



## Gray Ghost: The Life of Col. John Singleton Mosby

By James A. Ramage

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Confederate John Singleton Mosby forged his reputation on the most exhilarating of military activities: the overnight raid. Mosby possessed a genius for guerrilla and psychological warfare, taking control of the dark to make himself the "Gray Ghost" of Union nightmares. *Gray Ghost*, the first full biography of Confederate raider John Mosby, reveals new information on every aspect of Mosby's life, providing the first analysis of his impact on the Civil War from the Union viewpoint.

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### Editorial Review

From Library Journal

The extraordinary life of Confederate guerrilla John Singleton Mosby defies belief. Ramage (Northern Kentucky Univ.; *Rebel Raider: The Life of General John Hunt Morgan*) casts Mosby, whose raiders harassed Union rear columns and supply trains in the Shenandoah Valley, as the stoic icon of the Lost Cause who never hesitated to employ stealth, terror, and pillage against an equally resolute foe. Mosby never had more than 400 irregulars under his command, yet his raids occupied an enemy force many times that number. As an attorney in postwar Virginia, Mosby attempted to unite state conservatives behind Republican presidents Grant and Hayes and was spurned as a turncoat. He then took a number of Republican appointments, including U.S. consul in Hong Kong and assistant attorney in the Justice Department. In his later years, he lectured and wrote about his wartime experiences before passing away in 1916 at 82, fully redeemed on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. Painstaking research, dramatic illustrations, and a useful bibliographic essay add to this absorbing biography. Highly recommended. A John Carver Edwards, Univ. of Georgia Libs., Athens

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From [Booklist](#)

Ramage can reasonably claim to have produced the first full-scale biography of legendary Confederate raider John Singleton Mosby. And a readable, comprehensive portrait of the 80-year life of a gifted, thoroughly combative man it certainly is. Before the war, Mosby shot a fellow student at the University of Virginia. During the war, he was an extraordinarily effective master of guerrilla tactics. Leading comparative handfuls of men, he did far more damage to the Union than the Union did to him. Only regular antiguerrilla measures were effective against him. After the war, Mosby's adherence to the Republican party made him persona non grata in the South, and he had to spend the rest of his career as a diplomat and federal attorney. Ramage has researched thoroughly--including interviewing one of Mosby's surviving grandchildren--and written clearly, making the book accessible to a wide range of readers. Slight pro-Confederate and psychobiographical elements do not seriously weaken this valuable addition to Civil War literature. *Roland Green*

From Kirkus Reviews

A comprehensive biography of the Confederate guerrilla leader (1833-1916), with an emphasis on his Civil War exploits. Ramage's (History/Northern Kentucky Univ.; *Rebel Raider: The Life of General John Hunt Morgan*, not reviewed) well-documented volume charts the progress of Mosby from a boyhood victim of playground bullies to an icon of the Confederacy. Proceeding in fairly chronological fashion, Ramage focuses on Mosby's stunning career as a guerrilla leader, a man who was shot several times (once in the groin the bullet remained in his body), who quoted Lord Byron while he harassed the Union troops relentlessly despite repeated attempts to capture or kill him. Ramage is most at ease in these sections, moving steadily (if unspectacularly) through descriptions of strategies and firefights that generally end with Mosby's men stealing Union horses and supplies (which they divided among themselves), killing enemy soldiers, and disappearing into the woods like, well, gray ghosts. The author credits Mosby with innovations in guerrilla strategy (e.g., in close combat, his cavalry used two handguns each instead of the traditional saber) and more than once characterizes him as "one of the most brilliant minds in the history of guerrilla war." The final 66 pages deal with Mosby's long post-Civil War life. He was, among other things, a private attorney, US consul in Hong Kong, an employee of the US Interior and Justice departments, a popular lecturer and writer. He even portrayed himself in a lost silent film. Ramage sometimes slips into the biographer's trap admiring his subject so thoroughly that he can utter only a rare discouraging word about Mosby, who owned slaves and

once shot an unarmed classmate. Also unconvincing is the cereal-box psychology Ramage applies to Mosbyviz., his boyhood battles with bullies explain his ferocious fighting spirit. A volume that will become the standard reference on Mosbyintelligent and thorough, but at times flattering rather than analytical. (32 b&w illustrations, 7 maps, not seen) -- *Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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#### **Daniel Buch:**

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