

The Purple Heart and Oscar Burton [O.B.] Thomas

The Purple Heart - then called the Badge of Military Merit - originated during the Revolutionary War. Three soldiers from Washington's army received the award. After the Revolutionary War, no more Americans soldiers received the Badge of Military Merit.

Although a number of private efforts were made to have the medal reinstituted, it wasn't until January 7, 1931 that General Douglas MacArthur reopened the case. His object was to have a new medal issued on the bicentennial of George Washington's birth.

"A wound which necessitates treatment by a medical officer and which is received in action with an enemy, may in the judgment of the commander authorized to make the award be construed as resulting from a singularly meritorious act of essential service."

At that time the Navy Department did not authorize the issue of the Purple Heart, but Franklin D. Roosevelt amended that. By Executive Order on December 3, 1942, the award was extended to the Navy, Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard beginning December 6, 1941.

President Harry S. Truman retroactively extended eligibility to the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard to April 5, 1917, to cover World War I.

Oscar Burton Thomas was awarded the Purple Heart retroactively for wounds received in battle on July 26, 1918 during the First World War. His name is engraved on the



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The Purple Heart - Then and Now {continued}

WWI-39

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President John F. Kennedy extended eligibility on April 25, 1962, to “any civilian national of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with an armed force..., has been, or may hereafter be, wounded.”

The Victory Medal

The photograph below is of the actual medal awarded to Oscar Burton Thomas. The ribbon at this date has become quite frayed. Notes about the history of the Victory Medal, and the specific bars on this one, continue on the next page.



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The Victory Medal

WWI-40

The World War I Victory Medal was awarded for honorable service on active duty at any time between April 6, 1917 and November 11, 1918. Battle clasps were awarded for each of the major operations for those individuals actually present. O. B. Thomas' Victory Medal carries bars for the following three major battles of the First World War in which he was actively involved.

Champagne-Marne: 18 Jul - 6 Aug 1918

Aisne-Marne: 18 Jul - 6 Aug 1918

Defensive Sector

The actual Medal shown on the preceding page probably dates from early 1919, and so is almost one hundred years old. The ribbon shows some deterioration from age.

The three pictures below provide a clearer image of this medal {without bars}, both front and back.



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WORLD WAR I VICTORY MEDAL



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