

Mary E. Walker

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker

Only Woman to Receive the Medal of Honor



Dr. Mary Walker

Prior to the First Battle of Bull Run in Virginia on July 21, 1861, only five soldiers and one sailor had earned Medals of Honor. In the Battle of Bull Run, eleven soldiers and Civilian Contract Surgeon Mary Walker earned the Medal of Honor. Dr. Walker was cited for her service in not only the Battle of Bull Run, but also in the Hospital in Washington, DC, as well as continued service in Tennessee (September 1863), Richmond, Virginia, and the Battle of Atlanta (September 1864). She was a prisoner of war of the Confederate Forces from April 10 – August 12, 1864. Her citation notes: “(Dr. Walker) has rendered valuable service to the Government, and her efforts have been earnest and untiring in a variety of ways. She was assigned to duty and served as an assistant surgeon in charge of female prisoners at Louisville, Kentucky, upon the recommendation of Major Generals Sherman and Thomas, and faithfully served as a contract surgeon in the service of the United States. She has devoted herself with much patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and in hospitals, to the detriment of her own health, and has also endured hardships as a prisoner of war four months in a Southern prison while acting as a contract surgeon.”

Mary Walker was the first and only woman to receive the Medal of Honor. She is one of eight civilians to receive the award.

Rank and organization:

Contract Acting Assistant Surgeon (civilian), U. S. Army. Places and dates: Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861; Patent Office Hospital, Washington, D.C., October 1861;

Chattanooga, Tenn., following Battle of Chickamauga, September 1863; Prisoner of War, April 10, 1864-August 12, 1864, Richmond, Va.; Battle of Atlanta, September 1864. Entered service at Louisville, Ky. Born: 26 November 1832, Oswego County, N.Y.

Citation:

Whereas it appears from official reports that Dr. Mary Elizabeth Walker, a graduate of medicine, "has rendered valuable service to the Government, and her efforts have been earnest and untiring in a variety of ways," and that she was assigned to duty and served as an assistant surgeon in charge of female prisoners at Louisville, KY., upon the recommendation of Major-Generals Sherman and Thomas, and faithfully served as a contract surgeon in service of the United States, and has devoted herself with much patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and hospitals, to the detriment of her own health, and has also endured hardships as a prisoner of war four months in a Southern prison while acting as contract surgeon; and whereas by reason of her not being a commissioned officer in the military service, a brevet or honorary rank cannot, under existing laws, be conferred upon her; and



Whereas in the opinion of the President and

honorable recognition of her services and sufferings should be made: It is ordered, that a testimonial thereof shall be hereby made and given to the said Dr. Mary E. Walker, and that the usual Medal of Honor for meritorious services be given her.

Given under my hand in the city of Washington, D.C., this 11th day of November, A.D. 1865.

*Andrew Johnson,
President*

Birth: November 26, 1832, at Oswego, NY

Home Town: Louisville, KY

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