

The Order of the PURPLE HEART



George Washington
Photo of famous Houdon Bust



Gen. John J. Pershing



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Maj. Gen. C. B. Summerall

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

WHEN Gen. John J. Pershing, commander in chief of the A. E. F. in the World war, made repeated recommendations for the creation of a special decoration for our fighting men to be awarded in exceptional cases which would not come within the scope of the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service cross or the Distinguished Service medal, he did not know that authority for such a decoration was already in existence, in fact, had been in existence for nearly 140 years. It was not until John C. Fitzpatrick, formerly assistant chief of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, now affiliated with the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration commission, revealed the result of researches which he had made several years ago, that the War department realized just what a decoration had been authorized way back in 1782 and, so far as it has been possible to learn, authority to award it has never been revoked either by congress or the President. While Gen. Charles P. Summerall was chief of staff, a study of the situation was made and a recommendation that the award of this decoration be resumed without additional authority from congress seemed probable. No definite action was taken at the time, however, but, with preparations for the nation-wide celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Washington nearing completion, it seems likely that this award may yet be re-established.

For it was George Washington who established this award, the first military decoration ever conferred by this country and the second oldest reward for valor in existence, being antedated only by the Russian Cross of St. George. Known officially as the "Badge of the Order of Military Merit," it is also referred to as the "Order of the Purple Heart" because of the shape of the badge. It consists of a heart-shaped piece of purple silk, fringed with lace, which was to be sewn on the left breast of the soldier's tunic.

A peculiar situation led Washington to establish the award. During the Revolution it was the custom for Washington and other generals to give commissions and promotions as rewards for valor. But congress decided that it alone had the power to issue commissions to officers and took that power away from the generals. Money was scarce and Washington could not use it as a reward, so he conceived the idea of awarding a badge of merit. Accordingly on August 2, 1782, he issued the following general order:

"The general, ever desirous to cherish a virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on the facings over his left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding.

"Not only instances of unusual gallantry, but also of extraordinary fidelity and essential service in any way shall meet with a due reward. Before this favor can be conferred on any man, the particular fact, or facts, on which it is to be grounded must be set forth to the commander in chief, accompanied with certificates from the commanding officers of the regiment and brigade to which the candidate for reward belonged, or other incontestable proofs, and upon granting it, the name and regiment of the person with the action so certified are to be enrolled in the book of merit which will be kept at the orderly office.

"Men who have merited this last distinction to be suffered to pass all guards and sentinels which officers are permitted to do.

"The road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all—this order is also to have retrospect to the earliest stages of the war, and to be considered as a permanent one."

So far as it has been possible to learn, the only names ever written in the "book of merit" and the only men empowered to wear the Purple Heart badge were three sergeants in the Continental army—all from the state of Connecticut. They were Sergt. Elijah Churchill of the Second Continental dragoons, Sergt. Daniel Brown of the Fifth Connecticut regiment and Sergt. Daniel Bissell of the Second Connecticut regiment. The original citation of Sergeant Churchill's exploits which won him this award is preserved in the Library of Congress and states that "Sergt. Churchill of the 2nd Regiment of Light Dragoons, in the several enterprises against Fort St. George and Fort Slongo on Long Island acted a very conspicuous and singularly meritorious part, in that at the head of each body of attack he not only acquitted himself with great gallantry, firmness and address, but that, the surprise in one instance and

the success of the attack in the other, proceeded in a considerable degree from his conduct and management."

According to the story, as it has been dug out of dusty old records by Mr. Fitzgerald, Sergeant Churchill first attracted the attention of his superior officers for his daring in leading a dangerous raid inside the British lines before dawn on November 23, 1780. He again displayed outstanding valor in another hazardous raid right under the noses of the British on October 3, 1781. Both raids were planned and directed by Maj. Benjamin Tallmadge of the Second Continental dragoons, chief of Washington's intelligence service.

Major Tallmadge had received information concerning a huge supply of hay—several hundred tons of it—that had been stored for winter forage in a building at Coram, on the north shore of Long Island. Hay, in that day of cavalry supremacy, was one of the important supplies of warfare. Major Tallmadge relayed the information direct to General Washington, with an astounding plan for attempting not only to destroy the forage, but to storm a fortification which protected it. The intrepid major was authorized to make the attempt.

Late on the blustery afternoon of November 21, 1780, a detachment of half a hundred dismounted dragoons of the Second Continental embarked in whaleboats at Fairfield, Conn., and headed across the sound toward Fort St. George, 20 miles away, with Major Tallmadge in command. They landed about eight o'clock in the evening and deciding that it was too late to attempt a march on the fort they pulled their boats out of sight and camped for the night. All the next day they huddled in the woods, trying to keep warm, and when night came they set out at a rapid pace for the fort. By three o'clock in the morning they arrived, undiscovered, within two miles of Fort St. George. Here they halted for final orders.

Major Tallmadge divided his force into three groups, each assigned to storm a particular blockhouse. Sixteen of the most daring members were picked for the assault on the main blockhouse and Sergeant Churchill was put in command of this group. Just before dawn the three detachments moved toward the fort, taking different routes to minimize the chances of discovery and to enable them to launch concerted attacks from three different points.

The British sentinels seem to have been sleeping at their posts for they did not discover the attackers until Churchill and his men were less than 50 feet away and sprinting toward the walls. They immediately gave the alarm, but by this time the Americans had swarmed over the wall, crossed the ditch and were inside the stockade, where they opened fire on the British soldiers as they came tumbling out of their barracks.

"The other two attacking parties had expended their energies in getting inside the defenses and two blockhouses still remained to be taken," writes Mr. Fitzgerald in an account of this battle, which appeared in the magazine of the Daughters of the American Revolution several years ago. "A brisk fire was beginning to pour upon the Americans from these two houses, but battering parties beat in the doors and inside of 10 more minutes Tallmadge's men had possession of the entire works.

"The growing light now showed a British supply schooner at anchor close to the shore near the fort. A detachment captured her with ridiculous ease. The rapidity of the attack had protected the attackers and they had not lost a man, and only one of them was wounded. The British loss was several killed and wounded and most of the latter were mortally hurt.

"The fort and the schooner were set on fire and the prisoners, over 50 in number, were started back toward the boats under a guard. Leaving a small force to see to it that the fort was completely destroyed, Tallmadge marched with the rest toward Coram.

"The few sentries found there fled, and the hay was pulled loose and set on fire. Over 300 tons went up in rolling clouds of smoke and as soon as the fire was going beyond all hope of extinguishment, Tallmadge and his hay burners started back toward their boats.

"The party of Americans reached their hidden boats late in the afternoon, after one or two brief skirmishes with the pursuers, and the force succeeded in getting away from shore without casualties. They arrived back at Fairfield before midnight."

That was the first of the affairs which won for Churchill the Purple Heart decoration. The next was in the following October when Washington made plans for destroying Fort Slongo, located on the north shore of Long Island, northeast of Brooklyn. Again Major Tallmadge secured the necessary exact information which led to the attack on this post. The attacking party consisted of 100 men from the Fifth Connecticut regiment and the Second Continental

dragoons. Maj. Lemuel Trescott, a Massachusetts officer, volunteered to lead the party.

"The expedition started across the sound at eight o'clock in the evening of October 2, 1781," writes Mr. Fitzpatrick, "and at three o'clock in the morning the fort was in its hands.

"Again Sergeant Churchill was in the van of the first attacking party and again he acquitted himself with the utmost gallantry. The fort was so strong that Tallmadge had advised Trescott not to make a direct attack, but to try to draw off the defenders by a feint. This idea was not followed, the attacking force went at their job with such vigor that the fort was taken without the loss of a single man and only four of the British force were killed before the works surrendered.

"The report of the affair shows 21 prisoners taken, and the destruction of a goodly quantity of artillery and stores or arms, ammunition and clothing."

Sergeant Brown was his Purple Heart 12 days later at Yorktown. The citation of the board of awards, dated April 24, 1783, is among the Washington papers in the Library of Congress. The board was composed of Brig. Gen. John Greaton, Col. Walter Stewart, Lieut. Col. Ebenezer Sprout and Majs. Nicholas Fish and Lemuel Trescott.

The board declared that Sergeant Brown, "in the assault of the enemy's left redoubt at Yorktown, in Virginia, on the evening of October 14, 1781, conducted a forlorn hope with great bravery, propriety and deliberate firmness and that his general character appears unexceptionable."

Sergeant Brown was serving under Lieut. Col. Alexander Hamilton, who had been assigned the task of taking one of two British redoubts that were stubbornly resisting the siege of Yorktown. The other redoubt was to be attacked by allied French troops. The Americans volunteered to storm the outer redoubt, which was close to the river, and the French were to attack the inner redoubt.

The sergeant led his "forlorn hope" at the forefront of the attackers and refused even to await destruction of the abatis and other obstructions. Calling to his men to follow closely, he surmounted all the obstacles and led his men directly into the redoubt. A withering barrage failed to stop them, and the unbelievable courage of the little party so confounded the defenders that the redoubt surrendered in less than 15 minutes from the time Brown and his men launched the attack. The American losses were comparatively few.

As for the exploit which won the Purple Heart decoration for Sergeant Bissell, the record is far from complete, due to the fact that it was in line of duty as a spy. In order to accomplish his mission he had to "desert" from the American army and in the faded Revolutionary records in the War department he is listed as a deserter. But the citation for the Purple Heart decoration, contained in Washington's General Orders for June 8, 1783, while it does not contain the full story of Bissell's heroism, contains a hint of what it must have been and removes from his name the stigma attached to it by the notation in the official records. The citation reads as follows: "Sergt. Bissell of the 2nd Connecticut Regiment having performed some important services within the immediate knowledge of the Commander-in-Chief, in which the fidelity, perseverance and good sense of the said Sergt. Bissell were conspicuously manifested, it is, therefore, ordered: That he be honored with the badge of merit; he will call at headquarters on Thursday next for the insignia and certificate to which he is hereby entitled."

So far as it is possible to reconstruct the story, Bissell "deserted" from the army in August, 1781, and made his way into New York City. His mission was to obtain all the information he could about the plans of the British and to stay no longer than was necessary to accomplish his purpose. A year passed and nothing was heard from Bissell by his regimental officer, Lieut. Col. Robert Hanson Harrison, or his commander in chief. For all that they knew his mission may have been discovered by the British and he may have paid the usual penalty for being a spy. Then one day in September, 1782, Bissell reported at Washington's headquarters at Newburgh, N. Y., and made his verbal report which was taken down by Lieut. Col. David Humphreys.

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Picturesque Apron-and-Cuff Sets

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



WHEN the modern business woman with a family comes home at night and must turn immediately to the preparation of dinner, or when the Sunday night hostess must serve light refreshments without changing to kitchen attire, her first thought is of an apron that will protect her pretty frock.

To be sure, the apron itself is all right in its way, but it does not protect the sleeves and so, as always, necessity becomes the "mother of invention" in that some clever brain has devised apron "sets" which include deep matching cuffs which are worn as you see in the picture.

It is not only the novelty and practicality of the cuffs as illustrated which attract, but the aprons themselves are very new and unusual. If there is one thing more than another which makes appeal to the home-sewing woman it is a new apron pattern. They are very easy to make, the aprons pictured, if you use a bias trim for bindings and decoration.

Make them of any suitable material. Organdie or dotted swiss is suggested for the more dressy affairs that are to cover the Sunday night frock and its sleeves with gingham, percale or gay

cretonne for every day use. The bias trim comes in the proper width, cut on a true bias, ready to apply, and in bolifast colors.

Quite a new idea is the surplice front effect which fashions the apron to the left. Then, too, the skirt of this apron is sewed onto a V-shape waistline which is slenderizing. For this model the designer chooses a dainty flowered percale. In this instance the bias trim is used for binding only. For the other apron which, by the way, is made of gingham the bias trim also forms decorative bands at the front and on the cuffs. Note that circular-cut side sections are seamed into the skirt portion, achieving a graceful flare for its hemline.

Where sheer material such as organdie is employed, use sheer fabric thread in matching color to stitch down the bias bands. This fabric thread does not go by number although in reality it is equal to a number one hundred ordinary cotton. It requires the machine gauge set to about twenty-five stitches to the inch. It is excellent for seaming frocks of sheer material as the fine stitches and the fine needle prevents the seams from fraying. Paris couturiers are using it on silks and velvets (it has an exquisite luster). In fact the use of exceedingly fine thread, very fine needles and little stitches is one of the sewing secrets learned from French dressmakers.

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AUTUMN HATS WORN HIGH ON THE HEAD

You will find that the new autumn hats are not easy to wear and that the hair must be beautifully done, as much of the head is exposed at one side. Tiny tiled brims, very shallow crowns, the hats worn high on the head, that is the style message of the very best milliners. And managers and buyers for the hat departments in the very smartest of specialty shops assure us that these hats will be the thing next autumn and that real millinery is back with us again. And that is something for which the really well-dressed woman will be profoundly grateful.

All too long we have been content with just a covering for our heads, and the covering was not too good-looking either. Nor were the tight little caps at all healthy for the scalp, as you have no doubt learned from your favorite hairdresser.

Little Things of Dress Which Count for Chic

Your new wide, soft-and-crushable patent leather belt, how are you wearing it? Not with the buckle at the front if you are fashionable, but fastened at the back—tres chic!

In selecting hosiery for midseason wear keep in mind that stockings of lacy open mesh is latest fashion decree.

Give distinction to your white sports frock or jacket suit by wearing belt and scarf in vivid tri-colors. Red, white and blue or green, orange and red or "say it" in pastel such as pale pink and light blue.

As to waistlines—"going up" is the message. It seems that the new French millinery is inspiring decided changes in costume trends, as, for instance, the now-so-modish Empress Eugenie hats are influencing the raising of the waistline in empire fashion.

Advance afternoon and evening dresses in early Paris displays reflect the styles of the 1830s to 1800s. Which is to say that the world of fashion is about to witness a revival of whims and foibles of the old-fashioned sort such as ruchings, frills, longer skirts, peplums, little capes and tiny fur scarfs (maybe we will be using that quaint word "tippet" again) and ostrich boas too are in prospect, to match the trims on the new hats.

CHERIE NICHOLAS.

Fabric Hats

Be sure to include several of the new knockabout hats in the summer wardrobe—one version is the flannel hat of the vagabond type with a soft crown and stitched brim. It comes in every color for town or country.

Light Blue for Evening



For dance and party frocks, light blue is a favorite color. The dress pictured is of ciel blue chiffon patterned with velvet flower motifs. The peplum effect adds to the grace of the silhouette. Pale blue satin is also favored by the smart Parisienne for her evening gown.

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Scarf Becomes Bonnet by Simple Twist of Wrist

Not for a long while has there been a more practical and generally becoming bit of headgear than the sports scarf which, by a simple twist of the wrist, becomes a bonnet. Intended only for wear on the head, this scarf of wool or tweed-like mixture, matching the sports frock, is made so wide that by merely wrapping it around the head and pinning it, the bonnet is achieved. The ends, standing smartly out, from the only ornaments beside the pin.

White on Red or Navy

Sheer prints, showing white patterns on red or navy backgrounds are prominent in town costumes. The white and red print model looks surprisingly cool for hot weather and is a type alluring to the younger generation.