



Compliments Of The

*Cherokee Chapter of the Georgia Society
Sons of the American Revolution*

The Sons of the American Revolution are engaged in a variety of programs to promote the patriotic, educational and historical interests resulting from the American Revolution. Programs include Essay Contests for both High School students and Eagle Scouts, presentation of medals to College and High School ROTC students, Poster Contests for Elementary School students, American Revolution presentations to Elementary and Middle School students, presentation of medals to Public Safety officials, Revolutionary War Grave Dedications, Volunteer work with Veterans, presentation of Flag Certificates to deserving organizations and schools, participation in historic battle sites observances and others.

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THE STORY OF THE PURPLE HEART



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The Military Badge of Merit

Does this look familiar? General George Washington, “ever desirous to cherish a virtuous ambition in his soldiers,” established the Badge of Military Merit on August 7, 1782. He directed that it be “the figure of a heart in purple cloth, or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding.” Although Washington intended this forerunner of today’s Purple Heart to be bestowed “whenever any singular meritorious action is performed,” only three soldiers of the American Revolution were awarded this badge.

Sergeant Elijah Churchill, 2nd Regiment, Light Dragoons, was awarded the badge for his part in two successful raids behind British lines. In November 1780, leading only 16 men, he was able to capture and destroy the heavily manned British fortifications at Corum, New York. Not only did they burn 300 tons of hay, but they also burned a British supply schooner and captured 50 prisoners. In accomplishing this, only one of his men was wounded. The second raid was on Ft. Slongo in October 1781. Churchill’s unit, without the loss of a single man, captured and destroyed the fort in less than 24 hours.

The badge was awarded to Sergeant William Brown, 5th Connecticut Regiment, for leading an advance party who, using only bayonets, penetrated the British fortifications at Yorktown, Virginia on October 14, 1781. Although challenged by enemy gunfire and grenades, Brown’s party drove the British from their position in only 125 minutes. The third and last badge was given to Sergeant Daniel Bissell, 2nd Connecticut Regiment, for masquerading as a British soldier from August 1781 to September 1782. The information he gathered helped prepare for the American–French attack on the city of New York.

With the American Revolution over and the army disbanded, the Badge of Military Merit seemingly passed into history until February 22, 1932, the 200th anniversary of Washington’s birth. On that date General Douglas MacArthur, then War Department Chief of Staff, announced the restoration of the Purple Heart for use by the U.S. Army. Elizabeth Will of the Office of the Quartermaster General is credited with the 1932 design. The modern medal is reminiscent of Washington’s Badge of Merit with its heart shape, however, it now contains a likeness of Washington and his family coat of arms.

Over the years, Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and John Kennedy established uniform standards and extended eligibility for the award. Today, the medal can only be given to military or civilian nationals, serving with one of the U. S. Armed Forces since April 5, 1917, that have been wounded or killed under a specific set of circumstances. Although the criteria for the award is very different than that set by General Washington, it still honors those who have demonstrated “unusual gallantry” and “extraordinary fidelity.”

Recipients of the Purple Heart today receive a certificate that reads:

*The United States of America
To All Who Shall See These Presents,*

Greeting:

*This is to certify that
The President
of the United States of America*

Has Awarded The

PURPLE HEART

*Established by
General George Washington
At Newberg, New York,
August 7, 1782
To*

*For Wounds Received
In Action*