

Colonel John Lyman Chatfield 1826 - 1863

"Are the colors saved? Thank God for that; keep them as long as there is a thread left."

- Col. Chatfield (being carried from battle, bleeding from his wounds)

John L. Chatfield was born in Oxford, CT on September 13, 1826. His lifelong military career began in the 1840s with the Derby Blues. He moved to Waterbury in 1851 with his brothers, who built some of the finest dwellings and churches in the Naugatuck Valley.

In 1854 he was instrumental in forming the "Waterbury City Guard" and always maintained his interest in that organization. When President Lincoln, on April 15, 1861, called for 75,000 volunteers in the first months of the Civil War, Colonel Chatfield, then Captain, volunteered with his entire company. On April 20th they left for New Haven to join the Regiment recruiting there. While in camp, he was promoted by the Governor to the rank of Major. The Waterbury City Guard became part of the 3rd Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers and departed for Washington. Chatfield achieved the rank of Colonel during this time.

Chatfield was a respected, knowledgeable and inspiring military leader whose regiments were always among the best drilled. He praised them often such as in his Battle of James Island report that commended them "for admirable conduct and coolness...until the enemy was repulsed."

On the 21st of July 1861 at the first Battle of Bull Run, Col. Chatfield and his Waterbury City Guard distinguished themselves, capturing two of the enemy's batteries. They returned home and in October 1862, the Governor solicited Col. Chatfield to lead the 6th Connecticut Regiment. The 6th and the 7th left New Haven in late October for Port Royal, where he served in land and naval expeditions. He was wounded in the thigh at the Battle of Pocotaligo and returned to Waterbury to recover.

After a brief period of recuperation, Col. Chatfield returned to his command and he was ordered to Fort Wagner, S.C. with the 54th Massachusetts led by Col. Shaw. The 6th Connecticut attacked the fort on the 18th of July 1863. Col. Chatfield was wounded severely below the knee and in the arm and was taken from the battlefield by one of his men. He returned to Waterbury where he died of his wounds on



August 9, 1863 at age 37. A Resolution stated, "We, the Townsmen, who have ever esteemed him as a valuable and upright citizen, and have felt an honorable pride in his military career consider his death a national loss." Throngs of people from the City and the State attended his funeral while factories and businesses closed to honor this "born soldier" who excelled on the battlefield.

A bronze statue, cast in Paris, of Col. Chatfield in uniform was created by his good friend and noted sculptor, George E. Bissell. It was dedicated on September 13, 1887 and stands in Riverside Cemetery over his grave. At that ceremony General Kellogg fittingly said "moss and rust...may gather upon thy monument, but thy name and thy virtues shall remain imperishable in the history of this people."