

Introduction: Purple Heart Hall of Fame

George Washington's stay in Newburgh, New York is significant for several reasons. His stay at the Hasbrouck farm was the longest of all his headquarters. The general arrived in April of 1782 and stayed until August of 1783. The army altered some structures on the property, and some were constructed, in an effort to accommodate the many needs of a military headquarters. After the occupation, these alterations and structures were mostly removed.

While at this headquarters Washington also faced down the "Newburgh Conspiracy." His senior officers were contemplating a march on Philadelphia to overthrow the Congress, followed by the general's installation as a king. In a meeting at the Temple of Virtue in nearby New Windsor he expressed his dismay with the plan. Trying to read a formal statement, Washington stumbled over reading the words. Drawing his spectacles from his pocket he famously stated "Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown gray in your service and now find myself growing blind." He had made sacrifices like his men. Washington's grace under fire had won the day yet again.

A final significant event was Washington's creation of a major military recognition. Washington was prevented by the Articles of Confederation from being able to promote his men on the basis of merit. Although he had successfully stopped the Newburgh Conspiracy in its tracks, Washington sincerely recognized the many sacrifices that his men had made during the war. In order to recognize soldiers in this manner, Washington issued orders on August 7, 1782 establishing the Badge of Military Merit for "whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed..." The first recipients of the award were Sergeants Elijah Churchill, William Brown, and Daniel Bissell. All had demonstrated considerable courage as soldiers.

The award had not been used very much until General Douglas MacArthur signed General Order No.3 which created the "Purple Heart for Medal for Military Merit." It was intended to coincide with the 200th anniversary of General Washington's birth. World War I veterans were also qualified to receive award. Although the medal was originally reserved for members of the U.S. Army, today service members who have been wounded, killed, or has died after being wounded may qualify under specific circumstances.

The mission of the Purple Heart Hall of Fame in Vails Gate, New York "is to collect and preserve the stories of Purple Heart recipients from all branches of service and across generations to ensure that all recipients are represented." One does not seek a Purple Heart. Instead, one receives it as a result of his or her efforts above and beyond the call of duty. Exhibits include depictions of the actions that lead to service members receiving Purple Hearts and the changing nature of medical treatments on the battlefield. A search function allows visitors to search a data base of Purple Heart recipients who can register with the Hall of Honor through a form.

Primary Sources

-Historical evolution of the Badge of Military Merit and the Purple Heart:

<http://www.purplehearts.net/id6.html>

Print/Web Resources

-U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs history of the Purple Heart:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/purple-heart.pdf>

-"The Badge of Military Merit" by Professor Ray Raymond:

<http://www.purpleheart.org/Downloads/Raymond%20Badge%20of%20Merit.pdf>

-Website for the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor:

<http://www.thepurpleheart.com/>

Teaching About the Purple Heart Hall of Honor

Lesson Plan Introduction

The Purple Heart was last designed almost a decade before World War II. Since then, our beliefs about war have changed.

Suggested Grade Level: 8+

ACTIVITIES MENU

Activity 1: Purple Heart Recipient Research

- **Search** online for three individuals who have received the Purple Heart.
 - Try to select a recipient from three different periods:
 - World War I
 - World War II
 - Korean War
 - Vietnam War
 - War on Terror, Iraqi Freedom
- **Create a PowerPoint or poster** in which you include an image (if possible) of the recipient and the reasons for why he or she received the Purple Heart.

Activity 2: Design a new badge of military merit for the U.S. military

- Consult the sites available under print and web based sites to learn more about the evolution of the Purple Heart.
- Students will then:
 - **Draw** an image and identify the symbolism of:
 - George Washington's original award.
 - Today's Purple Heart.
 - **Create** a new award of merit.
 - **Draw** an image of the new award
 - **Write** an explanation of what the symbols mean and why you choose these symbols.

Activity 3: Compare the Purple Heart award with other military awards in the USA and other countries

- Read on the history of the Purple Heart and **list** the criteria to award it
- Study the criteria of 2-3 military awards and distinctions in the US and another country.
- Study the criteria of 2-3 non-military awards and distinctions in the US and another country.
- **Create a chart or table** with all of the information you gathered:
 - **Compare and contrast** similarities and differences of military vs. non-military distinctions
 - **Compare** the awards in the USA with those in another country.
- Draw a conclusion on the characteristics of actions that a person might need to present in order to receive an award (military vs. non-military).

Activity 4: Create a new award of merit for your school

- Design a new recognition award that a student in your school would receive if they demonstrate the traits George Washington saw in his soldiers.
 - Does not have to be an annual award.
 - George Washington’s soldiers exhibited “extraordinary fidelity and essential service in any way.”
 - Develop 4 or 5 concrete criteria for the recognition award recipient to exhibit..
 - Have a design contest throughout the school to develop the design of the recognition award.

