

Obama cast Pall over First Medal of Honor and Lincoln Administration

On June 18, 1862 at half past four in the afternoon the Confederates executed by hanging, Union soldiers Private Charles "Phillip" Shadrach and Private George Davenport Wilson. They were tried by court-martial and convicted as spies, bridge burners and engine thieves. Their execution was for their participation in the Andrews Raid on April 12, 1862 and the taking of the locomotive the "General" at Big Shanty, Georgia. On March 25, 1863 Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton and President Abraham Lincoln awarded the surviving repatriated volunteers of this daring raid the very First Medal of Honor. Secretary of War Stanton declared that, as they become known, all the men of this party shall receive this award.

The grounds for the award, as written in the record of the 66th Congress under "General Staff Corps and Medal of Honor, Case No. 947 states: "**One of 22 men**, including two civilians who, by the direction of General Mitchel, penetrated nearly 200 miles south into the enemy's territory and captured a railroad train at Big Shanty, Ga. in an attempt to destroy the bridges and track between Chattanooga and Atlanta. The evidence found seems to unite in showing that 22 of the party arrived at the rendezvous in Chattanooga and actually entered the enemy's country and took part in the subsequent operations of the expedition. They succeeded in capturing the train, but were caught after running about 100 miles and forced to abandon their cars and flee to the woods, and the whole 22 were captured. The records show that eight of these men were executed as spies" including Private Shadrach and Private Wilson.

On January 28, 2008, the Medal of Honor was authorized for Private Shadrach and Private Wilson under Public Law H.R. 4986; sec 564 and 565 respectively. Although these men have been jointly recognized by this legislation and recommended by the Armed Services and the Department of Defense, the President has failed to act. The Armed Services and Department of Defense have now spent the last four years reconsidering whether to again make a recommendation to the President. Or, perhaps wait for a better opportunity to ensure heroism, valor, the fidelity of the First Medal of Honor and that the intentions of Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton and President Lincoln are preserved.

On June 18th, the anniversary of Private Shadrach and Private Wilson's sacrifice, President Obama again failed to acknowledge these soldiers. Men who distinguished themselves through conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States. A daring incursion into the heart of the Confederacy, that if successful, many historians and military strategist believe may have ended the War of the Rebellion within a year.

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