

## RHODA RAY JONES (1839 – 1897)



Rhoda was born into slavery around 1839 in Georgia. She eventually became the property of William and Roxanna Steele in Warren County, Georgia. Young Rhoda traveled with the Steeles to Missouri in about 1840 and settled with their family on Wilson Creek. William Steele died in 1848, and Roxanna married a neighbor, widower John Ray. Thus, Rhoda, along with Roxanna Steele and her four children, joined John Ray and his daughter in 1849. Together, they would add five more children to their blended family.

Aunt Rhoda, as she was referred to by the Ray's 10 children, raised her four daughters, Mahala, Hannah, Millie, and Hettie, while toiling on the family farm. During the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Roxanna and Rhoda took all 14 children to the cellar for safety. When the battle ended, the Ray's home became a field hospital, and Rhoda went to work carrying water and supplies to the wounded and dying. Surgery was performed on many wounded soldiers in the Ray's yard, and the women assisted the doctors with water, towels, bandages, and whatever else they could provide.

Rhoda was freed in 1865. She married John Jones, a quarryman, on July 10, 1868, and moved to Springfield, Missouri, where she earned her living as a laundress. According to an 1897 Springfield newspaper, "Rhoda, aged 58, died this morning at the corner of Robberson Avenue and Olive Street." Buried in Hazelwood Cemetery in an unmarked grave, this marker serves to honor Rhoda Ray Jones, her place in history at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, and to acknowledge her final resting place.

DUV Tent No. 22 hoped to be able to locate living descendants of Rhoda who could attend this memorial. However, after much effort, they were unable to locate any living descendants. The following discoveries were made and adds to her story:

Rhoda's daughter, Hannah, married Robert Ritter in 1878. Hannah died in 1904. Her daughter, Millie, married Marshall Campbell, and they had one son, Paul. Lastly, her daughter, Hettie, married John Price, and they had a daughter, Frances, and a son, Clarence.