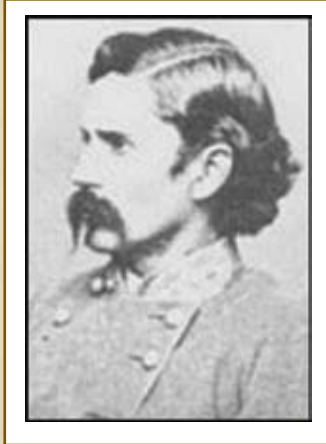


# FULL CIRCLE

## General Cosby held positions with Union, Confederacy and Cal Guard

By 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Michael Anthony Rodriguez



During the Civil War, California was not home to the pitched battles typical to the East and the Midwest. California's ties to the "War between the States," however, do run deep, and the Cal Guard holds a direct link to a commander among "Johnny Reb's" forces.

Major General George B. Cosby, who served from 1883 to 1887 as the ninth adjutant general of the California National Guard, was once also a cavalry general for the Confederate States of America.

Cosby was born in Louisville, Ky., on Jan. 19, 1830. While his early schooling was geared toward work as a merchant, he instead entered the U.S. Military Acad-

emy at West Point at age 17, and earned his commission in 1852. It was as a Union officer during his early years of service on the Great Plains that he suffered a wound to his arm during a fight with Comanche Indians.

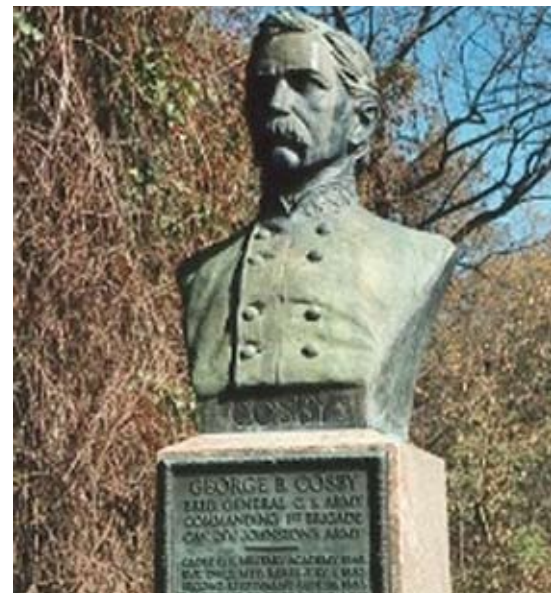
Near the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, he resigned from the Union to join the Confederate Army. A highlight of his Confederate service occurred on Feb. 15, 1862, at Fort Donelson, Tenn., when Cosby carried a message of surrender on behalf of Brig. Gen. Simon B. Buckner to Union Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Grant sent Cosby back to his old friend Buckner with a message of unconditional surrender. From this episode, Grant earned the nickname "Unconditional Surrender Grant." Buckner spoke highly of his subordinate, noting in his official report that "George B. Cosby, my chief of staff, deserves the highest commendation for the gallant and intelligent discharge of his duties."

After the surrender, Cosby became a prisoner of war but was freed shortly thereafter in a prisoner exchange. He also took part in offensive campaigns in Tennessee, including the battle of Thompson's Station; the Vicksburg and Jackson campaign of 1863; and other operations throughout the South. He continued to serve the Rebel cause until the defeat of the Confederacy.

After the war, Cosby moved to California to take up farming and settle into private life. He eventually re-entered public service by serving as secretary of the state Board of Engineers from 1878 to 1883. It was in 1883 that he was selected by Gov. George Stoneman to serve as the state's adjutant general. Both Stoneman and Cosby were West Point graduates and cavalry veterans of the Civil War. Stoneman, however, had served on the opposite side of Cosby as a Union officer.

Cosby served as the adjutant general until 1887, after which he spent time as a member of the board of visitors at West Point. In 1903, Cosby suffered a stroke that took a major toll on his physical and mental health. Many believe that this injury, along with the aforementioned injury he suffered years earlier at the hands of the Comanche Indians, led Cosby to take his own life in 1909.

He is buried in the Old Historic Cemetery in Sacramento next to his wife, son and daughter-in-law. Visitors to the site can take part in a monthly tour during which a reenactor details Cosby's diverse military service and life.



Major General George Blake Cosby, ninth adjutant general of the California National Guard, is memorialized in Virginia National Park with a bronze bust and a plaque commemorating his service to the Confederate States of America.

*"Without a sign his sword the brave man draws, and asks no omen but his country's cause."*

- Homer, "The Iliad"



Cosby was buried in the Old Historic Cemetery in Sacramento. He is buried in Lot 19, where two headstones bear his name.

### Fun Fact

After the Battle of Gettysburg, the discarded rifles were sent back to Union forces to be inspected and reissued. Of the 34,574 recovered, more than 24,000 were still loaded.

### By the Numbers

**10** Major General John Clem's age when he joined the Union Army. He served as a drummer boy and at the Battle of Chickamauga where he wielded a musket trimmed to his size. During the course of a Union retreat, he shot a Confederate colonel who had demanded his surrender. After the battle, the "Drummer Boy of Chickamauga" was promoted to sergeant, the youngest Soldier ever to become a noncommissioned officer in the U.S. Army. He was also the last Civil War veteran to retire, having reached the rank of major general.