

Alexander A. Semmes

(1825 – 22 Sep 1885)

Semmes. The funeral of Commodore Alexander A. Semmes, U.S. Navy will take place from Christ Church, Navy Yard on Friday, September 25 at 12:30 p.m.

The Evening Star, September 25, 1885

The Funeral of Commodore Semmes

His Death Ascribed to Suicide from Despondency

The attendance of uniformed naval officers at the funeral of Commodore Semmes today was larger than has been seen at the funeral of any naval officer in Washington for many years. Commodore Semmes was very popular and was looked upon as one of the ablest officers in the service.



It has transpired that the death of Commodore Semmes, which occurred at the house of Miss Jane Janney, near Hamilton, Loudon county, last Tuesday, was self-inflicted. The Loudon Mirror, of Leesburg, says:

"We learn from Drs. Welty and Ruth, that Commodore Semmes' death was the result of suicide. The deceased had been in bad health for some months, and was thought to be improving. At about 4 o'clock Tuesday afternoon, however, being left alone for a few minutes he secured his razor, and, laboring under a sudden fit of mental aberration, perpetrated the fatal deed by cutting his throat. He made five terrible gashes. Death followed the last one almost immediately."

The act is attributed by friends of Commodore Semmes at the Navy department to temporary aberration of mind, caused by continued sickness and extreme despondency.

Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography

SEMMES, Alexander Aldebaran, naval officer, born in Washington, D.C., 8 June, 1825; died in Hamilton, Va., 22 Sept. 1885. He entered the navy as a midshipman, 22 Oct., 1841, attended the naval academy at Annapolis, and became a passed midshipman, 10 Aug., 1847. He was promoted to master, 11 Aug., 1855, and to lieutenant, 15 Sept., 1855. During the civil war he rendered creditable service in command of the steamer "Rhode Island" on the Atlantic coast blockade in 1861, and in the steamer "Wamsutta" on the South Atlantic blockade, during which he conducted numerous engagements with forts and batteries on the coasts of Georgia and Florida, where he captured several blockade-runners in 1862-63. He commanded the monitor "Lehigh" in the bombardment of Fort Pringle, and participated in the operations at Charleston until that city surrendered. He cooperated with Grant's army, fought the Howlett house batteries, and was present at the fall of Richmond in 1865. He was commissioned commander, 25 July, 1866, promoted to Captain, 24 Aug., 1873, and stationed at the Pensacola Navy Yard in 1873-75. In 1880 he was president of the board of inspection, after which he was commandant

of the Navy Yard at Washington. He was commissioned commodore, 10 March, 1882, and was in command of the Navy Yard at the time of his death, but had left the city on account of his health.