

## Loudoun Virginia Rangers

The Loudoun Virginia Rangers formed on June 20, 1862, at Lovettsville, Virginia by order of Edwin M. Stanton, the Secretary of War. In the beginning they were subject to his orders but were merged into the Eight Corps under command at that time by Major General John Ellis Wool, hero of three wars: War of 1812, Mexican War, 1847 and the Civil War. The Loudoun Rangers consisted of Companies A, B, C, and D. Companies C and D eventually were merged into Company B.

The Rangers made up largely of Germans and Quakers with a sprinkling of other nationalities. They fought under the Union flag because of their opposition to Virginia's succession from the Union.

There were three Virts who were members of the Loudoun Rangers, **John W. Virts**, **Richard A. Virts** and **Charles W. Virts**. John was the son of Samuel and Sarah Harper Virts. Richard was the son of Adam and Susanna Lilly Virts, and Charles was the son of Henry and Lydia Warner Virts. Private John W. Virts joined in January 1863 at Waterford, Virginia. Private Charles W. Virts joined February 24, 1864 at Point of Rocks, Maryland. Private Richard A. Virts joined on March 3, 1863, in Berryville, Virginia. They were members of the Loudoun Rangers Company A, which was under the command of Captain Samuel C. Means and Captain Daniel M. Keyes. Company A consisted of 120 men, which by wars end, 9 were killed, 19 died in Confederate Prisons and 29 more were wounded.



*Charles Virts*

**John W. Virts** was shot through the breast and taken prisoner in a battle at Point of Rocks, Maryland on June 17, 1863, in a confrontation with Col. White's Confederate cavalry. John who had formerly belonged to the rebel army, was a member of the Loudoun Artillery, and wounded at the first battle of Bull Run. He was sent home to recuperate and when recovered, instead of rejoining his battery and continuing his service to the Confederacy went to Maryland and took the oath of allegiance to the Government of the United States. Afterwards he joined Loudoun Rangers. After he was taken prisoner, some of White's men who had been his former neighbors recognized him and tried to have him executed. Another prisoner captured a few days earlier in Winchester who belonged to an Ohio regiment, changed uniforms with him. When taken to Richmond he gave his name as Jim Davis, and claimed to belong to an Ohio regiment, and adopted that name. While there, on Belle Island, the rebel officer, Sergt. Haight, tried to find him by pretending to have a letter from friends at home, but the scheme would not work, and John Virts was finally exchanged as Jim Davis. Although he lived until the war was over he eventually died from his wounds at an early age.

**Richard A. Virts** was captured on October 18, 1863, in a battle at Charles Town. He was marched up the Valley to Staunton where he was put on a train to Richmond. On November 1 he was detained at Pemberton prison, an old tobacco warehouse, on Cary Street and stripped of all his valuables. After a week stay at Pemberton he was moved to Belle Island in the James River. The stockade on Belle Island consisted of a few old tents sufficient to accommodate 3,000 prisoners, but there were about 6,000, with as many as 11,000 at times. Rations would consist of a piece of corn bread about 2 inches square and once in a while a small piece of meat or a half of pint of bean soup. Deprived of adequate shelter and clothes many would freeze to death during the winter months or starve. Richard Virts was later moved to the Andersonville, Georgia prison where he died on May 23, 1864.

On August 27, 1862, a battle took place near Henry and Lydia (Warner) Virts' house in Waterford, Virginia. The following reflection is from book *History of the Independent Loudoun Virginia Rangers* by Briscoe Goodhart, who himself was a ranger:

*A few minutes before three o'clock a.m., August 27, the enemy, consisting of Maj. E. V. White's 35th Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, Ewell's Brigade, by being dismounted, and piloted by citizens and crossing fields, evaded our pickets and succeeded in reaching our camp unobserved.*

*The first apprehension we had of the approach of the enemy was an unusual noise, caused by the enemy, ostensibly for the purpose of drawing our men out of the church. The men rushed out in the front yard, when Lieut. Slater hastily formed them in line. A body of men could barely be recognized on the bank in front and on each side of the Virts' house and in the edge of the green corn. Lieut. Slater's clear voice rang out on the early morning air in quick utterance, "Halt! Who comes there?" and in answer received a terrific volley from the carbines of the enemy, which our men gallantly returned, notwithstanding over half had been wounded.*

*The rebels now took position behind buildings and in the green corn, and the Ranges fell back into the church. Lieut. Slater, although severely wounded, retained command until compelled by the loss of blood to relinquish that charge to Drillmaster Charles A. Webster, who continued the fight to its final termination, in a way that shed luster on his career as a brave and meritorious officer.*

*The rebels continued firing through the windows and the porch or vestibule of the church, a lath and plastered partition extending across the entire front. The bullets poured through this barrier as they would through paper. The Rangers returned the fire as vigorously as circumstances would permit. After continuing the firing for about thirty*

*minutes Maj. White sent in a flag of truce carrier by Mrs. Virts, demanding a surrender, which was refused by Webster in rather emphatic language, that is not often heard in church. The fight was continued, perhaps one hour longer, when the second flag of truce was sent in, making the same demand and sharing the same fate as the first, notwithstanding that one-half of the little band had been wounded and lay around in the church pews weltering in their blood, making the place look more like a slaughter pen than a house of worship.*

Below is a list of battles the Loudoun Virginia Ranges participated in.

- Battle at Lovettsville, Virginia
- Battle at Point of Rocks, Maryland
- Battle at Waterford, Virginia on 27 August 1862

Company of Loudoun Virginia Ranges under Capt. Samuel C. Means, This Company was surprised and captured by about 150 Confederates at Waterford, 14 miles south of Harper's Ferry. Reports of the affair are meager and it is impossible to ascertain what the loss was, nor was the strength of Means's company reported. (Source: *The Union Army*, Vol. 6, p., 910)

- Battle at Leesburg, Virginia on 02 September 1862
- Battle at Waterford, Virginia on 15 December 1862
- Battle at Lovettsville, Virginia on 15 March 1863
- Battle at Point of Rocks, Maryland on 17 June 1863

Detachment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Maryland Potomac Home Brigade. Cpts. Summers and Vernon were sent with their companies to seize and hold Point of Rocks until further orders. When near their destination they were overpowered by White's battalion of cavalry, which greatly outnumbered their force. Summers states the Union casualties as 1 killed, 3 wounded and 4 missing. White's report of the same affair says he killed 4, wounded 20 and captured 53, without the loss of a man. (Source: *The Union Army*, Vol. 6, p., 700)

- Battle at Taylortown, Virginia on 20 September 1863
- Battle at Neersville, Virginia on 30 September 1863
- Battle at Charles Town, West Virginia on 18 October 1863

Charlestown, W. Va., Oct. 18, 1863. 9<sup>th</sup> Maryland and 34<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry; Detachment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Connecticut Cavalry; and 17<sup>th</sup> Indiana Battery, Col. B. L. Simpson, with the 9<sup>th</sup> Md., was surprised by a superior force under Gen. Imboden about 7 a.m. A few of the officers made their escape, but most of the regiment was surrendered. Almost immediately after the affair information was received the Harper's Ferry. Col. George D. Wells, with the other troops, hurried to Charlestown, drove the Confederate out of the place and pursued them nearly to Berryville, when Gen. Sullivan sent an order to Wells to return. The Union loss was 6 killed, 43 wounded and 375 of the 9<sup>th</sup> Md. Captured. The loss of the enemy was definitely learned. Wells reported seeing about 25 dead along the line of the pursuit. Imboden's force numbered about 1,500. (Source: *The Union Army*, vol. 5)

- Battle at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia on 01 November 1863
- Battle at Waterford, Virginia on 17 May 1864

Birg.-Gen. B. F. Kelley sent the following dispatch from Harper's Ferry on the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup>: "A company of independent Calvary raised in Loudoun County, Va., was attacked this a.m. near Waterford, in said county, by a detachment of Mosby's men, numbering about 100. Our men were driven in here, losing 2 killed and 7 captured. (Source: *The Union Army*, Vol. 6, p., 910)

- Battle at Adamstown, Maryland on 14 October 1864
- Battle at Goresville, Virginia on 28 November 1864
- Battle at Fairfax Court House, Virginia on 15 December 1864
- Battle at Taylorstown, Virginia on 24 December 1864
- Battle at Keys Switch Virginia on 06 April 1865
- Battle at Alabama on 15 April 1865