

In Memory of Private Joseph Ward Simmons

1831 - 1863

(Company A, 12th Connecticut Infantry)

Age: 32

Spouse: Emma Eliza (Mack) Simmons

Conflict: American Civil War

Country Enlisted In: United States of America - Union

Country of Death: United States of America - Union

Relation: Husband of Maternal 3rd Cousin 4X Removed



Private Joseph Ward Simmons was thirty-two years old when he enlisted in the Union Army on November 5, 1861, joining Company A, 12th Connecticut Infantry. The regiment was organized at Hartford, Connecticut, and soon sent south with the Department of the Gulf, tasked with securing the lower Mississippi and the key Confederate stronghold of New Orleans.

Life in the Gulf theater was grueling. The Connecticut men, far from their New England homes, found themselves in the swamps and bayous of Louisiana, where every march meant mud, heat, mosquitoes, and the ever-present threat of disease. Simmons endured the hardship of long marches, poor rations, and sickness, along with the strain of combat in an unfamiliar and unforgiving climate.

In the spring of 1863, Joseph and his regiment took part in the Siege of Port Hudson, Louisiana. From May to July 1863, Union forces surrounded the Confederate fortress in one of the war's longest sieges. For weeks, Simmons and his comrades endured heavy fighting, sweltering heat, and constant bombardment. The men dug trenches, advanced under fire, and lived on the edge of survival. It was during this campaign that Simmons was wounded, and like so many soldiers in the Gulf, he also contracted illness in the swampy, unhealthy climate.



*Soldier of the Union Army with
Company A, 12th Connecticut Infantry*

By the autumn of 1863, Joseph's health was failing. His wound and disease weakened him until he was no longer able to remain in the field. He was granted a thirty-day furlough and returned to his home in Essex, Connecticut, where family and community cared for him. For a time, there may have been hope that rest and familiar surroundings could restore him, but his condition worsened.

Despite his poor health, Simmons remained committed to his comrades and his country. On January 1, 1864—his own birthday—he re-enlisted, a testament to his dedication even as his body was failing. Yet he would not return to the field. The disease and debilitation contracted during his service proved too strong.

On March 7, 1864, at the age of 32, Private Joseph Ward Simmons died at home in Essex, Connecticut, from disease contracted in the service of his country. He had given nearly three years of his life to the Union cause, endured combat and suffering far from home, and in the end, the war claimed him even though he died in his own bed.

His story is that of countless Civil War soldiers whose sacrifice came not in the smoke of

battle, but in the slow, relentless toll of wounds and disease. Buried in his hometown, Simmons is remembered as a man who served faithfully, endured bravely, and ultimately gave his life for the Union.



*River View Cemetery, Essex,
Connecticut, USA
Find a Grave 70406509*