

LESSON # 8:

BLACK AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR –
Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient William H. Carney



The Riderless Horse, by Frederic Remington, 1886,
Pencil, Pen and Ink, and Watercolor on Paper
Sid Richardson Museum, Fort Worth, Texas



Medal of war information available online on November 2, 2006, at:
<http://www.medalofhonor.com> .

ite contains pop-ups that link to video games, commercial sites and an offer to set user's home page to netstar.com.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Department

Boston, Nov 9th 1863.

Hon. E. U. Stanton,

Secy. at War, Washington D.C.

Sir:

Sirgt. William

H. Barney of Co. B. 54th Mass. Regt. was born in Norfolk Va. in 1840 and at the death of his master, Maj. Barney, he with the other negroes was made free.

In his fourteenth year he attended a private school secretly kept by a minister in Norfolk.

In 1856 his father set out in search of a home where he could live in peace and

enjoy his freedom. After several changes he came Massachusetts and settled in New Bedford where the family still reside.

Letter to Honorable E. U. Stanton from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department, Boston, November 9, 1863, Page 1; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Sergt. Barney soon after joined the Church
under charge of Mr. Jackson, who is now
Chaplain of our 54th Regt.

At the time our Colored Regiments were being
raised he joined the 54th, and the following
statement of his conduct at the assault on
Fort Wagner in July last must commend it-
self to all.

Receiving the regimental Colors, the
Sergeant pressed forward to the front rank
near the Colonel, who was leading the assault.
He received a severe wound in the thigh
but fell only upon his knees. He planted
the Flag on the parapet and for shelter lay
down upon the outer slope, where he lay
until the second Brigade came up - keeping
the colors flying until the second conflict was
ended. When our forces retired, he followed
upon his knees. Upon reaching the Hospital
where lay his wounded companions, he said

Letter to Honorable E. U. Stanton from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department, Boston, November 9, 1863, Page 2; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

in reply to their cheer "Boys, the old flag
never touches the ground".

Can any higher praise be bestowed upon
this brave man, than a recital of his
noble conduct in the assault upon Fort
Wagner?

In view of the special merit of Supt.
Cannery, I beg you will favorably consider
this application for a furlough of thirty
- days, to enable him to visit his family
and friends in New Bedford.

His case has made the subject
of special mention by the Col.
Davis commanding, I think
the favor I suggest only a fit
recognition of the merit of a
rare soldier of any color.

Yours truly
G. M. Anderson

Letter to Honorable E. U. Stanton from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department, Boston, November 9, 1863, Page 3; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

3632 C. T., 1885.

Boston, Mass.

Nov 9, 1863.

Jno. A. Andrew.

Gov of Mass.

Recommends 30 days
furlough be granted
Wm H. Carney, late
Sgt. Co. "C", 54th Mass.
Vols. for meritorious
conduct in the field.

Wolfe
ADDRESS: *File*

CE
9
1863

Noted on M. O. A. etc.

Document indicating furlough recommended to Wm. H. Carney, November 9, 1863, Boston, Massachusetts; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Subject:

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE.

CHARLESTON. December 26, 1899.

State of West Virginia)
County of Kanawha) S.S.

This day personally appeared before me,
a Notary Public in and for said County, Gen. J. W. M. Appleton,
who being by me first duly sworn, deposes and says: That on the
18th of July 1863 I was Captain commanding "A" Company of the
54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, and as such, in the line
of duty, was in the front line of the attack upon Fort Wagner,
Morris Island, Charleston Harbor, S.C. The regiment was formed
for the attack by wing, half the companies in the front line and
the remainder a few paces behind them, the Color company was to
my left in the front line.

As we approached the Fort, we broke
through some palisading and ran over some rifle pits in which were
men of the enemy's forces and I heard afterwards the color bearer
fell at that time. Sergeant William H. Carney, a Duty Sergeant
of "C" Company, picked up the colors and carried them forward with
us in the charge. I was near the colors when they crossed the
moat and they were planted on the top of the curtain of the fort
between the two main bastions, some twenty yards to my left as I
stood on the top ^{of the} rampart. There was severe fighting for me in my
front, but I could see that the colors kept rising and falling as
the men fought around them. Once I thought they were taken, but
Carney hung on to them and finally, to my great relief, I saw them

Letter from John W. Appleton, Adjutant General's Office, State of West Virginia, December 26, 1899, Boston, Massachusetts, Page 1; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

slowly go down the exterior slope of the rampart and cross the moat. Carney was wounded in three places in the fight about the colors. The State flag was torn from its staff and captured.

After our long fight in the Southeast bastion, which occurred after the time I speak of above, and in which I was wounded twice, I made my way down the beach and found a remnant of the Regiment, and Carney had brought the colors to the officer commanding. Carney's action throughout was very heroic. It is my opinion that he well deserves a medal for his deed.

John W. Appleton
Brig Gen., Adjutant Gen of W. Va.

Subscribed and sworn to before me at Charleston, W. Va., this day of December, 1899.

Edw. W. Meadley
Notary Public.

Letter from John W. Appleton, Adjutant General's Office, State of West Virginia, December 26, 1899, Boston, Massachusetts, Page 2; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

New Bedford, Mass., Jan. 8th, 1900.

I, Charles H. Harrison, a member of Company "C", 54th Mass. Volunteers, was on the 18th of July, 1863, at the battle of Fort Wagner, and as such was in line of duty; was in the front line of the attack upon Fort Wagner, Morris Island, Charleston Harbor, S.C. The regiment was formed for the attack by wing, half the companies in the front line and the remainder a few paces behind them.

The color company was to my left in the front line. As we went up to the Fort amid the sound of cheers and yells, we went through the palisades, and ran over some rifle-pits which were of the enemy. The regimental color-bearer fell, carrying the colors on to victory. Seargeant William H. Carney picked up the colors, and carried them with us through the charge.

I was a Private in Co. "C" of the 54th Mass. Vols. I saw Seargeant Carney carrying the colors across the ditch, and on he went across the curtain of the Fort, and I saw him wounded with the Stars and Stripes in his hand. He said "The old flag never touched the ground"

I would request that a congressional medal of Honor should be awarded him under the joint resolutions of Congress of July 19th, 1862, and May 2nd, 1896.

Witness

Charles H. Harrison
January 8th 1900
Then personally affirmed the above name Charles H. Harrison
mouth of the and says that it is at of statement. Subscribed
by him is true Before me

William B. Smith
Jury of the Peace

Statement of Charles H. Harrison, January 8, 1900, New Bedford, Massachusetts, Page 1; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

319 Spruce St., N. W.,

Washington, D. C., Jan. 15, 1900.



The Secretary of War,

Washington, D. C.,

Sir:-

I have the honor most respectfully to petition for the issue of "The Congressional Medal of Honor" to William Harvey Carney, Sergeant Co. C, 54th Regiment, Massachusetts Infantry Vols., under the Act of Congress approved July 19, 1862, and in support thereof beg leave to state:

That in the assault upon Fort Wagner, S. C. July 18, 1863, while serving as a file-closer in Co. C, of said 54th Mass. Inf. Vols. he saw the color sergeant of the regiment fall at the beginning of the charge. Carney threw away his rifle, snatched the flag, and springing to the front, led the way up to the parapet, planted the staff in the top of the parapet, and lying down behind it, kept it flying over the rebel works for over a half hour, when finding himself left alone, he pulled up the staff and retreated under a storm of shot and shell being wounded three times before reaching our lines. Weak as he was from loss of blood, he positively refused to be carried to the hospital or to have his wounds treated or to surrender the flag to any one until he could turn it over to the survivors of his regiment. Accordingly he was sent over in an ambulance to find them and when the boys cheered him, he simply said: "Boys I only did my

Letter from Christian A. Fleetwood to the Secretary of War, January 15, 1900, Washington, D.C. Page 1; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

duty. The old flag never touched the ground."

A Medal of Honor was issued to him by General Gilmore, commanding the Department; but by some oversight, the case was never brought to the attention of the War Dept. This oversight was only discovered by me within the past few weeks in looking up data for the Paris Exposition Negro Exhibit. While not serving in that Department, the facts in the case are perfectly familiar to me, and we are personal friends of long standing, hence my desire to see justice done in this award. I beg leave to refer you further in support:

1. To Rebellion Records Series 1, Vol. 28, pt. 1, page 362. Report made by Col. E. N. Hollowell, Commanding 54th Mass. Vols. to Genl. Seymour Commanding U. S. Forces Morris Island, S. C. under date Nov. 7, '63.
2. "History of the Negro Race in America," (George W. Williams) page 330. Copy of communication under date Oct. 15, '63, addressed by Milton S. Littlefield, Col. Commanding 54th Mass. Vols. to Col. A. S. Brown, Jr., Military Secretary to his Excellency John A. Andrew, Gov. Mass.
3. "Negro Troops in the Rebellion," pp. 199-200, relative to the award of a medal by General Gilmore. (All in Library of War Department).
4. Affidavit of John W. M. Appleton, formerly Capt. Commanding Co. A, 54th Mass Vols. Now Brig. Gen. and Adjutant General State of West Va.

Letter from Christian A. Fleetwood to the Secretary of War, January 15, 1900, Washington, D.C. Page 2; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

3

5. Affidavit of Chas. H. Harrison, formerly of Co. C, 54th Mass.
Vols. and

6. Affidavit of Lewis H. Douglass, formerly sergt. Major 54th Mass.
Vols,

And respectfully petition your favorable consideration and speedy
award.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully,

Christian A. Fleetwood

Formerly Sergt. Major 4th U. S. C. T.

Letter from Christian A. Fleetwood to the Secretary of War, January 15, 1900, Washington, D.C. page 3; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

LEWIS H. DOUGLASS,
Real Estate Broker,
609 F ST. N. W.,
(Room 11.)

Washington, D. C. Jan'y 15 1900

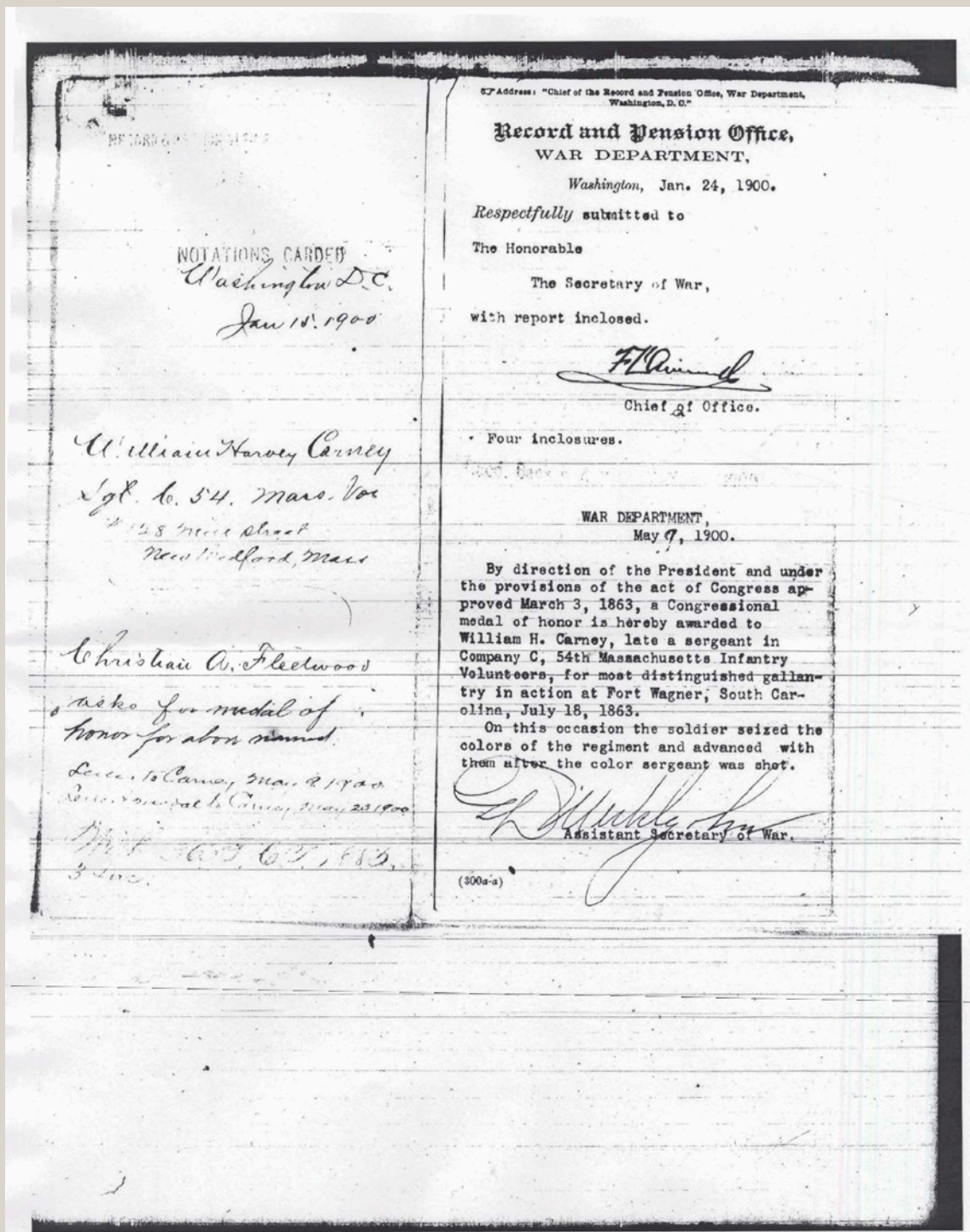
I Lewis H. Douglass now of Washington, D. C.,
was on July 18, 1863 Sergeant Major of the
54th Mass. Infy. Co. and was on that date
engaged with my regiment in the assault
on Fort Wagner, Morris Island, South Carolina.
I have read the affidavits of John W. M. Appleton
and Charles H. Harrison as to the part taken
by Sergt. Wm. H. Carney of Co. C. 54th Mass
Infy. From personal observation and in-
formation I certify that the affidavits are true
statements of the facts in regard to Carney's
gallantry at Fort Wagner. My position on
the left of the regiment was such that I was
some distance from the color guard. I how-
ever ^{saw} Carney when he came to the rear
and when he was the recipient of the plau-
dit of his comrades for his pluck in keep-
ing the colors from trailing in the dust.

Lewis H. Douglass

Given and subscribed to before me this 15th
day Jan'y 1900

J. J. Nelligan
Notary Public

Statement of Lewis H. Douglass, January 15, 1900, Washington, D.C.; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.



Document from the Record and Pension Office, War Department, January 24, 1900, Washington, D.C. to the Honorable Secretary of War; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT: Medal of honor.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON,

FILE NO. R. & P. 574146.

May 9, 1900.

Mr. William H. Carney,
128 Mill Street,
New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Sir:

I have the honor to advise you that, by direction of the President, and under the provisions of the act of Congress approved March 3, 1863, a Congressional medal of honor has this day been awarded you for most distinguished gallantry in action at Fort Wagner, South Carolina, July 18, 1863, the following being a statement of the particular service rendered on that occasion:

"This soldier, then a sergeant, Company C, 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, seized the colors of the regiment and advanced with them after the color sergeant was shot."

The medal will be forwarded to you, by registered mail, as soon as it shall have been suitably engraved.

Very respectfully,

Assistant Secretary of War.

Document from the Assistant Secretary of War, War Department, Washington, D.C., May 9, 1900, to Mr. William H. Carney; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

New Bedford
May 25, 1900

T. C. Sims
Chief Record & Pension Office,
Sir,

I am the honor to
acknowledge the receipt
this day of one Congressional
Medal, as awarded to me
by direction of President.
For which allow me to
thank you for the attention
paid.

I am, Yours respectfully
Wm. H. Carney.

128 Mill St.,

Acknowledgement letter from Wm. H. Carney, New Bedford, May 25, 1900, to the Chief Record & Pension Office; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.



New Bedford
May 26, 1900.

W. D. Meiklejohn,
Asst. Sec. of War, Sir.

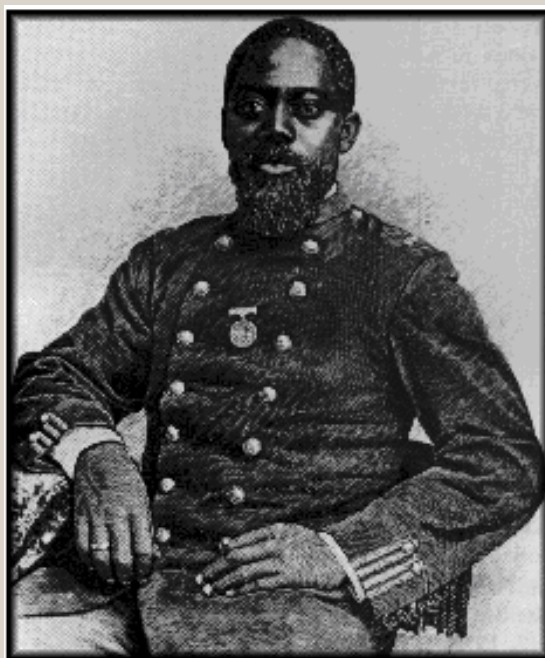
Your of May 9th came duly
to hand, informing me of the
award of a Congressional
Medal, by direction of the President.
I have the honor ^{and pleasure} to
acknowledge the receipt of the
same fully engraved, for
which allow me to return
thanks for your kind attention.
I assure you that I prize
it very highly.

I am, very respectfully,
Wm. H. Carney
125 Mill St.

Acknowledgement letter from Wm. H. Carney, New Bedford, May 26, 1900, to the Assistant Secretary of War; Documents Relating to the Military and Naval Service of Blacks Awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor from the Civil War to the Spanish American War, National Archives Microfilm Publication M929, Roll 1, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.



Buffalo Soldiers & Indian Wars, online version on November 2, 2006, available at:
<http://www.buffalosoldier.net/>



William Carney, Sergeant: Civil War, (commercial site), online version on November 2, 2006,
available at:
http://www.isomedia.com/homes/bhd2/william_carney.htm