

Servin' the Pies

By Carol Bruce

The story of Kitty Hanna's run in with John Singleton Mosby

There are many places throughout Herndon that evoke thoughts of an earlier time— from the beautiful old homes along Elden Street to the old Town Hall and, of course, the Depot.

But some of the Town's most interesting and colorful history is associated with the resident of a place that you probably wouldn't give a passing glance. It's the little white frame cottage across from the Baptist Church, at 681 Monroe Street.

The sign out front today says it houses a hair salon, but some long-time residents still refer to it as the Kitty Kitchen House after the woman who lived there off and on for many years, until her death in the early 1900s. Kitty's husband, Nat Hanna, built the original one-room section of the house in 1861.

While Kitty was a native of the area, Nat was a northerner who, during the Civil War, vowed that he would never fight against the Union.

At one point during the war Nat rented the Depot, which—because the tracks had been destroyed and the trains were not running—was not needed for its original purpose. He used the freight room as a store and the remaining rooms became the family residence.

On March 17, 1863, Kitty, who by then was living at yet another location (a house that stood on the site of what is now the Main Street Bank), was serving dinner to four Union officers when John Singleton Mosby and his men rode into town. They spotted the Union horses and, after a brief skirmish, captured the men.

Here's how Kitty described the event to her friend, Virginia Carter Castleman:

As I turned from servin' the pies, I cast my eyes out'n the window... an' I saw comin' a squad of grays! The rebel yell was no louder than my scream, "the Southerns!" as they come tearin' down the hill, an' every man at table ran to [the] front door—the wors' thing to do, to show theyselves!—an' then the bullets jes rained on our house.

The Yankees ran inside an' I thought they was goin' to fight it out, but though they buckled on sabers, they followed my brother-in-law up the stairway, til I cried out in terror—"Gentlemen, go outside, or I'll be murdered in my own house!"

According to Kitty, Mosby himself stopped by about a week later to apologize "for my men shootin' at your house."

Kitty—who in her later years had settled back into the little white cottage—told this and many other stories to her friend, who compiled them into a report she called *Reminiscences of an Oldest Inhabitant, a Nineteenth Century Chronicle*. The Herndon Historical Society published the work in conjunction with the town's bicentennial in 1976. It is available in the Depot.