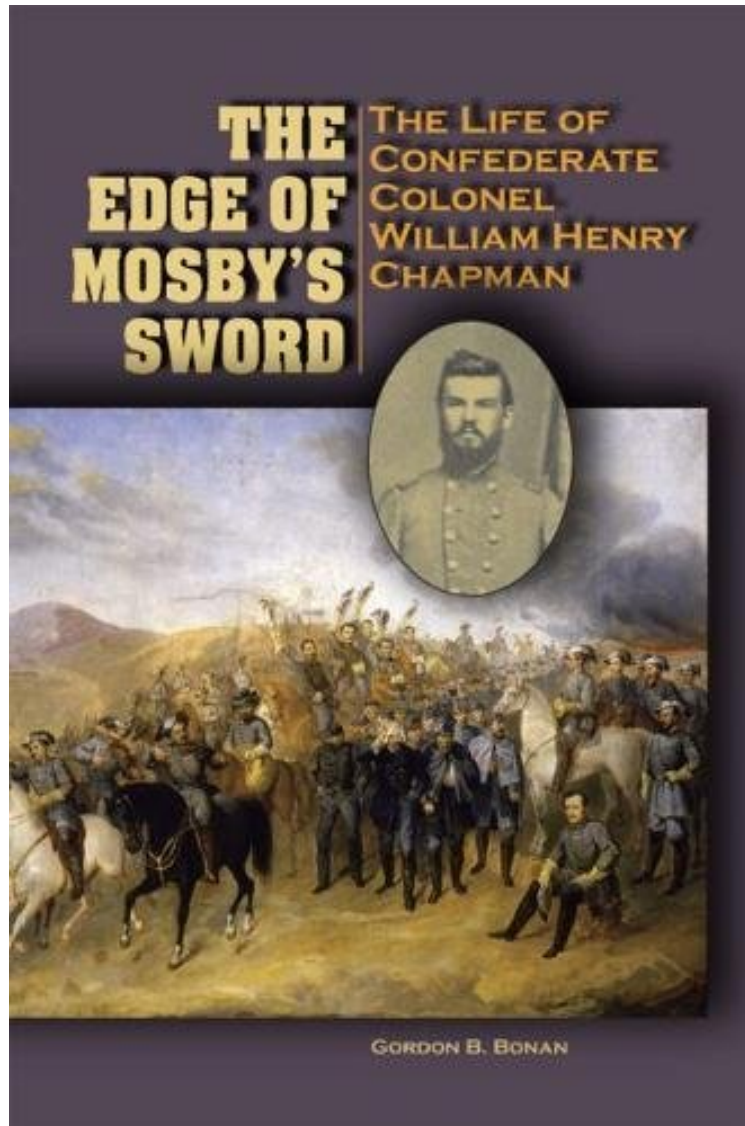


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## The Edge of Mosby's Sword: The Life of Confederate Colonel William Henry Chapman

*Gordon Blackwell Bonan*

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**Gordon Blackwell Bonan** : **The Edge of Mosby's Sword: The Life of Confederate Colonel William Henry Chapman** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Edge of Mosby's Sword: The Life of Confederate Colonel William Henry Chapman*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *The Comparison of Chapman and Mosby at War's End.* By V. Protopapas This is an excellent book, yet I found a problem with the author's viewpoint regarding the actions of Mosby

and Chapman at the very beginning. Bonan states, ". . .yet when the war was ended, when Mosby could not bring himself to surrender, Chapman accepted defeat with dignity and led the negotiations with the victorious federal army. . ." This is grossly inaccurate. To begin with, Mosby did not wish to surrender his command because he had no reason to do so. First, the 43rd Battalion was at its strongest in men, material and mounts. Secondly, Mosby's knowledge of Lee's surrender was obtained from Northern sources, not the most reliable to say the least! Third, he did not know if Johnston was still in the field. Even if Lee had surrendered, he and most of his men at least, preferred going to Johnston to fight on. Only when Mosby learned of Johnston's surrender did he finally disband those of his men who had remained with him after the disbanding at Salem. Mosby had always intended to disband rather than officially surrender as he told General George Chapman at their first meeting at Millwood. However, he also told Chapman that he had told any of his men who wished to go in for a parole that they had his permission as their commanding officer to do so. Eventually, Mosby disbanded before finding out the fate of Johnston's army because Hancock had promised to devastate "Mosby's Confederacy" with 40,000 troops then stationed at Winchester even though Mosby's men were no longer living among the civilians in that area. To protect the people who had succored him during the war, Mosby returned to Salem after the last meeting with Chapman and disbanded. It was then that he went with a few companions to seek Johnston only to discover upon reaching the James that that General had also surrendered. Perhaps Mosby was wrong to disband rather than officially surrender, but that was his choice and Chapman did not demur at the time if he felt differently. Neither did Chapman "lead the negotiations" with the federal forces. He went with Dr. Monteiro and William Mosby to Hancock with Mosby's letter suggesting a truce until such time as he could determine his future actions. But it was Mosby who negotiated with Gen. George Chapman, the federal representative sent by Hancock to meet with him at Millwood. But even before Mosby disbanded, he had sent a scout to see Lee in Richmond to ask if he should fight on. As a partisan command, Mosby could very well have continued to fight. Indeed, Gen. Porter Alexander of Lee's staff suggested to Lee that he send his remaining men into the hills to fight the invader, but Lee did not agree. Until Mosby learned of Lee's desires in this matter, he would not surrender or even disband the 43rd in case Lee should ask that he fight on. Finally, it was easy enough for Chapman to go in and surrender, but Mr. Bonan seems to forget that Mosby did not have that luxury. He had been granted the same parole as the rest of Lee's army, but Stanton revoked his parole and had him declared an outlaw. This removed from Mosby the luxury of simply going in and getting his parole. With an eventual price of \$10,000 on his head, Mosby remained in northern Virginia until finally Grant, at Lee's SECOND request, decided that a paroled Mosby was a lot less embarrassing to the federal army than an outlaw who seemed to move at will among the thousands of federal soldiers in that area. Once he had the promise of a parole, Mosby was happy enough to surrender and return to his family. So to suggest that Chapman's behavior was somehow more "dignified" or becoming a soldier than was Mosby's fails to take into consideration all that Mosby had to contend with while, as a subordinate officer who had been offered a parole and not the gallows, Chapman did not. This takes nothing away from Chapman, but it certainly ends any comparison that might be made of Chapman's and Mosby's actions at the end of the war that can be considered detrimental to Mosby.

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Should be read by every person who is descended from William Henry Chapman  
By Marilyn Chapman  
This book should be read by every person who is descended from William Henry Chapman. My Uncle Billie Chapman spent years gaining knowledge of our geneology and many of the names in my family are in this book. A fascinating read.  
0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By kdbugexcellent

The Edge of Mosby's Sword is the first scholarly volume to delve into the story of one of John Singleton Mosby's most trusted and respected officers, Colonel William Henry Chapman. Presenting both military and personal perspectives of Chapman's life, Gordon B. Bonan offers an in-depth understanding of a man transformed by the shattering of his nation. This painstakingly researched account exposes a soldier and patriot whose convictions compelled him to battle fiercely for Southern independence; whose quest for greatness soured when faced with the brutal realities of warfare; and who sought to heal his wounded nation when the guns of war were silenced. Born into a wealthy slave-owning family, Chapman was a student of the fiery secessionist rhetoric of antebellum Virginia who eagerly sought glory and adventure on the battlefields of the Civil War. Bonan traces Chapman's evolution from an impassioned student at the University of Virginia to an experienced warrior and leader, providing new insight into the officer's numerous military accomplishments. Explored here are Chapman's previously overlooked endeavors as a student warrior, leader of the Dixie Artillery, and as second-in-command to Mosby, including his participation in the capture of Harpers Ferry, the battering of Union forces at Second Manassas, and his ferocious raids during the 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign. Bonan reveals fresh perspectives on the intrepid maneuvers of Mosby's Rangers, the hardships of war, and Chapman's crucial role as the right hand of the "Gray Ghost." But while Mosby recognized him for his bravery and daring, the fame Chapman sought always eluded him. Instead, with his honors and successes came disillusionment and sorrow, as he watched comrades and civilians alike succumb to the terrible toll of the war. The end of the struggle between North and South saw Chapman accept defeat with dignity, leading the Rangers to their official surrender and parole at Winchester. With the horrors of the war behind him, he quickly moved to embrace the rebuilding of his country, joining the Republican party and beginning a forty-two-year career at the IRS enforcing

Federal law throughout the South. In the end, Chapman's life is a study in contradictions: nationalism and reconciliation; slavery and liberty; vengeance and chivalry.

“Entertaining and exhaustively researched, this is the first book on John S. Mosby's second-in-command William Chapman. Gordon B. Bonan provides new details and new insights into Mosby's against-the-odds victory at Miskel's farm and other cavalry skirmishes. . . . Chapman comes alive and speaks for himself through the Civil War and afterward.”—James A. Ramage, author of *Gray Ghost: The Life of Col. John Singleton Mosby*