

NATIONAL PURPLE HEART DAY

August 7

On this day in 1782, in Newburgh, New York, General George Washington, the commander in chief of the Continental Army, created the "Badge for Military Merit," a decoration consisting of a purple, heart-shaped piece of silk, edged with a narrow binding of silver, with the word *Merit* stitched across the face in silver. The badge was to be presented to soldiers for "any singularly meritorious action" and permitted its wearer to pass guards and sentinels without challenge. The honoree's name and regiment were also to be inscribed in a "Book of Merit."

Washington's "Purple Heart" was awarded to only three known Soldiers during the Revolutionary War: Elijah Churchill, William Brown and Daniel Bissell, Jr. The "Book of Merit" was lost, and the decoration was largely forgotten until 1927, when General Charles P. Summerall, the U.S. Army chief of staff, sent an unsuccessful draft bill to Congress to "revive the Badge of Military Merit." In 1931, Summerall's successor, General Douglas MacArthur, took up the cause, hoping to reinstate the medal in time for the bicentennial of George Washington's birth. On February 22, 1932, Washington's 200th birthday, the U.S. War Department announced the creation of the "Order of the Purple Heart."

It's not a medal a Soldier wants to earn. Criteria and standards are strict so as to protect the sacred nature of this military decoration. It is a medal of immeasurable cost and inestimable value. Recipients of the Purple Heart Medal are referred as "Patriots" in keeping with the historical connection to the Badge of Military Merit. And Patriots they truly are.

On this day, please all take a moment to reflect on the history of the Purple Heart, it's special meaning and remember the estimated 1.8 million Patriots awarded the Purple Heart Medal since February 22, 1932.

Yours in Patriotism

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