

## IN THE CAN !!!

The WBA has completed the first short video in its series, *The Forgotten Stories of Civil War Williamsburg*. "A Murder in Civil War Williamsburg" will be released very soon, so get your popcorn ready! Two other short videos are also in production.



These videos are made possible due to your generous donations to the WBA last year during Give Local 757. **The annual fundraising event for non-profits in the 757 area code will occur Tuesday, May 10 this year, and the WBA is again participating.** We hope you will continue to support our efforts to preserve the stories and battlefield of Civil War Williamsburg.

## The U.S. Medal of Honor



*Medal of Honor for 1862-1897 shown*

The Medal of Honor is the most prestigious decoration for U.S. military personnel who exhibit courage and self-sacrifice beyond the normal call of duty. In 1990, Congress established March 25 as National Medal of Honor Day. Creation of the medal, though, dates back to the Civil War. (Army

than during any other period in U.S. history! Of these, 1,198 have been awarded to soldiers, including 25 Black soldiers, and 324 to sailors. The total also includes one female, Dr. Mary Walker, even though the medal was not intended for non-combatants. We may even consider some acts for which these medals were presented as unexceptional by modern views. For instance, medals were often awarded to flag bearers. During the Civil War, flag bearing was not just a patriotic act, but a necessary and deadly duty. The colorful banners were essential for identification and communication during battle but also made their bearers targets. Moreover, regimental flags were usually provided by a unit's local community. So, loss of the flag could lead to confusion in battle as well as shame and loss of pride.

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In December 1861, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill authorizing a medal of honor for Navy personnel. This was followed by a medal for Army personnel in July 1862. To date, there have been 1,532 Medals of Honor awarded to Civil War participants— more

## The Confederate Roll of Honor

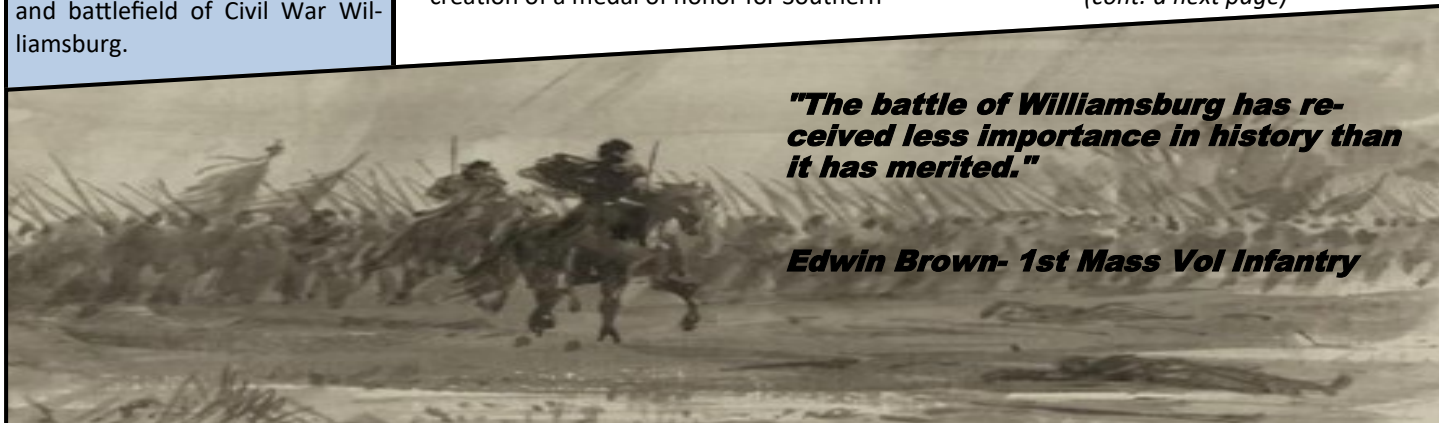
Like the U.S. Army, the Confederate Army consisted primarily of volunteer soldiers. As such, many political and military leaders felt it was more important than ever to recognize "conspicuous [...] courage and good conduct on the field of battle." General Robert E. Lee, though, reportedly opposed the idea. Nevertheless, Confederate Congress approved President Jefferson Davis authorizing creation of a medal of honor for Southern

soldiers in October 1862. No medal was ever authorized for sailors. With limited resources and manufacturing capabilities focused on the war effort, however, no medals were ever minted. Instead, Samuel Cooper, the Adjutant and Inspector General for the Confederate Army, established the Confederate Roll of Honor in October 1863.

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**"The battle of Williamsburg has received less importance in history than it has merited."**

**Edwin Brown- 1st Mass Vol Infantry**



## Education & Preservation

### ***The U.S. Medal of Honor (cont.'d)***

One-third of Civil War medals were awarded decades after the war. Originally, there was no time limit between the act of valor and the awarding of the medal. There was also no clear procedure for recommending a recipient. As the 19<sup>th</sup>-century concluded and the medal became more widely known, aging Union veterans wrote to the Adjutant General's Office requesting it. As such, more than 500 medals were awarded between 1891 and 1897. In 1896, though, President McKinley established new policies that became effective in June 1897

and required nominations be submitted by someone other than the potential recipient and include testimony by an eyewitness. The nomination also had to occur within one year of the act of valor. The latter restriction is not retroactive to engagements prior to 1897. Consequently, Lt. Alonzo H. Cushing, who was killed at Gettysburg, was posthumously awarded the medal in 2014. Over the years, other changes have occurred to the policies and appearance of the medal to ensure that it remains the U.S. Government's most noble military decoration.

### ***The Confederate Roll of Honor (cont.'d)***

Confederate soldiers were included on the Roll of Honor via the votes of their comrades. After an engagement, soldiers could nominate comrades from their companies for the Roll of Honor. The entire company then voted, and the nominee with the most votes had his name listed in battle reports, read aloud to regiments, and published in Southern newspapers.

The first Roll of Honor was published in November 1863 and included soldiers who distinguished themselves at Murfreesboro, TN in July 1862, Chancellorsville, VA in May 1863, and Gettysburg, PA in July 1863. Publications in August and December 1864 included the names of soldiers who fought heroically in other battles. The Roll of Honor was never retroactive, however, to engagements on the Virginia Peninsula in 1862.

Since 1977, Confederate veterans who "distinguished themselves conspicuously by gallantry, bravery, and intrepidity at

the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty" may be posthumously awarded a Confederate Medal of Honor created and minted by the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). Over 60 such medals have been awarded to date, and many recipients come from the former Confederate Rolls of Honor. Only members of the SCV can submit candidates for the medal to the SCV's Confederate Medal of Honor Committee. A complete record on the nominee and documented proof of his deed of valor are required with the application. Medals for approved recipients are presented to institutions that agree in writing to display them publicly and to maintain their safety.



*SCV Confederate Medal of Honor*

### ***Upcoming Events***

#### **Friday, May 6 @ 6-7:30 PM - Walk and Talk**

The WBA and Civil War Trails will host a "Walk and Talk" in **York County's New Quarter Park (1000 Lakeshead Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23185)** featuring an overview of the Battle of Williamsburg. A significant part of the May 5, 1862 battle occurred near the park. The battle's aftermath will also be emphasized, including care of the wounded and the impact of the town's occupation on the citizens of Williamsburg. The event is free and begins in the Visitor Center parking lot and concludes near Redoubt 12.

#### **Saturday, May 14 @ 9 AM—1 PM —Walk of Valor**

The WBA and American Battlefield Trust (ABT) will host a free, outdoor event that recognizes the heroism of those who participated in and influenced the Battle of Williamsburg. As you stroll a short path, you will learn the stories of seven Union soldiers awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions during the fighting

and discover the stories of several courageous Confederate soldiers involved in the battle. The event also presents how African-Americans impacted the Williamsburg battle and national emancipation discussion at great personal risk. Interspersed along the walk will be stations where guests can learn about the four significant Williamsburg battlefield tracts saved by the ABT and what happened on them during the fighting. Check the WBA's website and Facebook page for any weather related announcements concerning this event.

**Location:** Ravine Tract @ 7155 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185

**Event Parking & Over-Night Accommodations:** Country Inn & Suites @ 7135 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185 (phone #757-229-6900 or email [countryinnbuschgardens@gmail.com](mailto:countryinnbuschgardens@gmail.com))