

Purple Heart Historical Timeline

1782: The Badge of Military Merit, today known as the Purple Heart medal, was created by George Washington, who was then the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. As the oldest U.S. military decoration still in use, it originated from Washington's respect and acknowledgement of veterans' combat valor.

1931-1932: To celebrate the bicentennial of Washington's birth, General Douglas MacArthur redesigned and revived the Badge of Military Merit, renamed it "the Purple Heart," and established the Purple Heart for the Army.

1932: The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) was established to provide support and assistance for all veterans and their families, incorporating the importance of this medal in its organization name.

1941: After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Purple Heart was extended to the Naval Services.

1942: The U.S. War Department designated the Purple Heart exclusively for wounds or deaths in combat.

1943: John F. Kennedy was wounded in action that resulted in a Purple Heart. He is the only U.S. president to have received the honor.

1958: Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) was chartered by Congress. In addition, the Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation (MOPHSF) was formed as the fundraising engine of Military Order of the Purple Heart member organization.

1996: Military Order of the Purple Heart successfully lobbied Congress to pass legislation as part of the 1996 National Defense Authorization Act, allowing Prisoners of War to be awarded the Purple Heart for their injuries or death while in captivity.

1997: At the urging of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Congress passed legislation prohibiting future awards of the Purple Heart to civilians. Today, the Purple Heart is reserved only for men and women in uniform.

2003: The Military Order of the Purple Heart successfully lobbied the U.S. Postal Service, with the assistance of then New York Senator Hillary Clinton, to issue the Purple Heart commemorative stamp, which is still in use today.

2010: Since its origin, the military has awarded an estimated 1.7 million Purple Hearts to soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen.

2014: Since 2008, MOPH has invested more than \$42 million in its efforts, shared more than 138,950 dedicated hours of volunteer time at 100 support locations; and helped more than 105,760 veterans get their claims approved. In addition, the organization is helping veterans and their families with four key initiatives: suicide prevention, PTS, brain injury and women's health issues.