

Medal of Honor

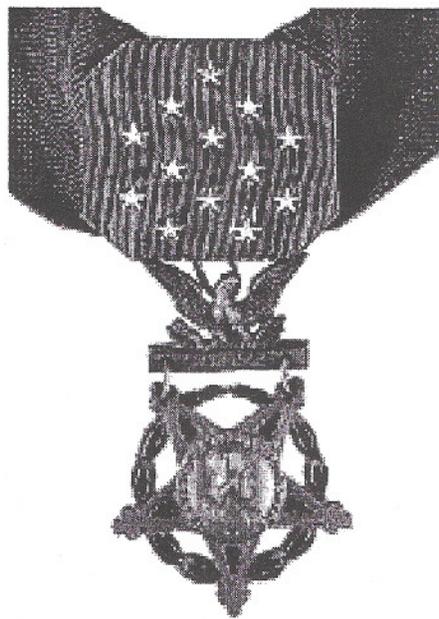


Table of Contents For Medal of Honor

Medal of Honor

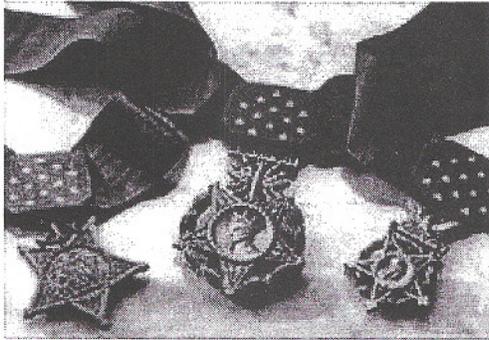
MOH Symbolism

Types of The Medal of Honor - 1862 to Present

Medal of Honor Breakdown

Only Woman Medal of Honor Holder Ahead of Her Time

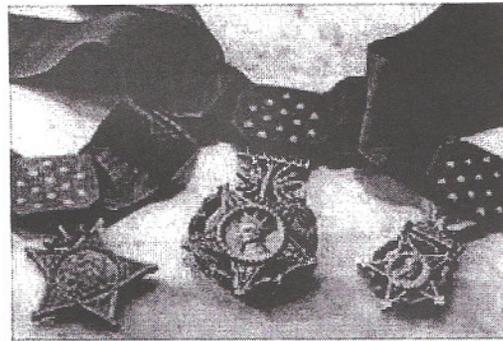




Medal of Honor

The **Medal of Honor** is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force, which can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States. Generally presented to its recipient by the President of the United States of America in the name of Congress, it is often called the *Congressional Medal of Honor*.

The Medal's History



On December 9, 1861 Iowa Senator James W. Grimes introduced S. No. 82 in the United States Senate, a bill designed to "promote the efficiency of the Navy" by authorizing the production and distribution of "medals of honor". On December 21st the bill was passed, authorizing 200 such medals be produced "which shall be bestowed upon such petty officers, seamen, landsmen and marines as shall distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action and other seamanlike qualities during the present war (Civil War)." President Lincoln signed the bill and the (Navy) Medal of Honor was born.

Two months later on February 17, 1862 Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson introduced a similar bill, this one to authorize "the President to distribute medals to privates in the Army of the United States who shall distinguish themselves in battle." Over the following months wording changed slightly as the bill made its way through Congress. When President Abraham Lincoln signed S.J.R. No 82 into law as 12 Stat. 623-624 on July 14, 1862, the Army Medal of Honor was born. It read in part:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, authorized to cause two thousand "medals of honor" to be prepared with suitable emblematic devices, and to direct that the same be presented, in the name of the Congress, to such non--commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities, during the present insurrection (Civil War)."

With this simple and rather obscure act Congress created a unique award that would achieve prominence in American history like few others. The table below will acquaint you with a chronological time line of key events in the history of the Medal of Honor.

3 MAR 1847	Congress authorizes a "certificate of merit" be presented by the President when a "private soldier distinguishes himself in the service", along with additional pay of \$2 per month.
13 FEB 1861	Army Assistant Surgeon <u>Bernard J.D. Irwin</u> rescues the 60 soldiers of 2d Lt. George Bascom's unit at Apache Pass, AZ. Though the Medal of Honor had not yet been proposed in Congress (and actually wouldn't even be presented to Irwin until 1894, it was the First heroic act for which the Medal of Honor would be awarded.
24 MAY 1861	In Alexandria, VA Army Private <u>Francis Edwin Brownell</u> performs the first action of the Civil War to merit the Medal of Honor
26 JUN 1861	Aboard the U.S.S. Pawnee, <u>John Williams</u> courage despite his wounds, his refusal to leave any man behind, and his love for the flag became the first act by a member of the U.S. Navy to merit the Medal of Honor.

21 JUL 1861	Eleven soldiers at the Battle of Bull Run perform actions that eventually will make them recipients of the Medal of Honor. The number includes <u>Dr. Mary Walker</u> who was involved in three major battles and became the ONLY woman to get the Medal.
	In all, 25 soldiers and 5 sailors would perform Medal of Honor actions in the months from Bernard Irwins' first heroic act to the establishment of the Navy Medal in December.
9 DEC 1861	Iowa Senator James W. Grimes, chairman of the Senate Naval Committee, introduces S. No.82 in Congress to create a medal of honor to promote the efficiency of the Navy.
21 DEC 1861	President Abraham Lincoln approves the Congressional action to provide for 200 <u>Navy Medals of Honor</u> .
17 FEB 1862	Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson introduces a bill in Congress to provide for an <u>Army Medal of Honor</u> for "privates in the Army of the United States who shall distinguish themselves in battle."
12 APR 1862	Civilian spy James J. Andrews and 19 volunteers begin their "Great Locomotive Chase" behind enemy lines in Georgia.
12 MAY 1862	At Drewry's Bluff, VA aboard the U.S.S. Galena, Corporal <u>John Mackie</u> became the first Marine to earn the Medal of Honor. When he received the award aboard the U.S.S. Seminole on 10 July 1863 he became the first Marine to also receive the award.
18 JUN 1862	Seven of Andrew's Raiders are hanged as spies in Atlanta. Four of them will eventually be awarded Medals of Honor...the first to die in their moment of heroism.
12 JUL 1862	President Lincoln approves the legislation authorizing the preparation of 2,000 Medals of Honor to "be presented, in the name of the Congress, to such non-commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities." Already 88 soldiers have performed heroic actions that will be ultimately awarded Medals of Honor.
17 SEP 1862	Twenty U.S. Army soldiers perform heroic acts at Antietam that would eventually become recognized by Medal of Honor presentations.
13 DEC 1862	At Fredericksburg, VA, Nineteen soldiers perform Medal of Honor actions.
3 MAR 1863	The Act of 3 March 1863 extended the presentations of the Army Medal of Honor to officers, as well as non-commissioned officers and privates. (The Navy medal continued to be reserved for enlisted personnel ONLY.)
25 MAR 1863	Secretary of War Edwin Stanton presents the first Medals of Honor to six of the surviving members of Andrew's Raiders. They are the first Medals ever presented.
3 APR 1863	The Navy presents its first Medals of Honor to 41 sailors, 17 of them for actions in the attacks at Forts Jackson and St. Philip (24 Apr 1862).
22 May 1863	Ninety-six soldiers perform Medal of Honor actions at Vicksburg, Mississippi....the highest one day total in the Medals entire history. In all, 120 Medals of Honor were earned at Vicksburg.
30 JUN 1863	Approximately 300 of the 864 members of the 27th Maine agree to remain to guard Washington, DC after their enlistment had expired. In return Secretary of War Edwin Stanton submitted the entire group of volunteers for Medals of Honor. A typographical error resulted in all 864 of the 27th Maine's soldiers being awarded Medals of Honor for their extra 4 days of service. (All were revoked in the purge of 1917).
1 JUL 1863	Four days of battle at Gettysburg added 58 Medals of Honor to the war total.
18 JUL 1863	At Fort Wagner, SC the 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry faced their first major test of combat. Former slave <u>William Harvey Carney</u> became the first Black American to earn the Medal of Honor.
5 AUG 1864	Ninety-eight Americans received Medals of Honor for actions this day at Mobile Bay, Alabama. The total included 90 sailors and 8 Marines.
2 APR 1865	Fifty-two soldiers earn Medals of Honor at Petersburg, VA.
6 APR 1865	Fifty-six soldiers earn Medals of Honor at Deatonville (Sailor's Creek), VA. Among them on this day was 2d Lt. <u>Thomas Custer</u> (yes, they were brothers) who earned his SECOND Medal of Honor, becoming the ONLY MAN in the Civil War to receive TWO.

11 APR 1865	General Lee surrenders at Appomattox Courthouse and the Civil War ends.
19 APR 1865	In the week following Lee's surrender 8 more Medals of Honor were earned, 7 of them at Columbus, GA. The 9th and last Medal of Honor of the Civil War was earned on April 19th at Greensboro, NC by <u>Charles Malone Betts</u> .
12 May 1865	In Nebraska Army Private <u>Frank W. Lohnes</u> becomes the first official Medal of Honor recipient of the Indian Campaigns, his action preceded only by Bernard Irwins 4 years earlier. His award is presented just two months after his action.
11 NOV 1865	Rather than grant <u>Dr. Mary Walker's</u> request for a commission in the U.S. Army, President Johnson orders that she be given the Medal of Honor. (The award was revoked in the purge of 1917, then restored in 1977).
31 DEC 1865	680 of the eventual 1520 total Medals awarded for Civil War actions (not counting those of the 27th Maine), have been presented. From 1866 to 1890 a total of 105 more will be awarded. From 1890 to 1899 more Medals will be awarded for Civil War action that were awarded during the war...a total of 683 in the last decade of the century.
1865 - 1891	During the period from the end of the Civil War to New Years Day, 1891 all but two of the 242 Medals of Honor awarded for the Indian Campaigns were earned. The exceptions were the earlier award to Irwin, and the last action which occurred on 5 OCT 1898.
9 JUN 1871	Three sailors earn Medals of Honor for action in Korea. These were the first Medals of Honor earned on foreign soil. Over the following two days twelve more Americans earn Medals of honor...9 sailors and 6 Marines in all.
1876	Due to the large number of men submitted for Medals of Honor after the Battle of the Little Big Horn, a review board of officers was assembled to consider the requests. The number was pared down to 24 men, and a "new standard" was applied that "the conduct which deserves such recognition should not be the simple discharge of duty, but such acts beyond this that if omitted or refused to be done, should not justly subject the person to censure as a shortcoming or failure."
23 APR 1890	The MEDAL OF HONOR LEGION is established to protect the integrity of the Medal.
2 May 1896	Congress approved legislation authorizing "a rosette or knot to be worn in lieu of the medal, and a ribbon to be worn with the medal." (20 Stat. 473)
10 NOV 1896	For the first time a change is made in the <u>DESIGN</u> of the Medal of Honor. The change is only in the suspension ribbon and affects only the Army's Medal of Honor.
26 JUN 1897	With more than 700 Civil War soldiers applying for Medals of Honor since 1890, President William McKinley had directed the Army to establish new policies regarding Medal of Honor applications and awards. Published on this date the new regulations: ...Established that Medals of Honor could only be awarded for "gallantry and intrepidity" above and beyond that of one's fellow soldiers, ...Required that a submission for the Medal of Honor be made by a person other than the veteran who had performed the heroic deed, ...Required the testimony, under oath, of one or more eyewitnesses to the heroic deed. ...Set a time limit of one year for any person to be submitted for the Medal of Honor for an act occurring after 26 June 1897.
1 FEB 1898	The Army issues proper instruction for display of the Medal of Honor suspended from a ribbon hung around the neck of the recipient. (For the next half century Army Medals of Honor were sometimes displayed in this fashion, at other times pinned to the tunic of a soldier's uniform.)
15 FEB 1898	The U.S.S. Maine mysteriously explodes in Havana Harbor killing 258 American soldiers and launching the Spanish-American War. From 1 May to 26 July, 109 soldiers, sailors and Marines earned Medals of Honor. All but 12 were awarded within a year of the war's end.
1 APR 1899	Three Marines and one Sailor earn Medals of Honor in Samoa.
20 JUN 1900	Twenty-nine Americans earn Medals of Honor in China (the Boxer Rebellion) in a campaign that will see 30 more awards for heroism by August 14th.
21 SEP 1901	Secretary of War Eli Root appoints a board headed by Civil War medal recipient Major

	<u>General Arthur MacArthur</u> to review Medal of Honor submissions from the Spanish American War and the continuing conflict in the Philippine Islands.
19 APR 1902	U.S. War Department Special Orders No. 93, Paragraph 14 continues the board appointed by Eli Root "for the purpose of examining applications and recommendations for Medals of Honor and Certificates of Merit.
23 APR 1904	Congress authorizes a distinctive new design for the Army Medal of Honor, the brainchild of <u>General George Gillespie</u> who had received the Medal of Honor during the Civil War. The new " <u>Gillespie Medal</u> " retains the star shape but surrounds it with a green laurel. The Medal is suspended from a newly designed blue ribbon bearing 13 stars from a bar on which is printed the word "VALOR". Upon authorizing the new Medal of Honor design, Congress requires Medal recipients to return their original Medals to be replaced with the new.
10 JAN 1906	In ceremonies at the White House, President Theodore Roosevelt presents the Medal of Honor to Spanish-American war hero <u>James R. Church</u> in keeping with his earlier Executive Order: "The presentation of a Medal of Honor to an officer or enlisted man in the military service, awarded under the Joint Resolution of Congress approved July 12, 1863, will always be made with formal and impressive ceremonial. "The recipient will, when practicable, be ordered to Washington, D.C., and the presentation will be made by the President, as Commander-in-Chief, or by such representative as the President may designate. "When not practicable to have the presentation at Washington, the details of time, place, and ceremony will be prescribed by the Chief of Staff for each case. "On campaign, the presentation will be made by the Division or higher commander." (September 20, 1905)
27 FEB 1907	Recipients of the earlier designs for the Medal of Honor have shown reluctance to return their "old" medals for the new "Gillespie" medals because of the sentimental value their original award holds for them. In response Congress authorizes them to be issued the new design without turning in their original Medals and instructs that those who had previously turned in their Medals have them returned to them. The legislation specifies, however, that both Medals (original and Gillespie) can not be worn at the same time.
1913	The Navy changes the <u>ribbon</u> from which their Medal of Honor is suspended to a blue ribbon with 13 white stars, similar to the design of the ribbon patented with Gillespie's Medal of Honor for the Army. Other slight changes in design are also made.
3 MAR 1915	Authorized the President to present "a suitable Medal of Honor to be awarded to any officer of the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard who shall have distinguished himself in battle or displayed extraordinary heroism in the line of his profession." Previously the award was reserved for enlisted personnel ONLY, but this act made it available to officers as well. (38 Stat. 928, 931)
24 Oct 1915	Three Marines earn Medals of Honor in Haiti. On the 17th of the following month three more Marines earn Medals of Honor in Haiti.
27 APR 1916	Congress passes legislation to establish "The Army and Navy Medal of Honor Roll" and authorizes a \$10 monthly pension for Medal recipients over age 65.
3 JUN 1916	"A board to consist of five general officers on the retired list of the Army shall be convened...for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon past awards or issue of the so-called congressional medal of honor."
16 OCT 1916	The BOARD OF GENERALS authorized in the previous legislation convened under <u>Lt. General Nelson Miles</u> , a Medal recipient from the Civil War. General Miles had taken an active role in promoting legislation to protect the Medal as commander of the Medal of Honor Legion and approached the work of his committee with determination and dedication. Every award of the Army Medal of Honor since the Civil War was reviewed. The recipients were anonymous to the board, represented only by a number.
5 FEB 1917	The Medal of Honor review board released its findings, striking the names of 911 medal recipients from the honor roll. The stricken names included all the medals awarded to

	<p>the 27th Maine, 29 members of President Lincoln's funeral guard, and six civilians (whose courage the board did not deny, but who were ruled ineligible for the Medal due their civilian status). Five of the civilians were scouts from the Indian Campaigns including <u>Buffalo Bill Cody</u>. The sixth was Civil War <u>Assistant Surgeon Mary Walker</u>. Though she had participated in major campaigns from Bull Run to Chickamauga, even endured three months as a Confederate prisoner of war, her civilian status denied her continued recognition as a Medal of Honor recipient.</p>
17 APR 1917	<p>The last Medals of Honor awarded for Civil War action are presented to <u>Henry Lewis</u> and <u>Henry Peters</u>, bringing to a close the controversial and divisive scramble of Civil War vets for the coveted award, and opening the way for new legislative protections.</p>
23 JUN 1917	<p>Commander <u>Willis Winter Bradley, Jr.</u> aboard the U.S.S. Pittsburgh becomes the first Medal of Honor recipient of World War I. In all 119 soldiers, sailors, marines, and for the first time AIRMEN performed heroism meriting their Nation's highest award over the following two years. Only 4 such awards were actually presented during the period of the war, the remainder came as a result of a review of World War I awards of the Distinguished Service Cross at the request of General John J. Pershing. The last presentation of a World War I Medal of Honor would not occur until the closing decade of the century.</p>
9 JUL 1918	<p>The Medal of Honor was born in 1862, but it was the act of 9 July 1918 that defined the future of the award, while further eliminated the Certificate of Merit while establishing the new "Pyramid of Honor" providing for lesser awards (The Distinguished Service Cross, The Distinguished Service Medal, and the Silver Star). A key difference between the levels of awards was spelled out, "That the President is authorized to present, in the name of the Congress, a medal of honor only to each person who, while an officer or enlisted man of the Army, shall hereafter, in action involving actual conflict with an enemy, distinguish himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty." The lesser awards were authorized for presentation by the President, "BUT NOT IN THE NAME OF CONGRESS."</p> <p>The act of July 9th further established time limits to avoid problems like those encountered with Civil War veterans seeking the award. Recommendations for Medals of Honor had to be made within 2 years of the act of heroism for which it was to be awarded, and the Medal was to be presented within 3 years.</p> <p>The act of July 9th was further clarified in September, then again in February 1919, to stipulate that no person could receive more than ONE Medal of Honor. Previously there had been <u>19 DOUBLE AWARDS</u> of the Medal, but hereafter, while there were provisions for second and consecutive awards of lesser medals to be made and noted with appropriate ribbon devices, no more than ONE Medal of Honor could be awarded.</p>
4 FEB 1919	<p>Where the Army Medal of Honor had been reserved SOLELY for heroism in conflict with an enemy of the United States, the Department of the Navy had recognized non-combat heroism with Medals of Honor since its inception. The act of 4 February provided a compromise with the creation of a second award similar to the Medal of Honor. Designed by Tiffany & Company of New York, the newly authorized TIFFANY CROSS was authorized for presentation in cases of non-combat heroism while the original Medal of Honor was designated for combat heroism only.</p>
3 MAY 1919	<p>Six months after the end of World War I the Medal of Honor is presented in France to <u>Sergeant Alvin C. York</u>. It was a historic event for the Medal not so much at the time but for the legendary status its recipients would receive in the years to follow.</p>
7 DEC 1941	<p>Five minutes before Japanese aircraft fell upon Pearl Harbor, the air field at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii was attacked. There Navy <u>Lieutenant John Finn</u> earned the first Medal of Honor of World War II. Fourteen more sailors earned Medals of Honor that day at Pearl Harbor, ten of them posthumously.</p>
7 Aug 1942	<p>The TIFFANY CROSS established for non-combat naval heroism in 1942 had proven unpopular, perhaps because it so closely resembled the German Iron Cross. It was also poorly regulated and documented. The Act of August 7th restored the earlier provisions of the Navy Medal of Honor for non-combat heroism and eliminated the Tiffany Cross</p>

	and the two-medal system.
27 SEP 1942	At Guadalcanal Canadian Born <u>Douglas Munro</u> becomes the first, and ONLY, member of the U.S. Coast Guard to receive the Medal of Honor. Munro was killed in action during his moment of valor.
23 May 1943	In the frozen Aleutian Islands of Alaska, Colorado's <u>Private Joseph P. Martinez</u> becomes the first Hispanic-American to receive the Medal of Honor during World War II. His posthumous award was the first act for combat heroism on American soil (other than the 15 at Pearl Harbor) since the Indian Campaigns.
10 NOV 1943	In Italy for Arkansas football star and Detroit Lion Pro <u>Captain Maurice "Footsie" Britt</u> earns the Medal of Honor. Having already earned the DSC and the Silver Star, it is the first time in military history that a soldier earned all of the military's top awards in a single war.
26 JAN 1945	In France a small, fair featured boy from Texas becomes the most decorated soldier of World War II. <u>Audie Leon Murphy</u> came to epitomize the heroism of America's finest and went on to achieve unprecedented celebrity status.
5 APR 1945	Japanese-American boys had struggled long to prove their loyalty to the United States despite paranoia and prejudice at home. The 442d Infantry Regiment built an impressive record of valor. On this day <u>PFC Sadao S. Munemori</u> became the only Japanese-American of the war to earn his Nation's highest honor. His Medal of Honor, presented posthumously to his mother, is on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.
29 JUL 1945	In the Philippine Island's Army <u>Corporal Melvin Mayfield</u> earns the last Medal of Honor of World War II.
1946	The CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY is formed.
20 JUL 1950	<u>General William F. Dean</u> and <u>George Dalton Libby</u> become earn the first Medals of Honor of the Korean War. Libby was killed in action and General Dean was taken Prisoner of War.
5 AUG 1950	The United States Air Force was born on July 26, 1947 when President Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947. On this date in 1950 <u>Louis Seville</u> became the first flier of the now separate AIR FORCE to earn the Medal of Honor. In all, FOUR Air Force officers received Medals of Honor for action in Korea...all of them posthumous awards. (These four men, as had members of the earlier Air Service and Army Air Corps, were awarded Army Medals of Honor.
25 JUL 1953	<u>Ambrosio Guillen</u> becomes the last of 131 Americans to receive the Medal of Honor in Korea. Guillen's posthumous award was one of 94 awarded to heroes killed during their moment of valor in Korea.
10 AUG 1956	Legislation is authorized providing members of the United States Air Force with their own, distinctive design for an Air Force Medal of Honor separate from that of the Navy and Army.
5 AUG 1958	The Medal of Honor Society is absorbed into the Congressionally Chartered CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA under Title 38, USC.
25 JUL 1963	Congress amended Titles 10 and 14 of the US Code establishing criteria and guidelines for award of the Medal of Honor: ...It would be awarded for action against an enemy of the United States, ...while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force, or ...while serving with friendly forces (such as was the case with the UN forces in Korea) in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.
13 OCT 1964	Changes in Medal of Honor legislation provided for a \$100 per month pension for Medal of Honor recipients over the age of 50.
17 DEC 1964	Army Special Forces <u>Captain Roger Donlon</u> becomes the first Medal of Honor hero of the Vietnam war.

1965	The AIR FORCE introduces the design for their distinctive Air Force Medal of Honor, similar in design to that of the Army Medal of Honor only larger and displaying the head of the Statue of Liberty and other design changes. Each branch of service, <u>Army</u> , <u>Navy/Marines/Coast Guard</u> , and <u>Air Force</u> now has its own medal design. All three branches display the Medal suspended below a neck ribbon...the only American military award thus worn.
23 JAN 1967	In Vietnam, <u>Bernard Francis Fisher</u> becomes the first airman to earn the Air Force's newly designed Medal of Honor. In all, 12 USAF servicemen received Medals of Honor including <u>John Levitow</u> , the only enlisted man to receive the award.
31 OCT 1972	Navy SEAL <u>Michael Thornton</u> performs the last Medal of Honor action of the Vietnam war, saving the life of his SEAL Team Leader <u>Lt. Tommy Norris</u> . Six months earlier Norris had been submitted for the Medal of Honor for heroic actions to rescue downed pilots. It was the first time since the battle at the Citadel in Korea in 1871 that a Medal of Honor was awarded for saving the life of a Medal of Honor recipient. (This, though Norris did not receive his award until 1976.)
10 JUN 1977	Army Secretary Clifford Alexander, Jr. orders the restoration of the Civil War award of the Medal of Honor to <u>Dr. Mary E. Walker</u> . She is the only woman ever awarded the Medal of Honor...but not the only woman whose name appears on the official Honor Roll.
12 JUN 1989	The United States Army restores the Medals of Honor to 5 civilian scouts from the Indian Campaigns, including the award to <u>William "Buffalo Bill" Cody</u> . All 5 awards had been included in the purge of 1917.
24 APR 1991	World War I had yielded no Black Medal of Honor recipients, not due to any lack of courage by America's "soldiers of color" but instead to the unjust prejudices of the time. On this date President George Bush corrected this sad part of Medal of Honor history when he presented the Medal of Honor to the family of <u>Corporal Freddie Stowers</u> , who died in his moment of valor.
3 OCT 1993	Two Army Rangers, <u>Gary Gordon</u> and <u>Randall Shughart</u> are killed in action during a rescue mission in Somalia. When President Clinton presented Medals of Honor to their widows on 23 May 1993 their heroism was recorded as the last Medal of Honor actions to date.
13 JAN 1997	As had been the case for Black American soldiers during World War I, racial prejudice had prevented the award of the Medal of Honor to any Black soldiers during World War II. After a comprehensive review of military awards to that war's Black heroes, President Clinton presented Medals of Honor to the families of 6 deceased Black World War II heroes and one living hero, <u>Vernon Baker</u> .
20 JAN 1998	President Clinton presented a long over-looked and over-due Medal of Honor to World War II hero <u>James Day</u> . Sadly, Mr. Day survived to wear his Medal of Honor for only six months before passing away.
10 JUL 1998	In ceremonies at the White House, President Clinton presents the Medal of Honor to Vietnam War Navy <u>Corpsman Robert Ingram</u> .
8 Feb 2000	In ceremonies at the White House, President Clinton presents the Medal of Honor to Vietnam War Medic <u>Alfred Rascon</u> . It is the last Medal of Honor presentation in the history of the award.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

A big thanks to Doug Sterner and his HomeofHeroes website for providing most of the content of this page.

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MOH Symbolism

THE ORIGINAL NAVY MEDAL OF HONOR

The Navy's Medal of Honor was the first approved and the first designed. The initial work was done by the Philadelphia Mint at the request of Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. The Mint submitted several designs for consideration, and the one prepared by the Philadelphia firm of William Wilson & Sons was the design selected.



The selected Medal of Honor design consisted of an INVERTED, 5-pointed STAR. On each of the five points was a cluster of LAUREL leaves to represent victory, mixed with a cluster of OAK to represent strength. Surrounding the encircled insignia were 34 stars, equal to the number of stars in the U.S. Flag at the time in 1862....one star for each state of the Union including the 11 Confederate states. The stars are also symbolic of the "heavens and the divine goal which man has aspired to since time immemorial" according to Charles Thompson, Secretary of the Continental Congress back in 1777.

Inside the circle of 34 stars were engraved two images. To the right is the image of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and war. On her helmet is perched an owl, representing WISDOM. In keeping with the Roman tradition, her left hand holds a bundle of rods and an ax blade, symbolic of authority. The shield in her right hand is the shield of the Union of our states (similar to the shield on our seal and other important emblems.)

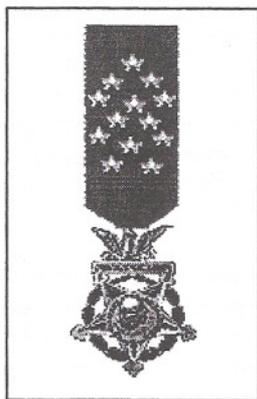


Recoiling from Minerva is a man clutching snakes in his hands. He represented DISCORD and the insignia came to be known as "Minerva Repulsing Discord". Taken in the context of the Civil War soldiers and sailors struggling to overcome the discord of the states and preserve the Union, the design was as fitting as it was symbolic.



The ribbon that held the medal was originally a blue bar on top and 13 red and white stripes running vertically. The 13 represents the original 13 colonies. The color white represents purity and innocence, red represents hardiness, valor and blood, blue signifies vigilance, perseverance and justice. The stripes also represent the rays of the sun.

Since this time much of the symbolism in the Medal of Honor has not changed much. The Army MOH was created soon after the original Navy MOH in 1862. It included an Eagle, symbolizing the United States of America, was perched on a cannon and saber grasped in its talons.



In 1904 the Gillespie version of the MOH included a simple portrait of a helmeted Goddess of War to replace the "Minerva repelling discord" scene. The red, white and blue ribbon was replaced with a light blue and 13 white stars. The 13 is once again the original 13 colonies.



In 1919 the Tiffany Cross version of the MOH had a Maltese Cross instead of an inverted star. The Maltese Cross' eight points symbolize the 8 virtues of a knight. A cross itself also represents the four cardinal directions and the sun. This design was discontinued in 1942 due to it's unpopularity.



In 1965 the Air Force MOH was created and it replaced the Minerva portrait with the head of the Statue of Liberty. Lady liberty has a pointed crown instead of a helmet. And she does stand for liberty although she is derived from the imagery of Semiramis, wife of Nimrod, and Queen of Babylon. Semiramis was famed for her beauty, strength, and wisdom and was said to have built the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon. She purportedly reigned for 42 years after taking control from Nimrod. She is a mythical figure who might be somewhat based upon a historical figure

Special thanks to the [Home of Heroes](#) website for much of the above information.

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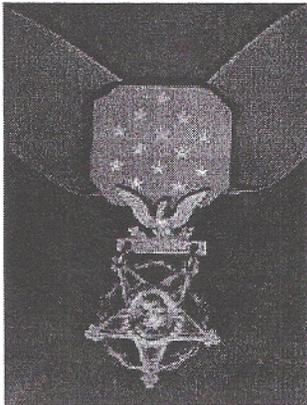
TYPES OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR

1862 TO PRESENT

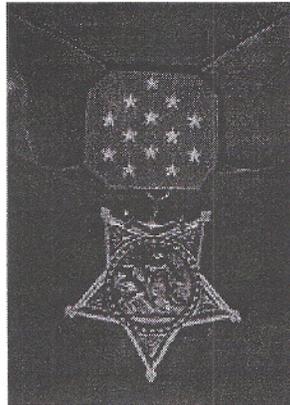
The Navy medal was the first to be struck, followed quickly by the Army version of this award. There are three different types of Medals of Honor today as seen directly below: the original simple star shape established in 1861 which the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard have retained; a wreath version designed in 1904 for the Army; and an altered wreath version for the Air Force, designed in 1963 and adopted in 1965.

The 3 Present Day Types of Medal of Honors

ARMY



NAVY



AIR FORCE



When considering the design of the Medal of Honor there are two factors one must remember:

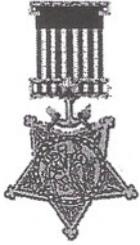
- 1) The Medal of Honor was designed in the early days of the Civil War to represent the valiant efforts of the Union Army, Navy and Marines, and
- 2) Over the years as the Medal has become a historic symbol of the bravest of the brave, in respect to all who have earned it, little has been done to change its design.

THE ORIGINAL

Navy Medal of Honor

The Navy's Medal of Honor was the first approved and the first designed. The initial work was done by the Philadelphia Mint at the request of Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. The Mint submitted several designs for consideration, and the one prepared by the Philadelphia firm of William Wilson & Sons was the design selected.





NAVY MEDAL OF HONOR (1862)

For all practical intents and purposes, the Navy Medal of Honor remains the same today as it did when it was born. The only change has been in the attachment that connects it to the ribbon, and the ribbon itself. Originally the Navy Medal of Honor was suspended from its red, white and blue ribbon by an anchor wrapped with a length of rope. The reverse side of the Medal was inscribed with the words "Personal Valor" above an open area in which the recipient's name could be engraved.

ARMY MEDAL OF HONOR (1862)

Struck from the same die as the Navy Medal of Honor, the original Army Medal differed only in the emblem that attached it to the same red, white and blue ribbon as the Navy. Replacing the anchor was an eagle perched on crossed cannon and clutching a saber in its talons. Replacing the words "Personal Valor" on the back of the Medal were the words "The Congress To" with an area to engrave the recipient's name.



ARMY MEDAL OF HONOR (1896)

The first change in the Medal of Honor occurred in 1896 and dealt ONLY with the ARMY Medal of Honor. The change resulted after Congress authorized the wearing of a rosette or ribbon in lieu of the Medal in 1895. Following this step, Congress provided for replacement ribbons to recipients whose ribbons had deteriorated with age. In an effort to distinguish the Medal of Honor from awards being produced and distributed by various veterans organizations, the new suspension ribbon was introduced.

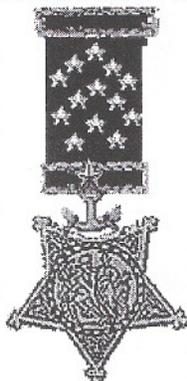
The change in the design of the ribbon was not enough distinction for the Medal of Honor for many recipients including Civil War hero Brigadier General George Gillespie. With the full support of Secretary of War Elihu Root at the turn of the century, the idea of a redesigned Army Medal of Honor gained momentum. One of the leaders in the effort was Horace Porter who had just received the Medal of Honor (July 8, 1902) for his own heroism during the Civil War. The U.S. Ambassador to France, Porter had a new design prepared by the Paris firm of Messrs. Arthur, Bertrand, and Berenger. He shared this design with Secretary Root, then sought the approval of the officers of the Medal of Honor Legion. On April 23, 1904 Congress authorized the new design for the Army Medal of Honor.

To protect the new design from being copied as had been the earlier Medal, General Gillespie sought and obtained a patent in November, 1904. The following month he transferred the patent to Secretary of War William Taft.

Gillespie MEDAL OF HONOR (1904)

The new Army Medal kept the star but modified the face of the Medal. The words "United States of America" replaced the ring of 34 stars and "Minerva Repelling Discord" was changed to display a simple profile of the helmeted Goddess of War. The oak clusters remained in the points of the star, now in a dark enameled green. The laurel clusters were moved to a wreath where they too were enameled in green, in the shape of an open wreath. The eagle that had once perched on cannon, saber in its talons, now perched on a bar bearing the words "VALOR" and the shafts of arrows.

The ribbon likewise was changed from its red, white and blue to a single light blue color on which was embroidered thirteen stars. The reverse of the Medal continued to bear the words "The Congress To", but these words were now printed on the back side of the "VALOR" bar, the full back of the Medal itself unadorned to provide for information on the recipient.



NAVY MEDAL OF HONOR (1913)

Since its birth the Navy's Medal of Honor, presented also to members of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, has not changed. In 1913 the anchor that connected it to the suspension ribbon was changed slightly when the rope was removed. At the time of that change the ribbon too changed to the same blue silk ribbon bearing 13 stars that was used with the Army Medal of Honor.

Since the Navy awarded Medals of Honor for both COMBAT and NON-COMBAT heroism, in 1919 the Department of the Navy decided to distinguish between the two acts by presenting a different Medal of Honor for each. The Original Medal would be presented for COMBAT heroism and the new MALTESE CROSS would signify NON-COMBAT heroism meriting the Medal of Honor. Designed by New York's TIFFANY & COMPANY, it became known as the "Tiffany Cross".

TIFFANY CROSS (1919)

The blue silk ribbon of the Maltese Cross hung below a bar bearing the old English spelling for valor, "VALOUR". The Medal itself featured the American eagle in the center of the award and surrounded by a six sided border over the top of which was printed "UNITED STATES NAVY" AND "1917 - 1918". An anchor protruded outward from each of the cross's four arms and the back of the medal bore the words "Awarded To" with a place for the recipient's personal information.

The "Tiffany Cross" was not a popular award and is the rarest of all Medals of Honor in existence. In 1942 it was dropped from the Medal of Honor profile and the Navy returned to its original Medal of Honor as the only design awarded.

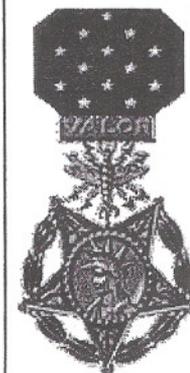


Though it was not uncommon for Medals of Honor to continue to be pinned to a soldier's tunic during World War II, the practice of draping it around a recipient's neck became increasingly used. For this purpose the modern Medal of Honor was suspended from an 8-sided "pad" bearing 13 white stars, to which the blue silk neck ribbon was attached. The Medal of Honor is the only United States Military Award that is worn around the neck rather than pinned to the uniform.



AIR FORCE MEDAL OF HONOR (1965)

Authorized in 1956, the Air Force unveiled its own design for the Medal of Honor in 1965. About 50% larger than the other services' Medals of Honor, it retained the laurel wreath and oak leaves of the Army Medal which had previously been presented to members of the Army Air Service and Air Corps. It also retained the bar bearing the word "VALOR". Inside the circle of stars the helmeted profile of Minerva from the Army's medal is replaced by the head of the Statue of Liberty. Replacing the Army's eagle is the Air Force Coat of Arms.





RIBBON AND ROSETTE

On May 2, 1895 Congress authorized "a rosette or knot to be worn in lieu of the medal and a ribbon to be worn with the medal." Today's Medal of Honor Ribbon is blue with FIVE stars, 2 at the top and 3 at the bottom. (One of the most common mistakes people make when displaying Medal of Honor graphics is to display the ribbon up-side down.)

The six-sided blue silk rosette bears 13 stars and is worn on civilian attire. Medal of Honor recipients also wear the Medal itself around the neck of civilian attire for special occasions.

NOTES:

When the patent on the Medal of Honor first obtained by General Gillespie expired in 1918 Congress intervened to protect the Medal's integrity. In 1923 legislation was enacted to prohibit the unauthorized manufacture of medals awarded by the military services. Additional legislation since then has taken steps to further protect the awards presented to our military heroes, and the Medal of Honor in particular.

As long as our Nation has veterans of military service there will be "war stories" and embellished tales of battlefield heroics. Such is the nature of military men. Sadly, some have stooped to the lowest levels by claiming or displaying medals they are not authorized. Misrepresentation of ones' self as a Medal of Honor recipient is a CRIME punishable by imprisonment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

A big thanks to Doug Sterner and his [HomeofHeroes](http://HomeofHeroes.com) website for providing most of the content of this page.

Last updated Feb. 6, 2001. Charles Polanski.
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**MEDAL OF HONOR BREAKDOWN
(By War and Service as of 13 May 1997)**

Action	Total	Army	Navy	Marine	Air Force	Coast Guard	Posthumous
Civil War	1,520	1,195	308	17	0	0	25
Indian Wars 1861-1898	428	428	0	0	0	0	6
Korea 1871	15	0	9	6	0	0	0
Spanish American War	109	30	64	15	0	0	0
Philippines Samoa	91	70	12	9	0	0	1
Boxer Rebellion	59	4	22	33	0	0	1
Vera Cruz 1914	55	0	46	9	0	0	0
Haiti 1915	6	0	0	6	0	0	0
Dominican Republic	3	0	0	3	0	0	0
Haiti 1919-1920	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Nicaragua 1927-1933	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Peacetime 1865-1870	12	0	12	0	0	0	0
Peacetime 1871-1898	103	0	101	2	0	0	0
Peacetime 1899-1911	51	1	48	2	0	0	0
Peacetime 1915-1916	8	0	8	0	0	0	1
Peacetime 1920-1940	18	2	15	1	0	0	4
World War I	124	96	21	7	0	0	32
World War II	440	301	57	81	0	1	250
Korean War	131	78	7	42	4	0	93
Vietnam War	239	155	15	57	12	0	150
Somalia 1993	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
Unknown Soldiers	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Total	3,427	2,362	745	294	16	1	574

These totals reflect the total number of Medals of Honor awarded. Nineteen (19) men received a second award: fourteen of these men received two separate Medals for two separate actions; five received both the Navy and the Army Medals of Honor for the same action. The total number of Medal of Honor recipients is 3,408.

Total Medals of Honor awarded: 3,427

Total number of Medal of Honor recipients: 3,408

Total number of double recipients: 19

Total number of enlisted personnel: 2,553

As of 13 May 1997, there are 169 living Medal of Honor recipients.

Source: Congressional Medal of Honor Society, 40 Patriots Point Rd, Mt Pleasant SC 29464

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Only Woman Medal of Honor Holder Ahead of Her Time

By Rudi Williams, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Whenever Ann Walker's brattish attitude emerged, her grandmother would often say, "You're just like your great-aunt Mary."

"When I was a teen-ager, I started to wonder, who is this great-aunt Mary?" said Walker, 74. "I sort of hungered for information about her, but I couldn't find much. Nobody, including my grandmother, seemed to care about her. She always said, 'Your aunt was always dressing like a man.'"

Her curiosity surged when one of her father's friends, a history professor, told her about her distant relative, actually her great-great-aunt, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker of the Civil War Union Army. He told her Mary Walker was the first American woman to be a military doctor, a prisoner of war and a Medal of Honor recipient. She was also a Union spy and a crusader against tobacco and alcohol.

"He told me she was always imitating men, and if she had dressed like a lady, she would have had a larger role in history," said Walker, a resident of Washington's Georgetown Aged Women's Home. A retired free-lance journalist, Walker said she's working on a book, "Woman of Honor," to tell the story of her aunt's Civil War exploits and her controversial life thereafter.

Through the family friend and research, Ann Walker learned her aunt was born on Nov. 26, 1832, in Oswego County, N.Y., and graduated from Syracuse Medical College in 1855. She married fellow medical student Albert Miller, but declined to take his name. The couple set up a medical practice in Rome, N.Y., but the public wasn't ready to accept a woman physician. The practice and the marriage foundered.

When the Civil War started, the Union Army wouldn't hire women doctors, so Walker volunteered as a nurse in Washington's Patent Office Hospital and treated wounded soldiers at the Battle of Bull Run in Virginia. In 1862, she received an Army contract appointing her as an assistant surgeon with the 52nd Ohio Infantry.

The first woman doctor to serve with the Army Medical Corps, Walker cared for sick and wounded troops in Tennessee at Chickamauga and in Georgia during the Battle of Atlanta.

Confederate troops captured her on April 10, 1864, and held her until the sides exchanged prisoners of war on Aug. 12, 1864. Walker worked the final months of the war at a women's prison in Louisville, Ky., and later at an orphans' asylum in Tennessee.

The Army nominated Walker for the Medal of Honor for her wartime service. President Andrew Johnson signed the citation on Nov. 11, 1865, and she received the award on Jan. 24, 1866. Her citation cites her wartime service, but not specifically valor in combat.

Walker's citation reads in part that she "devoted herself with much patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and hospitals, to the detriment of her own health. She has also endured hardships as a prisoner of war for four months in a Southern prison while acting as contract surgeon."

The War Department, starting in 1916, reviewed all previous Medal of Honor awards with the intent of undoing decades of abuse. At the time, for instance, the medal could be freely copied and sold and legally worn by anyone. Past awards would be rescinded and future ones would be rejected if supporting evidence didn't clearly, convincingly show combat valor above and beyond the call of duty.

Mary Walker and nearly 1,000 past recipients found their medals revoked in the reform. Wearing the medal if unearned became a crime. The Army demanded Walker and the others return their medals. She refused and wore hers until her death at age 87 in 1919.

In the late 1960s, Ann Walker launched an intensive lobbying campaign to restore her aunt's medal. A Nov. 25, 1974, letter from the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee read, in part, "It's clear your great-grandaunt was not only courageous during the term she served as a contract doctor in the Union Army, but also as an outspoken proponent of feminine rights. Both as a doctor and feminist, she was much ahead of her time and, as is usual, she was not regarded kindly by many of her contemporaries. Today she appears prophetic."

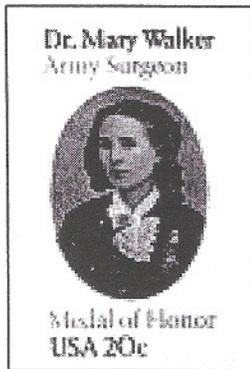
President Jimmy Carter restored Mary Walker's Medal of Honor on June 11, 1977. Today, it's on display in the Pentagon's women's corridor.

Walker said her relative was controversial on the battlefield and in civilian life. During the war, she wore trousers under her skirt, a man's uniform jacket and two pistols. As an early women's rights advocate, particularly for dress reform, she was arrested many times after the war for wearing men's clothes, including wing collar, bow tie and top hat.

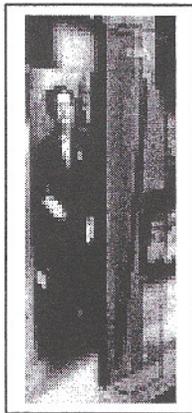
The Women in Military Service to America Memorial at Arlington (Va.) National Cemetery features the story of Dr. Mary E. Walker along with a photograph of her and her walking cane. Curator Judy Bellafaire called Walker "quite a character" and one whose ideas made her seem eccentric in her own day and age.

"But judging her from today's perspective, much of what she spoke and wrote about, that people made fun of at the time, is probably true today," Bellafaire said. Walker, she said, wrote volumes about the evils of tobacco and alcohol and women's clothes and authored two books: "Unmasked" and "Hit," a fictionalized autobiography.

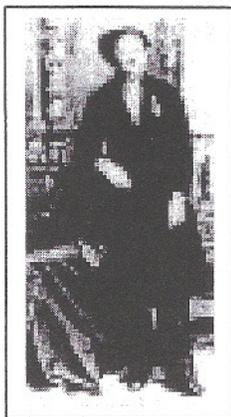
"My most favorite of her sayings is, 'Let the generations know that women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom,'" Ann Walker said. "She was strong. I wish I'd known her. It would have been fun."



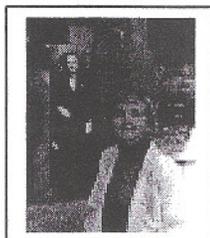
The U.S. Postal Service honored Civil War Dr. Mary E. Walker, the only woman awarded the Medal of Honor, with a 20-cent first-class postage stamp in 1982.



A photograph and the walking cane of Dr. Mary E. Walker, the only woman awarded the Medal of Honor, is featured in "Serving with the Military: 18th and 19th centuries," an exhibit at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial at Arlington (Va.) National Cemetery. Rudi Williams



The Women in Military Service for America Memorial at Arlington (Va.) National Cemetery features the story of Dr. Mary E. Walker, the only woman awarded the Medal of Honor, along with a picture of her decked out in men's clothing and her walking cane. Rudi Williams



Ann Walker, 74, the great grandniece of Civil War Dr. Mary E. Walker, the nation's only women Medal of Honor recipient, poses by Dr. Walker's photograph and walking cane on display at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial at the entrance to Arlington (Va.) National Cemetery. Rudi Williams

