

JOHN MALCOLM MONTGOMERY | CAROLINE PLEASANTS MOSBY

On November 2, 1876, **John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910)**, an almost 35-year-old Civil War veteran who lived at Locust Plantation, married 18-year-old **Caroline Pleasants Mosby (1858–1890)** of Loughborough Plantation. The Montgomery and Mosby families were quite close friends.

As children, both John Malcolm and Caroline were sent away from their plantations for schooling.¹ When John Malcolm was seven years old, his mother, **Catherine Cameron Montgomery (1811–1848)**, died. After that, he attended Centenary, a private boarding school in Jackson, Louisiana. He was later educated at Western Military Institute in Nashville, Tennessee. Caroline P. Mosby was sent to an Episcopal school called Patapsco Female Institute in Maryland as a young girl.

In 1861, at age 19, John Malcolm Montgomery joined the Confederate Army and served for four years in the Western Theater. He became a captain in May 1864 and was called “Captain Mac” for the rest of his life. Based upon his writings and Civil War records, we have been able to account for his whereabouts throughout the war.²

In about 1909, John Malcolm Montgomery wrote a long letter to his first cousin Victor Montgomery (1846–1911), who lived in Santa Ana, California. In that letter, he recalled a number of Civil War experiences, including his recollections of the Battle of Shiloh,³ his participation in the capture of a gunboat in Lousiana,⁴ and what he called “the greatest battle of his life”⁵ defending Atlanta against General Sherman (1820–1891).

Also in that letter, John Malcolm related an affair that his cousin’s brother, William F. Montgomery (1844–1899), had with a nurse in Georgia in 1864.⁶ He then wrote about his encounters with Nathan Bedford Forrest (1821–1877),⁷ the general he most admired, and about the general he least admired, John Bell Hood (1831–1879).⁸ He concluded his long letter with a story about his “Fides Achates,” his term for faithful black body servants who accompanied Confederate soldiers during the war.⁹

John Malcolm Montgomery married Caroline Pleasants Mosby 11 years after the war ended. He then moved to Loughborough Plantation, which his wife inherited. John Malcolm Montgomery later served in the Mississippi State Legislature and at age 53, in 1894, ran unsuccessfully for Washington County sheriff.



Caroline Pleasants Mosby
John Malcolm Montgomery

John Malcolm Montgomery lived the last 41 years of his life as a Confederate veteran. Shortly before he died, he wrote a paper that was entitled “Reminiscences of a Cavalryman.”¹⁰ Using his rather florid writing style, he romanticized and rationalized the war, but did so with a tone of reconciliation and regret.

Caroline Pleasants Mosby was four years old when her mother died and almost nine when her father died. She was 18 when she married John Malcolm Montgomery, who was more than 16 years older than her.

Caroline Pleasants Mosby Montgomery, like her grandmother and mother before her, was destined to die young. She was 31 years old when she died at the home of her brother-in-law, **Dr. D. C. Montgomery (1835–1898)**. Some of the

correspondence between Caroline and John Malcolm survives, including a letter written shortly before she died.¹¹



John Malcolm Montgomery died at age 68, 20 years after the death of his wife. He is buried in the family cemetery at Loughborough. Caroline is buried in Greenville, where she died.

Capt. John Malcolm Montgomery around 1900.

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1. JOHN MALCOLM MONTGOMERY AND CAROLINE PLEASANTS MOSBY’S SCHOOLING

Plantation life in the Mississippi Delta has been described as “manorial.” The children of plantation owners often went far away from home for their schooling. At age seven, in 1848, **John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910)** was sent to Centenary, a preparatory school in Jackson, Louisiana, which is a small village south of Natchez, Mississippi. He later attended Western Military Institute in Nashville.

Centenary was bought by the Methodist church in 1903 and moved to Shreveport, Louisiana. Today it is a rather large school called Centenary College. My niece Frances Harrell Livesay (b. 1961) attended college there and graduated in 1983. She met her future husband, Shawn Livesay (1963–2003), there.

Western Military Institute, founded in 1847 in Kentucky, merged with Nashville University in 1855. After the Civil War, its operations were taken on by Montgomery Bell Academy, founded in 1867.



A painting of John Malcolm Montgomery in Confederate uniform. This portrait, adapted from an early photograph, was commissioned in recent years by my brother, George Wilkerson Bryan.

Caroline Pleasants Mosby (1858–1890) attended Patapsco Female Institute in Ellicott City, Maryland, just west of Baltimore. A newspaper clipping found in the family Bible tells about 14-year-old Caroline Pleasants Mosby’s confirmation while at Patapsco Female Institute.

This is to certify that Caroline P. Mosby received the Apostolic rite of laying on of hands at a Confirmation held in the chapel of the beloved disciple, Patapsco Female Institute, St. Peters, Ellicott City, Howard County, Maryland on Monday, the 10th day of February in the year of our lord 1873. William Pinckney, assistant bishop of Maryland, countersigned S.W. Crampton, Chaplain.

Patapsco Female Institute was one of the earliest female schools in America. It was founded in 1839 and survived to 1891. Today the school site is a romantic ruin, said to be haunted.



This is a c. 1874 photograph of Caroline Pleasants Mosby probably while she was at Patapsco Institute in Maryland. She appears to be about 16 years old. The photograph is owned by my second cousin Kathryn Payne Eubank (b. 1948).

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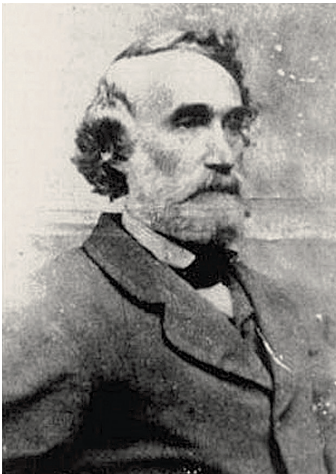
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2. JOHN MALCOLM MONTGOMERY’S CIVIL WAR SERVICE

When the Civil War began at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, in April 1861, **John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910)** was a 19-year-old student at Western Military Institute in Nashville, Tennessee. He was offered a commission as first lieutenant in Tennessee, but preferred to come home to Greenville, Mississippi.

After returning home, John Malcolm entered Confederate service as a first lieutenant in the Erin Guards, a company composed mostly of Irish immigrant workers who had come to construct levees along the Mississippi River. They were willing to go to war, but were unruly and difficult to train. In his writings, John Malcolm said, “After being with the Erin Guards for quite a while, and much attached to them, I became impatient to get to the front and tendered my resignation.”

And so in August 1861, at Sikeston, Missouri, John Malcolm Montgomery enlisted as a private in the Bolivar Troop, initially led by Captain Charles Clark of Doro Plantation in Bolivar County and later by Captain Frank A. Montgomery of Natchez.



Captain Charles Clark (1811–1877), father-in-law of John Malcolm Montgomery’s brother, William Eugene Montgomery. He was governor of Mississippi (1863–65).



Captain Frank A. Montgomery (1830–1903), John Malcolm Montgomery’s second cousin.

The Bolivar troops fought in the first skirmish of the Western Theater at Bird’s Point in October 1861. After that, but before the Battle of Shiloh (April 1862), the Bolivar Troop became Company H of the First Mississippi Cavalry. It joined with nine other companies to form that regiment, which went into battle under Colonel Andrew J. Lindsay (1825–1895) at the Battle of Shiloh. At Shiloh, John Malcolm Montgomery was a courier in communication with General Albert Sidney Johnston’s (1803–1862) headquarters. He was stationed on the Tennessee River, watching the enemy before the Battle of Shiloh began.

On June 11, 1862, while in camp in north Mississippi at the town of Poplar Springs, the First Mississippi Cavalry reenlisted for the duration of the war. As part of this reorganization, the men were allowed to elect new officers, and John Malcolm Montgomery became a first lieutenant.

In December 1862, Company H was detached from the First Mississippi Cavalry and sent to duty in Ponchatoula, Louisiana, where they spent the winter of 1863. In May, John Malcolm Montgomery’s company returned to Mississippi and was employed in defensive action around Jackson during the Siege of Vicksburg and afterward against General Sherman’s (1820–1891) march eastward.

In the spring of 1864, John Malcolm Montgomery and his troops moved to Rome, Georgia, arriving in May to defend Atlanta. On May 28, 1864, Captain Gadi Herrin (1839–1864), commanding officer of company H, was killed in Georgia in the Battle of Dallas, and John Malcolm Montgomery was promptly promoted to take his place and thus become a captain.

John Malcolm fought in the Tennessee Campaign and the Battle of Franklin in late 1864. He then moved southward with General Forrest (1821–1877) through east Mississippi and was at the Battle of Selma in 1865. John Malcolm escaped after that battle and was not at the surrender of his company’s troops at Gainesville, Alabama, on May 9, 30 days after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee (1807–1870) at Appomattox in Virginia.

John Malcolm Montgomery next appears in May in Vicksburg, where he signed the Oath of Allegiance and was paroled and returned to Locust Plantation.

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JOHN MALCOLM MONTGOMERY’S LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE CIVIL WAR

1861

Mid-April	An upperclassman at Western Military Institute, Nashville, Tennessee
Mid-May	At home at Locust plantation, Washington County, Mississippi
June/July	A lieutenant training the Erin Guards, Iuka, Mississippi
August–October	A private with the Bolivar Troop, Sikeston, Missouri
Late October	Home on furlough at Locust Plantation, Washington County, Mississippi
November/December	With the Bolivar Troop, Columbus, Kentucky

1862

January to early February	Camp Desha, Moscow, Kentucky, and Camp Beauregard, Mayfield, Kentucky
Mid-February to early April	Camp Porter, Paris, Tennessee, and in camp at Lexington, Tennessee
April 6–8	Battle of Shiloh
Late April	Siege of Corinth, Mississippi
May	Camped at Bethel, Tennessee
Early June	Camped at Poplar Springs, Mississippi, where he reenlisted on June 11 and was elected a first lieutenant in Company H of the First Mississippi Cavalry
Late June to mid-July	Camped at Holly Springs, Mississippi, and was in skirmishes near Holly Springs and White Oak Bayou, Mississippi
July 29	Engagement at Hatchie Bottom near Denmark, Tennessee
August 2 and 4	Skirmishes in Coahoma County, at Totten’s Plantation and Drysdale’s cotton gin, Mississippi
Mid- to late August	On furlough at home at Locust Plantation, Washington County, Mississippi
Late August to early October	Engaged in 14 skirmishes in west Tennessee down to Corinth

1862 (cont.)

October/November	Camped at Coldwater in Marshall County and skirmishes nearly Holly Springs (November 5–13)
Early December	Company H detached from the First Cavalry and en route to Ponchatoula, Louisiana
1863	
Early January to April	In camp at Madisonville, Louisiana, and Camp Ruggles in Ponchatoula, Louisiana
March 26	Engagement at Ponchatoula, Louisiana
Mid-April	Skirmishes at mouth of Amite River, where Company H secured the cannon from the USS <i>Barataria</i>
Early May	Camped near Port Hudson
Mid-May to mid-July	Camped in Jackson, Canton, and Mechanicsburg, Mississippi, covering General J. E. Johnston’s advance to Vicksburg and retreat to Jackson
July 19	Engagement near Brandon, Mississippi
July to October	Encamped near and around Jackson, Mississippi, and involved in skirmishes in the area

1864

February/March	In Mississippi, camped at Livingston, Mississippi, north of Jackson
April/May	Camped in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and en route to Georgia to defend Atlanta
May 15	Arrived at Rome, Georgia
May 28	Battle of Dallas, Georgia
June/July/August	Skirmishes and battles near Atlanta, including the Battle of Ezra Church (July 28), Battle of Herring’s Mill (August 6), and Battle of Jonesborough (August 31)

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1864 (cont.)

Mid- to late September	Guarding the Confederate retreat from Atlanta and camped near Palmetto, Georgia
October 6	Engagement at Altoona, Georgia
October 29	Engagement near Tuscumbia, Alabama, and camped near Florence, Alabama
Mid-November–December	Participated in John Bell Hood’s invasion of Tennessee
November 24	The Battle of Campbellsville and a skirmish at Columbia, Tennessee
November 29–30	Engagement at Spring Hill and the Battle of Franklin
December 7	The Battle of Overall Creek near Murfreesboro, Tennessee
Late December/early January	Covering Hood’s retreat from Tennessee
Late December	Camped at Tuscumbia, Alabama

1865

Early January	En route from Tuscumbia, Alabama, to Tupelo, Mississippi, where he went on furlough at Locust Plantation, Washington County, Mississippi, through January
Early February	Camped near Columbus, Mississippi
Mid-February	Camped at Verona, Mississippi
Late February/early March	Camped near West Point, Mississippi, probably on Chuquatonchee Creek, just south of town
Mid-March	Camped near Columbus, Mississippi, and en route to Selma, Alabama, via Pickensville, Alabama
April 2	The Battle of Selma
April to late May	An escapee en route (presumably on foot) to Vicksburg, Mississippi
Late May	In Vicksburg and en route by steamboat home to Locust Plantation, having been paroled

Map depicting the general path of John Malcolm Montgomery during his four years of service in the Western Theater.

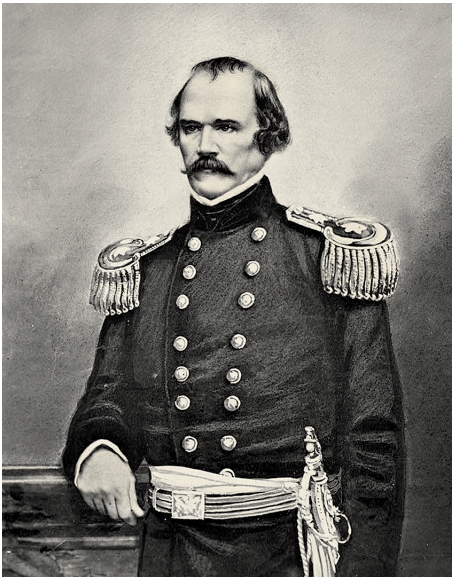


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3. THE BATTLE OF SHILOH (ALSO CALLED PITTSBURGH LANDING)

The Battle of Shiloh (April 6 and 7, 1862) was the first major battle in the Western Theater of the Civil War.

It began with an attack by Confederate troops (40,000 strong) under General Albert Sidney Johnston (1803–1862), the commanding general of the Western Department. Initially, the Confederates were successful over the Union troops of Brigadier



General Albert Sidney Johnston, who led Confederate troops at the Battle of Shiloh.

General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820–1891) at the Shiloh Church near Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River. In the afternoon of the first day, however, General Johnston was mortally wounded by a bullet in his leg. He bled to death.

On the second day (April 7, 1862), with reinforcements from Major General Don Carlos Buell’s (1818–1898) Army of the Ohio arriving overnight, the Federal

forces, more than 50,000 strong, were nearly three times their original size. The Confederate Army, now led by General P. T. Beauregard (1818–1893), was down to 30,000 troops and was soon in retreat. The Federal forces were victorious. Confederate casualties at Shiloh numbered 10,699. The Union Army lost 13,047.

John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910) wrote the following about the Battle of Shiloh.

[At the Battle of Shiloh,] we were not engaged much the first day, although our regiment charged and captured a battery. The next day we were in it, from start to finish. However, Buell and his 40,000 troops were on us. The first day’s fight was the grandest I ever saw in my life. There was no protection whatever for either side. The country was mostly timbered, with a few open fields at intervals. Our first commander, Albert Sidney Johnston, planned and executed well. We struck the enemy before daylight, and some of them were killed in bed, blissfully ignorant of the bloody program to be enacted that day. Numbers of breastplates were piled in profusion around the first camp we struck, but curious to say, I never saw one after that fight.

At times it would seem that it was impossible for our line to stand it one minute longer, but at the opportune moment, fresh troops would arrive, and take the places of the hard pressed ones.

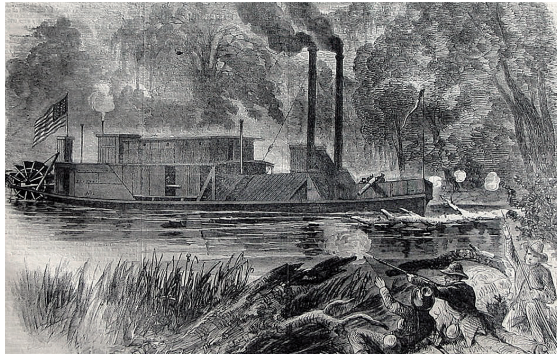
When General Johnston made his last charge, music was brought up and went along the line playing “Rally Around the Flag, Boys.” The enemy’s encampment was one of the finest ever sent forth by the United States government. The poet’s lines, “There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune,” were impressed upon my mind on that eventful night.

Strolling around, along the enemy’s tents, we came upon the paymaster’s fine Sibley tent [a tent of conical design named for its inventor], carpeted and filled with bureaus and Saratoga trunks. In the course of our investigation, we found a trunk filled with United States money. Our patriotism at that time was at such high flood tide that we scorned the filthy lucre, and consigned it to the flames, only reserving a few bills as mementos. That was my tide. We could have walked away with millions.

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4. JOHN MALCOLM MONTGOMERY AND THE CAPTURE OF THE USS BARATARIA

In the winter of 1863, Lieutenant John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910) was stationed at Camp Ruggles in Pontchatoula, Louisiana. On April 7, 1863, his captain, Gadi Herren (1839–1864) of Company H, sent troops to the mouth of the Amite River to attack the USS *Barataria*. It was a 125-foot-long stern-wheeled steamboat that had been made into a Federal armored gunboat, and it had run



Confederate attack on the USS *Barataria* on Lake Maurepas. Sketch by F. H. Schell. It was published originally in Harper's Weekly.

aground on the east bank of the Amite. A day or so later, Captain Herren, along with John Malcolm Montgomery, arrived to capture the boat, but found that it had been blown up and burned. They did, however, secure the guns from the boat and capture about 16 Federal soldiers.

John Malcolm Montgomery, in a letter to his cousin Victor Montgomery (1846–1911), gave an account of his experience with the USS *Barataria*.

Our squadron, as I previously remarked, were at Pontchatoula, in snug winter quarters, having a nice time with the piney woods girls, while the rest of our command were engaged in a winter campaign [in Tennessee], with no quarters at all, and enduring all kind of hardships....

In one engagement, Corporal Nahim Davidson, with about fifteen men (I think [my cousin] Will [Montgomery] was among the number) engaged a gunboat at the mouth of the Amite River, and succeeded in capturing it.... However, the gunboat grounded, and the enemy, seeing no chance of getting away from our little corporal's constant fire, burned it and made their escape. The next day we got a schooner and boarded the wreck. We took the guns off and put them aboard the schooner and went out into Lake Maurepas [maw-ree-paw], and then made our way to the mouth of the Tickfaw or Pontchatoula River. As we passed out of the lake on our way to the mouth of the river, we were spied by a gunboat, which opened on us, thinking we were some schooner running the blockade. The lake

was too shallow to admit of their closing in on us, so they dispatched a lieutenant with sixteen men in a big yawl to overtake us. Our men in their fright threw the [Barataria] guns overboard, tied up the boat and crossed to the opposite side of the river and there awaited the lieutenant and his sixteen men. As they came opposite them, our men opened on them, killing one or two, and the balance took to the water, losing their guns. We had left one man on the boat, Corporal Bill Peek, who had a broken arm and a pistol that wouldn't shoot. He ran down, and they all surrendered to him. The [Federal army] lieutenant offered me a nice gold watch; I did not accept it, but gravely doubt if it stuck with him during his prison career.

The map shows Lt. John Malcolm Montgomery's theater of operations in the early part of 1863.



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5. JOHN MALCOLM MONTGOMERY’S BLOODIEST FIGHT:
BATTLE OF DALLAS, MAY 28, 1864

This battle is one of a series of engagements in the Atlanta Campaign (May 7–September 2, 1864) led by Major General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820–1891) against the Confederate troops of General Joseph E. Johnston (1807–1891) and General John Bell Hood (1831–1879) defending Atlanta. Atlanta ultimately fell and burned on September 2, 1864. Sherman’s Atlanta victory was a major factor in the reelection of Abraham Lincoln in 1864.

The Battle of Dallas occurred on May 28, 1864. The Confederate troops were defeated and had casualties of 3,000. The Federal troops lost 2,400 men.

John Malcolm Montgomery’s (1841–1910) memories about the Battle of Dallas are as follows:

[...] we went to Dallas, dismounted from our horses, and again took our position in the trenches along with Johnston’s web-footed infantry. We were there confronted by [General James Birdseye] McPherson’s corps, the best in Sherman’s army. Johnston thought Sherman was at his old flanking game and was only holding his line with a small force, consequently, the only way to develop it was to make an assault, so he forthwith ordered one. The signal for formation was the fire of a six-gun battery on our line, and, in a few minutes after, another fire from the same battery was the signal for the charge. As Johnston had obtained the desired information, wanted to stop the charge, the order had to come from right to left, and they succeeded, according to my recollection, in stopping three infantry brigades. Our brigade and one brigade of infantry continued the charge.

Previous to this charge, our gallant little captain encouraged the boys by telling them that, as they knew, the infantry called them “Buttermilk Cavalry.” He said it would be well to show them who would be there first that day. He also said that the ball was not molded that would kill him. We took the first line of works with a large number of prisoners and a battery of siege guns. There was a second line, and from thence they poured upon us a very destruction fire, so that we had to abandon the works as well as our prisoners, and received from our captured line as heavy a fire in retreat as we did in the charge. In our immediate front was a deep ravine, which protected us nearly two-thirds of the distance, but the infantry on

our right had to move across a more level space, and only a few of them reached the works. They were almost annihilated. This happened on the twenty-eighth day of May 1864. Our loss was some fifteen or sixteen hundred killed and wounded, in about one-hour’s time. As nearly as I can remember, the charging column numbered not more than three thousand men. Captain Herrin [sic] was killed and fell upon me, pierced with a score of bullets. Your brother, Will, was wounded in the right arm below the elbow. Of our regiment, nearly every captain was killed or wounded....

This was the bloodiest fight in which I participated during the whole war, and well could one say, on that day, against the breadth of every one’s breast was reared the red crest of destruction. In his history of the Civil War, General Johnston speaks of this charge, and, in a manly way, assumes all responsibility for the unfortunate action.

Some days after this, the enemy evacuated that part of their line, and upon occupying it, we found that they had buried our dead in the breastworks. I found Herrin’s [sic] body, and having him placed in a plain coffin, had him buried nearby. A gold ring he wore, a present from his sweetheart, had been taken from him....*

*In this engagement, which in the histories of our Civil War has never been dignified with the name of a battle, we lost more men in one hour than were lost during the whole Cuban War. Yet that Santiago campaign has robbed our nation in garments of glory, and made a governor for the Empire State [Theodore Roosevelt].** It has added new laurels to the peerless Lawton’s [General Henry W.]*** brow, and made countless heroes for history’s page.*

*Temporary fortifications, usually earthen mounds raised to breast height.

**Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), colonel in the Spanish-American War; elected governor of New York in 1898 and president of the U.S. (1901–09).

***Gen. Henry W. Lawton (1843–1899), Union Army colonel; at the Battle of Atlanta in 1864; captured the Apache Indian warrior Geronimo (1829–1909) in Mexico in 1886; led troops in Cuba during the Spanish-American War in 1898; killed by sniper’s bullet in Philippines in 1899.

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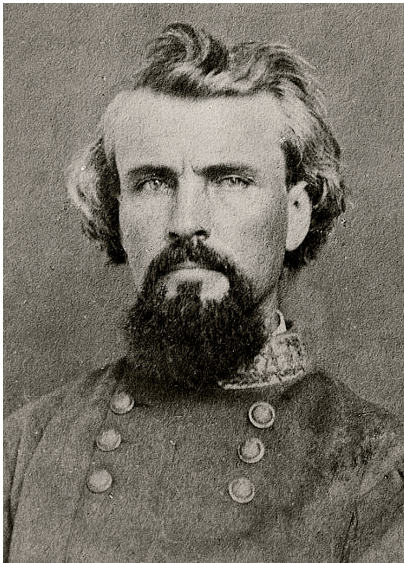
6. WILL MONTGOMERY (JOHN MALCOLM’S FIRST COUSIN)
“ENGAGES HIMSELF”

In **John Malcolm Montgomery’s (1841–1910)** letter to his cousin Victor Montgomery (1846–1911), he told about an affair that Victor’s brother had with a nurse in Georgia while in the hospital after having been wounded at the Battle of Dallas. John Malcolm’s account of the affair follows:

Will Montgomery, being wounded, was sent to Atlanta, and from that city to Forsythe, Georgia, where he received the best and kindest treatment from one of Georgia’s lovely girls, which soothed many a pain and cheered many a lonely hour. I always accused him of falling in love with this young lady, but he stoutly denied it, until a few years ago when he wrote me and made acknowledgement. He told me that there was a little episode of his life during the war of which he had never told me, and that it was tinged with the only regret he felt for any occurrence during that period. This was his falling in love with, and engaging himself to his kind nurse. He said his love was all the reward he had to give her for her world of troubles. He consoled himself with the belief that she had soon ceased to grieve for him, thinking that he had been killed in some battle after his return to the army, and was included in that huge list of unknown and unrecorded dead, whose memories are even now being perpetuated by enduring monuments raised by loving hands throughout southern country.

In my reply I told him that I saw no cause for regret in that boyish freak, that it was a common affair. That he should accept Napoleon’s definition of love, who, when asked what love was, had said, “that it was the pleasure of youth, the pastime of mature years, and the folly of old age.”

7. GENERAL NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST: “WIZARD OF THE SADDLE”



General Nathan Bedford Forrest

Nathan Bedford Forrest (1821–1877) is a celebrated Confederate general of the Civil War. He distinguished himself with heroic action in Tennessee, north Mississippi, and Alabama.

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a Tennessean who had no formal military training. He was a slave trader before the war. He is reputed to have been a Klu Klux Klan founder, but later left the Klan and spoke out against racism. He rose from the rank of private in 1861 to the rank of lieutenant general

in 1865 and died of chronic dysentery while somewhat impoverished in Memphis in 1877. He lived before and after the war in Cohoma County, Mississippi, just north of John Malcolm Montgomery’s home near Greenville.

In **John Malcolm Montgomery’s (1841–1910)** letter to his cousin Victor Montgomery (1846–1911), he expressed his admiration for Nathan Bedford Forrest and related several encounters with him. His first reference to General Forrest follows:

Now, in the death throws of the Confederacy, the powers that be lay aside prejudice and recognize true merit, and so the great “Wizard of the Saddle” Forrest is placed in supreme command of all the cavalry in the west. Jefferson Davis had always been friendly to Forrest, but [General Braxton] Bragg, his military advisor, had no use for him since Forrest cursed Bragg at Chickamauga.

[Later at Murfreesboro], our regiment was asked to report before daylight. My company again happened to be in advance and again I had the honor of riding with him, an honor I assure you I never coveted. Off we went to reconnaissance around the city, an as we reached Stones River, he ordered me to cross it at a certain ford, and meet him on the other side, at Salem Bridge. When I got to the ford, I found about 50 Yanks there, and sent him word of that fact. His reply was, “catch them!”

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At them I went, and they soon scampered away. I moved down the river and met him at the bridge. Then he moved us down the pike to the city driving in pickets on a dead run. After getting within 300 yards of their works, he wheeled the regiment to the right and directed me to fall in behind and made a complete circuit of the town, between their infantry pickets and the city, before the enemy could wake up and man their works, or get their guns to bear on us. It was the most daring and foolhardy move I ever heard of a man doing. It was a dreadful cold, winter day, snow was on the ground all the while and we were poorly clad, shod and fed.

Forrest at Columbus, Mississippi was again gathering his shattered few to make his death grapple with Wilson's [Major General James Harrison Wilson] 11,000 mounted men who were coming through north Alabama in the direction of Selma.

Into Selma Forrest went with most of our brigade. The place was well fortified, but we didn't have men enough to man the trenches. They were from 5 to 10 steps apart in the ditches. Wilson came on, getting between Forrest and the rest of his command and at once moved on our works. Not an officer was mounted, and every man of them, it is said, had his whiskey. We did not open on them until they had gotten within 60 or 70 yards of us and then we raked them well. They could not force our line, except at one point where some had militia troops. They gave way, and Forrest seeing there was no hope told us to get away the best we could.

The majority of our commanders were made prisoners, your brother among the number. I made my escape, but tried as hard as ever man did to surrender.

The killing and wounding of our men all took place with few exceptions after they had surrendered. The enemy's men were full of whiskey and had sworn vengeance against our men for having killed so many of them a night or two before claiming that we had shot them while asleep.

The following has been termed “the most important historical information” revealed in John Malcolm Montgomery’s remembrances of the war. It is an eyewitness account of General Forrest in Vicksburg, Mississippi, in late May 1865, after Lieutenant General Richard Taylor (1826–1879) had surrendered the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana.

(One more incident I will mention as I have never seen it related in history.)

Forrest surrendered at Uniontown, Alabama [the surrender was at Gainesville, Alabama]. Myself, Captain W. L. Gay, Colonel W. L. Nugent, and Captain Adams were paroled at Vicksburg. While we were at General A. J. Smith's headquarters, General Forrest came in while on his way up the river. General Smith offered him a guard during his stay in the city, saying the feeling in the army, especially among the colored troops was very bitter against him. Forrest thanked him for his kind offer, but said he thought it would be hardly necessary. The Vicksburg garrison, at that time, consisted of 13 regiments, every one of which, except one regiment and battery were Negroes. After this conversation, we proceeded toward the Washington Hotel, and when we near Washington Street, near Cassel's drugstore corner, we saw 50 or more colored soldiers. They called out “Here comes the rebel, Forrest. Let's us kill him.” Forrest in company of some other confederate soldiers whose names I do not know, moved forward, and the Negroes began to raise their guns. Forrest at once stopped and said to them “shoot, you damn cowards.” They at once dropped their guns to the ground and we proceeded on our way unmolested.*

General Smith, who apprehensive of some such occurrence, had mounted his horse and with his staff was soon at our side and continued in our company until we arrived at the Washington Hotel.

After we entered the hotel, the street soon became packed with a howling mob of Negro soldiers. General Smith told Forrest that was the result of curiosity more than anything else and asked Forrest if he would not walk out on one of the upper galleries so that they could see him. He did so and stood there for several minutes with General Smith by his side. It seemed that every Yankee officer in the garrison had come to get a view of him and if possible, an introduction.

Our boat soon arrived and we went down followed by a great crowd of officers and men eager to get a last look at the great “Wizard of the Saddle,” the man who Sherman said was the greatest soldier produced on either side during the Civil War. Sherman also said the sacrifice of 10,000 Yankees would be cheap if they could accomplish the destruction of the devil, Forrest.

*Major General Andrew Jackson Smith (1815–1897), United States Army.

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8. GENERAL JOHN BELL HOOD: “BUTTING OUT THE LITTLE BRAINS HE HAD LEFT”

John Bell Hood (1831–1879), a Kentuckian, was a West Point graduate who finished 44th in his class of 52 at the U.S. Military Academy. He is remembered as a brave, but reckless general who was decisively defeated in both the Atlanta and Franklin-Nashville campaigns. John Bell Hood fought in northern Virginia early in the war. He lost use of his left arm at Gettysburg in 1863, and his right leg was amputated after a wound at the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1863.

After the war, John Bell Hood was a cotton broker and an insurance executive in New Orleans. General Hood married and had 11 children in 10 years, and died of yellow fever in New Orleans in 1879, at age 48.



General John Bell Hood (1831–1879).
His nickname was Sam Woodenhead.
He was brave, but reckless.

At age 33, General Hood led Confederate forces at the disastrous Battle of Franklin, near Nashville, Tennessee, on November 30, 1864. **John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910)**, who was at that battle, expressed a strong animosity toward General Hood:

... from there we went to Franklin [11-30-64], the bloodiest drama in the picture of time. Forrest pleaded with Hood to go around it and force the enemy to fight in open ground out of their works, but he would not listen to him and proceeded with his old tactics completing his military career by butting out the little brains he had left. All his men asked was for a fair open field fight. 34% of the entire army was destroyed in this conflict. The cavalry being on the wings and having no breastworks to contend with suffered, but little in comparison to the infantry. Thirteen generals, our bravest and best, were killed and wounded, and one was captured.... More general officers were killed in this attack than in any other battle in the Civil War. Hugh Kirk and Sam Montgomery, cousins of ours, were killed in that battle.

The esprit de corps and morale of the army were there destroyed. Nevertheless, on Hood went to Nashville with an army already vanquished. I have often thought how nice it would be if the angels with their tears could blot from the historic page the record of the useless butchery, that great human sacrifice.

At the Battle of Franklin, the lives and future legacies of 1,750 Confederate soldiers were tragically extinguished in a brainless frontal assault led by General John Bell Hood. It was one of the worst blunders in the history of warfare. The number of dead Confederates at Franklin on that day was greater than all the American fatalities (1,456) on D-Day in Normandy 80 years later.

In September 2010, I went to Franklin, Tennessee, to learn about the only Civil War battle in which two of my great-grandfathers fought. In fact, both Captain John Malcolm Montgomery, with the first Mississippi Cavalry, and **Private William John Parker (1841–1921)**, with the 24th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, were 23-year-old unmarried survivors of that battle. As one of several hundred descendants of these two soldiers, I now know how perilous the Battle of Franklin was in the history of my ancestry.

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9. BLACK BODY SERVANTS: FIDES ACHATES* (TRUE FRIEND)

Confederate soldiers from slave-holding families were often accompanied by black body servants, especially during the early years of the Civil War. The chosen slave usually considered such service an honor. Their duties (cooking, cleaning, tending horses) were less onerous than field labor, and they rarely saw much action. There were probably around 75,000 body servants attached to Confederate soldiers who enlisted in the first year of the war. In the latter years of the war, as food rations diminished, it was mostly officers who had body servants.

At the end of his long missive to his cousin Victor, **John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910)** paid tribute to his body servant and then told a story about a bloody fight between two negro servants while he was encamped in Louisiana in 1863.

In giving these personal recollections, I have failed to remember our servants, our fides achates. They were with us on the march and in the camp, often times under fire, and sometimes slept with us. My old valet, Lank, is still with me, and though he is a pronounced Republican in politics, he has never left me, and I sincerely believe he will be with me till death us do part....

[A body servant that William Montgomery, my cousin, had with him], called Hentz, brings to my mind a thrilling story. We were camped on Sandy Creek, East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. We had been in camp for some days, and our body servants, like their masters, sometimes had love affairs. This amour of Hentz’s did not run smooth, and green eyed jealousy ran rampant in the breast of another son of Africa. This sable champion called Hentz out to the bloody field, but it was not the field of honor. This avenger of his blighted love came to my tent about midnight and called Hentz, telling him he had a hog a short way off, and if he would go with him, that he would divide with him. We interposed no serious objection, as our commissary was often far behind what it should be, and more often still, was empty.

We soon were slumbering and lost in peaceful dreams, dreaming of the good things to come in the morning, but not a great time had elapsed when I was awakened by cries of “Murder! Murder! Come here quick, come quick!” We hastily reached for our pistols and hastened to the scene of the trouble, and trouble we found. It seems that Hentz had been told that the hog was just over the fence, and he proceeded to climb over. But just as he mounted it, Blanchard’s boy, the aforesaid negro with the blighted affections, opened on him with a six shooter. Hentz, a big powerful darky, jumped down and grabbed his pistol hand, and was holding on for dear life when we arrived on the scene. He was well nigh exhausted from loss of blood. We got there in the nick of time to prevent further bloodshed. Hentz was shot twice, once in the arm and once in the leg.

We took the law in our own hands and administered a severe flogging on the assailant’s naked back with a stirrup leather.

After the war, Hentz returned home with us, and made some cotton for us. His assailant found a watery grave in one of the streams of southern Louisiana, whether of his seeking or not, we never learned.

*A Greco-Roman phrase meaning “faithful friend”; Achates was the faithful companion of Aeneas in Virgil’s (70–19 B.C.) epic poem The Aeneas.

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10. REMINISCENCES OF A CAVALRY MAN: JOHN MALCOLM MONTGOMERY

Sometime in the first decade of the 20th century, **John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910)** wrote a paper entitled “Reminiscences of a Cavalry Man.” It was read three times at the Washington County Historical Society, the first time on December 5, 1910, about nine months after John Malcolm Montgomery died. The reader of this paper was Mrs. Nellie Nugent Somerville (1863–1952), the oldest child of William Nugent (1832–1897), who married John Malcolm Montgomery’s sister Kate in 1867.

In his reminiscences, John Malcolm Montgomery mostly told about his war adventures. After that, he made a passionate appeal for the Confederate cause to be remembered, and he drew upon contemporary events and personalities to reveal his political views at the time.

The Sons of the Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy are the ones we have to look to, to preserve the hallowed memories of the past. They are the palladium of all our hopes, our sentinels on the watch-tower, to bear aloft the beacon lights of truth and justice and to vindicate our cause when we are dead and gone. We do not have to turn back the pages of time very far to find the more cautious telling us, “Don’t have any reunions; don’t bring out those bullet-rent and blood-stained old flags and make more bad blood.”

We find the reverse of that is now true. Our flags have been returned to the states by the national government. The lamented President McKinley said the time would come when the government would care for the Confederate graves. We also see our good president sending a wreath of flowers from himself and his wife. This wreath was to be laid on the grave of Mrs. [Jefferson] Davis, the mother of the Confederacy. The grand-daughter of Raphael Semmes placed a Confederate badge on his coat during his last Southern tour. We are fraternizing in the same camp, fighting under the same flag.*

*It is hard, however, to forget the past, and now and then it reappears, as when Joe Wheeler,** during the Cuban War, hollered out, “Give them Yanks hell, boys!”*

*Raphael Semmes (1809–1877), a prominent Confederate rear admiral.

**Joe Wheeler (1832–1906), a highly regarded Confederate major general who also served in the Spanish-American War.

If a war cloud appears, the young men are tumbling over each other to see who will get there first.... With such a rampant spirit of militarism or of patriotism, who will say now that we have not a more indestructible Union than ever before? The doctrine of states’ rights is yet feebly indicted in our courts. The doctrine of secession I thought to be dead, but our good president is now a bold exponent of it, recognizing the republic of Panama [Panama seceded from Columbia in 1903] ere it had left its mother’s breast....

Near the conclusion of his paper, John Malcolm Montgomery wrote a poignant and poetic paragraph that summarized his reflections of his life. These are my favorite lines of John Malcolm Montgomery’s writings.

We are now moving along the walk of life with feeble steps. Life’s battle will soon be over with the strongest of us. As we look back into the long ago, we can see where we committed some errors, but we submitted all to the arbitrament of the sword and did our duty as God gave us the light to see that duty. God grant when Gabriel blows his trumpet for the last rally, and the recording angel passes on our deeds, one by one, that he will write the good in smiles and blot the bad in tears.



John Malcolm Montgomery’s tombstone at Loughborough. It reads: Capt. / John Malcolm / Montgomery / Born / Nov. 7, 1841 / Died / Mch. 19, 1910.

This old photograph shows that there was a figure on the top of the marker. Today the figure is missing and the urn that was at the feet of the figure is on the ground.

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11. CAROLINE PLEASANTS MOSBY MONTGOMERY: “DIED AT AGE 31 AFTER LONG ILLNESS”

In 1889, the year before she died, **Caroline Pleasants Mosby Montgomery (1858–1890)** wrote these words in a letter to her husband, **John Malcolm Montgomery (1841–1910)**. She was ill in Greenville.

My darling husband,

I thought I would write you few lines so if I saw anyone passing, I could send it out to you. I am feeling some better today than I was when you left. If I have time, or rather if I feel like it—I will write mother [John Malcolm Montgomery’s stepmother, Evelyn Bacon (1823–1899)] a few lines to let her know how I am.

Write to me when you have an opportunity to do. I enjoyed my breakfast very much this morning and so far it has been alright. I hope and trust I will continue to improve so that I will be able to be up again. I will be truly thankful if I am spared to train my children a while longer and to be with you. I do not know whether I am able to work and help you like I have done before. I have just finished my dinner, two poached eggs, biscuit and a glass of cold water. I feel pretty well so far today—hope I will continue to feel better. I will close and have this ready to send if I have a chance. Both the children [Caroline Mosby Montgomery, my grandmother, and Francis Cameron Mosby Payne, my great-aunt] send love to dear Papa. Keep well and write soon. Do not work too hard and make yourself sick and if you feel bad, come to town where I am. May God Bless and keep you safe from harm.

This prayer of your affectionate wife, Caroline M

Caroline Pleasants Mosby Montgomery died 10 minutes after 7:00 p.m. on April 6, 1890, at the home of her brother-in-law, **Dr. Daniel Cameron Montgomery (1835–1898)**, Greenville, Mississippi. Her obituary in the local newspaper said:

Death of Mrs. Carrie P. Montgomery, wife of Captain John M. Montgomery, estimable lady passed away quietly and with peace on last Sunday night at the residence of Dr. D. C. Montgomery where she had been carefully nursed during her last few days on this earth. The funeral services were held Monday evening at the Methodist Church, owing to the water surrounding the Presbyterian Church of which she is member. The service was by Revs. G.T. Storey and Stevenson Archer.

A large number of friends and relatives and acquaintances had assembled to pay the last loving tribute of respect and love to the memory of one whom they had held so dearly in life. Her illness was a long suffering one which she had borne with a Christian spirit and fortitude which had characterized her life. Two motherless little girls, a bereaved husband, a large number of relatives will miss this bright light which has gone from around them to shine still brighter in the land which knows no pain.

She died at age 31 after a long illness.



Caroline P. Mosby Montgomery is buried at the Greenville cemetery in the plot of Dr. Daniel Cameron Montgomery, her brother-in-law. Flood waters in Bolivar County at the time of her death precluded her from being buried at Loughborough. It reads: My Wife / Carrie P. / Dau. of / G.S. & E.G. Mosby / Wife of / J. M. Montgomery / Died / Apr. 6, 1890 / Age 31 yrs, 7 Mo. 16 Ds / Tis sweet joy to our despair / That Heaven is God's and Thou are / there.