



FEBRUARY 2016

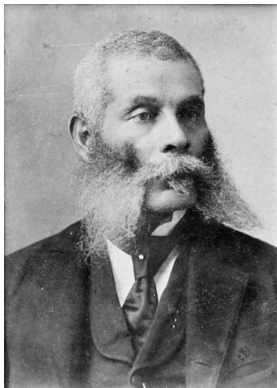
MEDAL OF HONOR CELEBRATES CIVIL WAR HEROES IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

by **Antigoni Ladd**

The Medal of Honor, our government's highest military decoration, was created during the Civil War. From its inception, the award was for those who distinguished themselves at the risk of their own lives, above and beyond the call of duty, in action against an enemy of the United States.

To date, nearly 3,500 medals have been awarded. Of those, 90 have been awarded to African-Americans. For their Civil War service, 25 men earned the medal: 7 sailors in the Union Navy, 15 soldiers in the U.S. Colored Troops, and 3 soldiers in other Army units.

To honor Black History Month, we salute these heroes and share a sampling of their achievements in military service.



Alexander Kelly

Alexander Kelly, First Sergeant in the 7th U.S. Colored Infantry, "Gallantly seized the colors, which had fallen near the enemy's lines of abatis, raised them and rallied the men at a time of confusion and in a place of the greatest danger." His award was for his achievements on September 29, 1864, at the Battle of Chaffin's Farm, Virginia.

Wilson Brown, Navy Landsman, on the USS *Hartford*, for service at the Battle of Mobile Bay, Alabama, August 5, 1864: "Knocked unconscious into the hold of the ship when an enemy shellburst fatally wounded a man on the ladder above him, Brown, upon regaining consciousness, promptly returned to the shell whip on the berth deck and zealously continued to perform his duties although 4 of the 6 men at this station had been either killed or wounded by the enemy's terrific fire."

Robert Blake, listed as Contraband, U.S. Navy, served on the USS *Marblehead* on December 25, 1863 during "an engagement with the enemy on John's Island [South Carolina]. Serving the rifle gun, Blake, an escaped slave, carried out his duties bravely throughout the

engagement which resulted in the enemy's abandonment of positions, leaving a caisson and one gun behind."

James Miles, Army Corporal, 36th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment: "Having had his arm mutilated, making immediate amputation necessary, he loaded and discharged his piece with one hand and urged his men forward; this within 30 yards of the enemy's works" on September 29, 1864, at the Battle of Chaffin's Farm, Virginia."



What more needs to be said? They exemplify leadership at its best.

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