed in large numbers in certain parts of the county, particularly in the Lovettsville and Waterford areas.

On May 23, 1861, Loudoun County had cast its vote on the secession ordinance. The tally stood at 1626 for secession and 726 against. But in Lovettsville precinct the vote was 325 against and 46 for; in Waterford, 200 against and 31 for.

And the strong Union sentiment in the northwest section of the county shortly made itself evident in strong fashion. On June 20, 1862, the Loudoun Rangers, composed of men from Loudoun who wished to aid the Union cause in a military way, was mustered into the service. White's Battalion, the 35th Virginia, of which Mobberly was a member, had been formed to protect the Loudoun border against Federal attack. It was inevitable that the two units would clash from time to time, and that such bitterness would result on both sides. After all, it was neighbor against neighbor.

In 1863, about a mile south of Waterford, a detachment of White's 35th Virginia and Mean's Loudoun Rangers clashed, and the latter was forced to withdraw, leaving its wounded on the field. Charles B. Stewart of the Rangers was badly wounded and left on the field with the others. A Doctor Bond, a physician of Waterford, and several local ladies drove to the scene of the engagement and attend the wounded.

Then up rode John Mobberly and came upon the wounded Stewart and without provocation shot him in the face, breaking his jaw. Not satisfied with this wanton action, he rode over the helpless man with his horse. Believing Stewart to be dying, he then stole his boots and rode off. Doctor Bond, shocked by the inhuman action, cried out, "Surely no hell is so hot for a man that would do a thing like this." Though he could little have suspected it, Mobberly would meet Stewart later under far less favorable circumstances.

But the cruel streak in Mobberly's makeup did not confine itself to the needless abuse of wounded soldiers upon the field of battle. It manifested itself in his actions against civilians as well.

War is, of course, disciplined violence. Remove the discipline and violence spills into areas and against targets not generally constructed to be legitimate objects of war. Guerrilla fighting by its very nature often removes all or much of the discipline. The noted guerrillas Mosby, White and McNeill maintained fairly effective discipline in their commands, but men like Mobberly when left to their own devices often took matters into their own hands.

Mobberly was making forays against civilians in Loudoun County as well as against the Federal forces. And what he was capable of doing to civilians is best illustrated by his action at the farm of Joseph Compher about four miles southwest of Lovettsville near the end of the War.

A report reached Mobberly that a Union Flag was being flown atop the mountain near the Compher farm, a report later proved false. As the Comphers were Unionists, he went to investigate the matter, and while there he attempted to set fire to the barn, but was repulsed in his efforts by the Comphers. Thereupon, he fled to the farm house, raced upstairs and attempted to destroy the dwelling by setting fire to a mattress.

But again Mobberly failed. Elizabeth Elmira Compher, aged 15, Mr. Compher's only daughter, wrestled with the giant man; and in a rage he pistol-whipped the girl about the head and fled the scene. The injuries to the head were severe, and thereafter Elizabeth's health declined. And finally, in poor physical condition, she contracted typhoid fever and died, undoubtedly a victim of the War.

If the good Doctor Bond, of Waterford, had been shocked by Mobberly's sadistic treatment of the wounded Stewart, he most certainly would have been horrified had he known what presumably happened to a Federal spy by the name of Law who fell captive of the gang. The fate and manner in which the hapless Law met death were not known until after the war, when a member of Mobberly gang confided to a close friend what they had done to him.

Law had been a school teacher in the Harpers Ferry area prior to the outbreak of the War, and he was a man of strong Union sympathies. In due time he offered his services to the Union as an espionage agent; and while thus engaged, he fell into the hands of the Mobberly gang.

Instead of turning Law over to the proper Confederate authorities for trial and punishment, they took him to a lonely spot in the Virginia mountains. There, in spread-eagle fashion, he was pinioned to the ground with pegs and ropes and left to die from starvation, thirst and the elements.

There is nothing to indicate that the body was ever recovered, and perhaps it still lies, undiscovered, in some remote mountain spot.

And why didn't Mobberly's superiors halt such actions. The simple truth of it is that they were probably too busy with other matters of warfare, or perhaps they preferred to close their eyes to the situation. And why not? For Mobberly responded when called upon for specific tasks and at other times kept the Federals sufficiently harassed.

And yet this perversity of spirit was balanced with his love of a practical joke. Or was it a manifestation of just plain braggadocio or recklessness? While Mobberly displayed coolness on sudden and daring raids, one is lead to speculate as to whether he had the deliberate courage that would have stood the discipline of the ranks required of the regulars and the uncertainty of awaiting the attack.

Yet he was no coward. He had participated in a least one major cavalry action, the Battle of Brandy Station, Virginia, on June 9, 1863. Apparently he was not averse to mixing it up, for his horse was shot and killed. However, the mercenary bent in his nature broke through. He submitted a bill for \$800 for the loss of the animal. He received payment on February 24, 1864.

But whether it was braggadocio or humor that showed its face from time to time, two incidents lend some color to his personality. On one occasion he rode to the top of Loudoun Heights overlooking Harpers Ferry and fired his carbine. As the soldiers scampered for cover, he laughed heartily. And once he built a fence around a curve in a mountain road in the vicinity of Neersville, and then he fired at a passing Federal patrol. With the Federals in pursuit, he jumped his horse over the barricade, but the trooper, being unaware of it, were thrown into a state of confusion.

By the middle of 1865, Mobberly had become little more than an outlaw. When horses, equipment and supplies were captured from the enemy, he appropriated them for his own personal benefit. There can be no doubt that by this time Mobberly had become disenchanted with even nominal military service with White's Battalion, for service records in the National Archives show, "Deserted from company, July 1864."

By now some of the men who joined him had no sense of devotion to the Confederate cause. Typical of these men was William Loge, a deserter from a New York regiment. Known variously as "French Bill" and "Billy the Frenchman" because of his French birth, he had attached himself to Mobberly's gang and assisted in raiding and terrorizing the citizens of Loudoun Valley, loyal and rebel alike. But "French Bill's" luck ran out, and he was captured by Corporal Samuel Tritapoe of the Loudoun Rangers and brought to Harpers Ferry. After being court marshaled, hew as hanged at that point on December 2, 1864.

But the actions of the guerrillas, including Mobberly, were getting attention in high places by the middle of 1864. None other than General Grant advised General Sheridan under date of August 16th of that year that all male citizens under the age of 50 could be held as prisoners of war. In addition, he suggested retaliation against the guerrillas. But Sheridan was very busy with his campaign in the Shennandoah Valley and did not get around to taking any immediate action.

He was aware of the guerrillas, including Mobberly, and on the 10th of September he reported from a point near Berryville: "Within the last twelve days Crook's men have killed 1 of Mosby's lieutenants, 18 men, and captured 6 of his men. They have killed 5 of Mobberly's men, captured 40 of his horses and 75 revolvers. Other parties have captured 1 officer, badly wounded, and 40 of his men. As soon as I get time I will have a circular hunt for the whole gang. Many

of these men are citizens who live in this vicinity, and have been selling produced to the Government and claim to be loyal to this account; they are getting loyalty now, with a prospect of poverty in the future.”

No general plan was made for the capture of Mobberly, but General Sheridan’s feelings in the matter were known, and some of his subordinates were devising schemes to rid themselves of their cunning and ruthless adversary. Brigadier General J. H. Wilson, commander of the Third Cavalry Division, had worked out a plan. On September 12, 1864, he instructed Brigadier General Chapman, commanding the Second Cavalry Brigade, as follows:

“Please make arrangements for the capture of Captain Mobberly and such other of Mosby’s gang as infest the country along the Shenandoah and beyond. Mrs. Kline who lives two miles and a half beyond Snickersville, on the Leesburg road, will direct the troops in the house of a man named Carlisle, who is acquainted with the haunts of Mobberly. The party that is detached for the arrest of Mobberly should not be more than twenty, and should do all in one night. Mr. Carlisle, although a loyal and well disposed citizen, should be arrested to keep up appearances. His residence is between Aldie and Leesburg pikes about a mile from Mrs. Kline’s.”

The Federals had felt the sting of Mobberly’s attacks for nearly two years, but they still knew little about him as the above indicates, for they identified him as a captain and a member of Mosby’s command. If anything, he was still a deserter from White’s Battalion.

But Mobberly was not to be caught. He showed up at the Carlisle farm as planned, accompanied by one of his men, Thomas Simpson. While Mr. Carlisle engaged him in conversation, two Federal cavalrymen rode up and demanded Mobberly’s horse. Being caught unaware, he attempted to stall for time by protesting that he could not spare it. One of the troopers snapped his pistol at Mobberly and it misfired. It was a fatal mistake. Mobberly instantly shot the Federal dead and made his escape.

If by this time the Federal’s patience with the guerrillas was wearing thin, the Confederates were beginning to have their doubts as to the value of the partisan troops which their government had authorized early in the war. Thomas Rosser, a general officer, reduced his doubts to writing, describing them as thieves, doing every manner of mischief and crime, “a terror to the citizens and an injury to the cause.” Only Mosby escaped Rosser’s scathing indictment.

Rosser passed his charges on to Major General J. E. B. Stuart, commander of the Confederate Cavalry, who concurred in Rosser’s views, and forwarded the report to General Lee. The latter recommended a law to authorize the abolition of the partisan corps, and the Confederate Congress passed a bill revoking same. But after the reverse in July of 1863 at Gettysburg, the Confederate authorities had little time to devote to such small matters, and the guerrillas continued.

Mobberly was not deterred by the legislation, if, indeed, he even knew of it, and it is doubtful that he did. Besides, he was a deserter, officially at least.

On November 11, 1864, he executed one of his typical raids against the Union forces. Two wagons of the Second U. S. Cavalry, with a guard of one sergeant and ten men, were dispatched from Charles Town to Harpers Ferry. About midway between the two towns, Mobberly with a force of approximately twenty-five men, all of them dressed in blue uniforms, burst upon the party. In the action that followed, the sergeant was killed and five men captured along with the mules attached to the wagons.

The Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry, stationed at Charles Town, sent out a patrol in pursuit of Mobberly. For their efforts they recaptured two of the mules. Not all surprising, for the guerrillas as was their custom, had faded from raiders in Union blue into unidentifiable citizens of Loudoun County.

By now Phil Sheridan had perhaps begun to pay closer attention to Grant’s suggestion of the previous August. And perhaps his Irish temper was beginning to show a little. In any event, under date of November 27, 1864, he ordered Brigadier General Wesley Merritt to take a force into Loudoun Valley in an attempt to break up the guerrilla bands. What was to be done and why are best told in Sheridan’s orders Merritt:

“This section has been the hotbed of lawless bands who have from time to time depredated upon small parties on the line of the army communications, on safeguards left at houses and on small parties of our troops. Their real object is plunder and highway robbery. No dwelling is to be burned, but burn barns and mills and contents, drive off cattle, etc.

“The ultimate results of the guerrilla system of warfare is the total destruction of all private rights in the country occupied by such parties. The destruction may as well commence at once and the responsibility of it must rest upon the authorities at Richmond, who have acknowledged the legitimacy of guerrilla bands. The injury done to them by this army is very slight, the injury they have inflicted upon the people and upon the rebel army may be counted by the millions.”

Merritt swept Loudoun Valley, ranging as far south as Middleburg beyond the confines of the valley. The damage was enormous. Over one million dollars worth of private property was destroyed. The guerrilla bands had inflicted widespread damage on the Federal troops, but the citizens of Loudoun Valley and beyond had paid a terrible penalty for the actions of the guerrillas. But Mobberly and the others continued their activities.

In the fall of 1864, Brigadier General Thomas C. Devin, commanding the Second Brigade of the First U. S. Cavalry Division, established his headquarters at Lovettsville and prepared to spend the winter at that point.

The left of his brigade rested on the Lovettsville-Berlin (Brunswick) pike, and the right rested at the base of Short Hill Mountain on the west. Mobberly began to make almost nightly attacks against Devin's lines, running the circuit from the extreme right to the extreme left. These attacks were irritating to the men as it kept them under arms most of the night.

But Devin left the retaliation to Means' Loudoun Rangers, and Captain Frank M. Myers of White's 35th Virginia Battalion states that Mean's men countered with raids on hen roosts, milkhouses, etc., and that, "No dread of Mosby or White sharpened their consciences."

The almost nightly raids against the Union lines may have been made with more than military objectives in mind. For a number of the men, including Mobberly, were reported to have sweethearts in the vicinity. In fact, legend suggests that the latter had a penchant for transient romantic attachments. And rumor, a polite euphemism for gossip, had it that Mobberly was the father of a son, born of one of these alliances.

Mobberly continued his nighttime raids on Devin's lines, but the latter showed no disposition to retaliate against the citizens of Loudoun for the actions of the guerrilla. This forbearance on the part of General Devin Gained for him the respect, if not the admiration of the citizens. Retaliatory action continued to be taken by the Rangers.

But Devin decided that he, too, would like to try his hand at capturing Mobberly, and under date of February 15, 1865, he reported that he had sent a party toward Snicker's Gap, passing through Neersville and returning by Woodgrove and Hillsborough in search of the illusive Mobberly. Enroute they searched all the houses, but the alarm had been spread. However, they managed to capture four men of the Seventh Virginia Cavalry and six horses. In addition, the force chased some of the enemy into the mountains, but a snowstorm and the drifts that resulted from it caused them to break off the pursuit. Mobberly was using a sleigh for transportation, but when Devin's troopers got too close, he had cut it loose from the horses and fled on horseback.

Soon Colonel White, commanding officer of the 35th Virginia Battalion, came to Loudoun to review the situation. Now while Mobberly had deserted White's command in July of the previous year, the latter used Mobberly and a companion by the name of Lum Wenner and some others who knew the Lovettsville area well to scout for him. With some little difficulty they obtained information that the Sixth New York Cavalry was encamped near the base of Short Hill Mountain and had about 250 men in camp.

On February 17, 1865, White collected his men and was ready to move against the Union line of the Sixth New York. When he reached Woodgrove in Loudoun Valley, he found that he had 80 men, including Col. R. P. Chew of the famous Horse Artillery and a few of Mosby's men.

At about 9 p.m., under cover of darkness, the column moved forward from the rendezvous point, and after passing Neersville, the force reached Short Hill Mountain by a narrow path near Mobberly's home and descended the eastern slope of the mountain. Since Mobberly knew the area so very well, Colonel White sent him forward with Frank Curry, a member of the gang, to capture the pickets. Soon some firing was heard, and White rode swiftly forward and found that Mobberly and Curry had been forced to shoot some the Federals at the reserve post.

White, knowing that success would depend upon surprising the camp, continued to charge. But the intelligence reports submitted by Mobberly and Wenner had failed to divulge that this end of the line would be reinforced that day. So instead of 250 bluecoats to contend with, White found 600 of the enemy.

But the sudden nature of the attack resulted in great confusion, and 150 Federal and horses were captured in the initial phase of the action. Recovering from the first shock of the attack, Captain Bell of the Union forces countered with an attack on the guerrillas. The final result was a Union loss of 12 men and 50 horses. White suffered only one trooper slightly wounded.

White's forces retreated westward over Short Hill Mountain into Loudoun Valley, and upon reaching Woodgrove the command disbanded until scouting by Devin, the Federal commander, was finished. The guerrillas had struck again in typical, sudden attack, disbanded quickly and blended back into the civilian population. The action at Short Hill Mountain was the last blow struck by White's 35th Virginia in Loudoun County.

But while White was through, Mobberly apparently continued his activities, and the Federal commander at Harpers Ferry determined that he would attempt to rid the area of his irritant. And thus was devised a plan that was to result in the ultimate death of Mobberly. And the execution of it would result in charges of treachery and double-dealing that have built a romantic legend of tragic death and a love triangle that exist to this day. The plan began with the following communication written by Brigadier General John D. Stevenson, the Federal commander at Harpers Ferry, April 1, 1865, Brigadier General Morgan, chief of staff to General Winfield S. Hancock:

"There is a gang of murderers infesting Loudoun, who have done incalculable service for the rebels for the last four years. The leader of the band is named Mobberly, and is one of Mosby's right hand me. Some of the citizens of

Loudoun have proposed to me that if I will arm them and give them the means of living away from home for awhile they will kill or capture the band.

“The band consists of Mobberly, Riley, S. Mocks and Tribbey. All of them have murdered our soldiers time and again. The band originally consisted of about fifteen men. During the last summer we have killed most of the band, leaving these four men, who are the head devils of the concern.

“I think promising these men a reward of \$1,000 for Mobberly and \$500 for each of the others, dead or alive, will clean out the concern. The Government could readily afford to pay \$50,000 for men and save the amount in the prevention of the destruction of public property in six month’s operations of the band.”

Two days later, April 3, General Stevenson ordered the commander of the Loudoun Rangers to furnish three men for the task. Selected were Sergeant Charles B. Stewart, Private H. M. Best and Joseph Waters. In addition, three civilians accompanied the soldiers. One of the civilians was Jacob E. Boyer, a former member of the Loudoun Rangers, who had been discharged because of wounds received at Leesburg on September 2, 1862. Sergeant Stewart was, of course, the same Stewart that Mobberly had wantonly shot at Waterford in 1863, and the prospect of capturing or killing Mobberly must have appealed to him. The party proceeded by foot to Loudoun.

General Hancock had, of course, approved the venture, but objected to offering a reward openly. He stated that the parties would be rewarded in proportion to their services. Hancock’s position with regard to secrecy may have provided the basis for the rumor that the reward money was never paid.

The party learned from reliable sources that Mobberly would be at a certain rendezvous sometime on April 5. Now in the course of history beautiful women and money have been used freely as bait to spring traps. With Mobberly the story was to be a different one. A horse was selected, for it was well known that he loved good horse flesh, and that Luther H. Potterfield, who lived four miles west of Lovettsville, near the foot of Short Hill Mountain, had a fine horse for sale.

The Potterfield barn sat on a gentle slope about 25 yards from the farm lane that passed it on the east. To the south about 25 yards ran a small stream of water. The lane to the main road about a quarter of a mile from the barn.

Mobberly had learned of the horse being for sale, and against the advice of his mother rode over the mountain with his companion, Jim Riley, to have a look at the animal. Stewart and his party had concealed themselves in the top of the barn and had either removed a board or found a hold through which they would have an excellent view of the lane. It was April 5, 1865.

Shortly after noon time, Mobberly and Riley turned into the farm hand rode toward the barn. When they reached the stream of water, Riley stopped to water his horse, but Mobberly, being anxious to see the animal that was for sale, rode toward the barn. What happened then is hidden in the mists of history, for there are two versions.

The most colorful of the two stories has it that the three soldiers suddenly burst out of the barn with pistols cocked, demanding that Mobberly surrender. Mobberly refused and at the same time a sudden premonition of death flashed across his brain as he exclaimed, “Oh Lord, I’m gone.” Three shots rang out, and Mobberly toppled from his horse dead.

The second version had it that the soldiers fired from the concealed position within the barn as soon as Mobberly rode into range, but that he heard the clicks as the guns were cocked and exclaimed, “Oh Lord, I’m gone,” as he realized he could not defend himself against the barricaded men. In view of the fact that Mobberly had quite a reputation as a “fast gun,” the second version lends itself to credence. And who, under the circumstances, could fault the soldiers.

Riley, of course, had not been scratched in the encounter. In fact, after Mobberly had been shot, two messengers had been dispatched to General Stevenson with the news, one by the mountain road and one by the river road. Riley soon recovered his composure and managed to capture the messenger that traveled the mountain road and took the message from him.

General Stevenson received that same evening, April 5, the following message from Secretary of War Stanton:

“Accept the thanks of the Department for your diligence, skill, and success in the achievement mentioned in your telegram of this date.”

The Mobberly gang obtained some measure of revenge for his death when they visited the Potterfield farm the next day and burned the barn and contents of hay, grain, etc. The Government reimbursed the Potterfields for the loss to the extent of \$2,500. The individuals that assisted the Rangers in killing Mobberly received \$1,000 in addition to their expenses while living at Harpers Ferry. The Rangers received nothing.

The superstitious may say that the ghostly hand of Mobberly eventually reached forth from the grave to seek vengeance. For many years afterward, Jacob Boyer, one of the civilians that had assisted the Rangers in the killing of Mobberly, returned to the spot. He had just finished a cool drink of water at a spring about 200 yards west of the scene of the shooting, when he suddenly dropped dead. Tradition has it that none of the other members of the party would venture near the area thereafter.

If Mobberly had been a problem while alive, he still remained one after death. The authorities at Harpers Ferry either didn’t know what to do with the body or else they were reluctant to release it, for three days later it still lay in the street.

His mother was anxious to claim it for decent burial, and, at her request, one of Mobberly's boyhood friends, but not a member of gang, George Russell, went to Harpers Ferry and prevailed upon the authorities to release it.

And so the mortal remains of John W. Mobberly found their final resting place at Salem Church in Loudoun Valley, the scene of many of his escapades.

But the mystery of who persuaded him to visit the Potterfield farm to look at the horse remains just that. Legend has it that a member of his gang, name unknown, was in love with the same young lady whose charms had captivated the young fighter. Realizing that he could not compete with the handsome and dashing Mobberly in the game of romance, the erstwhile friend made the necessary arrangements that would dispose of his competition forever.

And what happened to the money that Mobberly accumulated through plunder and disposal of captured Federal property? You can take your choice. One story has it that it still lies buried somewhere on Short Hill Mountain. Another says that he left it in the hands of one of his associates for safe keeping, and that after Mobberly's death it became the basis of a family fortune.

And so John W. Mobberly sleeps the eternal sleep in Salem Church-yard in the shadow of the Blue Ridge. Hero or renegade? He was a hero, of course. If you don't believe it, go over to Salem Church and look at his tombstone, it says on the back:

*Thrice hallowed the green spot
Where our hero is laid.
His deeds from our memory
Shall never more fade.*

Oh yes! The opinion expressed thereon may be prejudiced. For, you see, the stone was erected by his feminine admirers.