

## **THE DEATH OF JAMES HC RODGERS**

Eventually, James HC, Harriet, Nancy, Robert, William, Sally Ann, Demira, and John Rodgers left Jennings County and would purchase forty acres of land for \$850.00 from Henry and Sarah Souther near Dora, Moultrie County, Illinois.<sup>1</sup> James HC's land was relatively small compared to the acreage around him, but this would seem to be a fresh start for the family in a new place.<sup>2</sup> While in Moultrie County James HC's sixth and youngest child, Louisa Elizabeth Rodgers (Lizzie) would be born on November 16, 1863.<sup>3</sup> She apparently would die very young of small pox on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1873 according to Mary Harris, a family friend.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it would seem that James HC felt his country needed him again and once again volunteered for service in Company H 18<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry (Re-organized.) He was mustered in at Danville, Illinois on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1865 and was assigned to Camp Butler, Illinois on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1865 for one year. James HC was promoted to corporal immediately upon his register.<sup>4</sup> These later muster-in rolls also had a physical description of the soldiers on them and James HC was described as having blue eyes, auburn hair, fair complexion, and being six feet one inch tall.<sup>5</sup> He left with his company for the Deep South as the Civil War was winding down by this point in time. General Sherman was well into his march to the sea and the only major Confederate strongholds left were in Arkansas and Mississippi. James HC arrived in Little Rock around April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1865 and participated in the securing of Little Rock for the next month.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [James HC Rodgers Land Deed Moultrie County, IL](#)

<sup>2</sup> [James HC Rodgers Land Photo Moultrie County, IL](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Mary Harris Deposition 12/27/1892](#)

<sup>4</sup> [James HC Rodgers Company H 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry II Muster In](#)

<sup>5</sup> [James HC Descriptive Muster](#)

It is unclear if James HC was wounded in this battle or if he simply became ill as a result of the terribly unsanitary conditions that were common in the infantry camps at the end of the war, but James HC's life would end in "regimental hospital" on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1865.<sup>6</sup> The listed cause of death was "diarrhea."<sup>7</sup> I have to admit that I was rather surprised and somewhat confused how someone could die of diarrhea!

Since the latrines and the drinking water in these camps were typically close to each other, there is now agreement that this was the cause of much disease and death, especially in the larger camps at the end of the war. Many, many men died as a result of intestinal disease as a result of food and water supplies being contaminated by human and animal waste. This situation was compounded by the fact that there were no intravenous solutions of potassium or the like that could be administered to soldiers who simply became so dehydrated they died. Some of the diseases were even compounded and men were given more and more contaminated fluids even though their kidneys had shut down. Men actually drown in their own tissues. Very sad indeed. This kind of situation is common in less developed countries, even today.<sup>8</sup>

James HC's effects of a "great coat," a "pair of cotton drawers," and a "flannel shirt" were forwarded back to Harriet in Moultrie County<sup>7</sup> and Harriet then proceeded to begin the probate process having an estate sale on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1865 and selling much of the farm implements.<sup>9</sup> Harriet did not sell the land that James HC had purchased, and it would remain in the family for several years after the family first left Moultrie County after James HC died. According to Robert, James HC oldest son, Harriet and the kids then returned to Scotland County Missouri where the family would begin to break apart.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [James Muster Out](#)

<sup>7</sup> [James Death Certificate](#)

<sup>8</sup> Cowl, MD email

<sup>9</sup> [James HC Rodgers Estate Sale](#)

Although I am saddened by the trials and tribulations of James HC's life, I feel a tremendous amount of pride in this man. He volunteered to fight for his county in two separate wars and did at least two tours of duty in the Civil War. He took care of his family even after a divorce and made sure that his family was provided for both before and after his death. He had some issues in his personal life, that is for sure, but which of us doesn't? My great-great-great grandfather was truly an inspirational character!