



# **Life and Death in Civil War Prisons: The Parallel Torments of Corporal John Wesly Minnich, C.S.A. and Sergeant Warren Lee Goss, U.S.A.**

*J Michael Martinez*

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More than anything, Civil War soldiers feared becoming a prisoner of war. Among the deadliest prisons for Confederates was Rock Island Prison in Illinois. One of the most notorious for Northern prisoners was Georgia's Camp Sumter - better known as "Andersonville." Dysentery, starvation, exposure to harsh weather, and brutal mistreatment killed more men in prisons than were killed at Gettysburg, the war's deadliest battle.

The gruesome reality of Civil War prison life is found in the personal stories of those who suffered it. Two such victims were Corporal John Wesley Minnich - a Southern teenager from Louisiana - and Sergeant Warren Lee Goss of Massachusetts. In *Life and Death in Civil War Prisons*, these two common soldiers become uncommon symbols of the largely untold under-life of the American Civil War. It is a penetrating, unforgettable portrait of the worst of the war - the military prisons of the North and the South. The book strips the war of its romance and pageantry. What is left is the hardship and horror of the war - and the extraordinary courage of American soldiers from both North and South.

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