

## John G. Merritt

### **Born**

October 31, 1837

New York, New York County (Manhattan) New York

### **Entered Service – Civil War**

U.S Army, St. Paul, Fort Snelling, MN

Company K, 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Infantry

### **Died**

December 17, 1892, Washington D.C.

### **The War Years**

John G. Merritt served as a Sergeant in the Union Army in Company K, 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Infantry. He was awarded the Civil War Congressional Medal of Honor for action at Bull Run, Virginia on July 21, 1861.

Prior to this first Battle of Bull Run in Virginia, only five soldiers and one sailor had earned Medals of Honor. In the Bull Run battle alone, eleven soldiers and Civilian Contract Surgeon Mary Walker earned Medals of Honor. In the engagement with Confederate Forces at Bull Run, Sergeant John Merritt became the first of several hundred Civil War heroes to earn the Medal of Honor as a Color Bearer. John Merritt's citation reads: "Gallantry in action; was wounded while capturing flag in advance of his regiment."

John Merritt told the story of the battle and this is a small part, "I never shall forget the first sight of dead, wounded and dying. Pity and sympathy, mingled with a feeling of fear, made me realize in an instant we were approaching death. But the feeling passed away as soon as it came."

### **Post War Years**

John married Mary A. (Hoddinott) and lived in Washington, DC. They had three children: Harriet, (b 1866), Leonora (b 1868) and William (b 1872).





It was many years before John Merritt received the Medal of Honor. The issue date was April 1, 1880 accompanied by a letter from Alexander Ramsey, the Secretary of War, who had been the governor of Minnesota during the conflict of Bull Run.

“In connection with this award I find occasion to remember with renewed pleasure and gratitude the patriotism of Minnesota’s citizens, who in answer to my call as governor, at the first dawn of the war period, valiantly responded with cheers, the trumpets and the drums of the First Minnesota Regiment, of which you were a member.”

Alexander Ramsey, Secretary of War

John Merritt was the Chief Doorkeeper of the U.S. Senate when he died, December 17, 1892. He is buried at the **Congressional Cemetery, Washington D.C.**, Plot: Range 72 Site 359. His wife, Mary is buried there also, along with William and Leonora.

Harriet married Henry L. Erdman and they had one daughter Ruth Erdman (1893-1975). Ruth appears to have been childless so there do not seem to be any descendants.

Sources:

Find A Grave

Home of Heroes

US Army Center of Military History

Photos of grave markers courtesy of Don Morfe, “Find A Grave” contributor who researches and photographs Medal Of Honor Recipient gravesites.

Compiled by Glynæ Deschene

**Maria Sanford Chapter DAR**

