

# THE ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

An Account of Sergeant William Brown

Who Brought His Badge of Merit

to Columbia, Ohio

*by*

MARIE DICKORÉ, A.M.



*Published by the*

SOCIETY OF COLONIAL WARS IN THE STATE OF OHIO  
CINCINNATI, OHIO



The original Badge of Merit



**The present Purple Heart.**

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1943

OTHER WORKS BY

MARIE DICKORÉ

*General Joseph Kerr of Chillicothe, "Ohio's Lost Senator,"*  
*Two Unpublished Letters of Thomas Jefferson Found in Ohio*

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This is Number \_\_\_\_\_  
of the first 500 copies printed of  
THE ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

## FOREWORD

Two years ago the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Ohio published a booklet entitled "Two Unpublished Letters of Thomas Jefferson Found in Ohio," which was edited by Miss Marie Dickoré, of Cincinnati. In the foreword it was stated that the Society hoped to gather more material of a kindred nature, which might be of historical interest and value and which would be issued in similar form.

For reasons then given the Society has found few sources in Ohio of records or journals pertaining to the colonial period, which have not already appeared in print. There are undoubtedly many letters in private collections which date from that time. There may likewise be diaries kept by individuals and still in the possession of their descendants, which are entertaining and possess a certain historical value, but they are not often deserving of publication. It is believed that further investigation may reveal more material of that kind which should be preserved.

There was a period in the history of the Northwest Territory when pioneers from the eastern colonies were coming here in great numbers. This was especially true of the years during and immediately following the War of the Revolution. Men and women migrating to the Western Country carried with them, in addition to clothing, furniture and other household belongings, mementoes and souvenirs of their former homes. Among these were relics of the War for Independence and the French and Indian War. The people who brought such things frequently had participated in both conflicts.

In conducting her researches for this Society Miss Dickoré discovered some time since that one of the earliest settlers in what is now Hamilton County, Ohio, was Sergeant William Brown, of Connecticut, who had been one of three original recipients of the Order of the Purple Heart established by General George Washington in 1782. The badge of this order of merit was to be bestowed only upon those enlisted men and non-commissioned officers who had earned it by valorous conduct. For many years no award had been given, but it was revived in 1932, and during the present war there have been many who have received the honor.

Miss Dickoré likewise learned that William Brown became an active and useful citizen of this community; that he was of good colonial family and had many prominent descendants in Ohio, one of whom was himself awarded the 1932 Purple Heart. In view of these facts, the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Ohio has felt that it would be wise and appropriate to publish this account of the Order of the Purple Heart and of William Brown.

COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION,

Chalmers Hadley,  
Gordon Woods Thayer,  
Harry Brent Mackoy,  
*Chairman.*

## PREFACE

On May 3, 1783, one hundred and sixty years ago, Sergeant William Brown, of Stamford, Connecticut, received the second Purple Heart, the badge of merit originated by General George Washington and bestowed by him for meritorious action performed in the Revolutionary War. He had successfully led a "forlorn hope" at the Siege of Yorktown.

As the years passed the decoration was forgotten and only a fortunate chance brought its meager history to light in the early 1920's in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division. So much interest was aroused by its story that the badge of the Purple Heart was revived by President Herbert Hoover, February 22, 1932, to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of Washington's birth and the War Department order to that effect was signed by General Douglas MacArthur. A new medal was then created which is now given to those wounded in the present war.

One of William Brown's descendants, Ruth Punshon Schroth, and her husband, Herbert H. Schroth, brought to my attention the facts that Brown had been an early pioneer of Columbia, Ohio, and that his Purple Heart had been in the family of his youngest daughter, Isabella. Various other descendants have been very helpful and from Col. Frank J. Schneller, Junior Vice-Commander, 2d Zone, of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Inc. we have received the photograph of the original Badge of Merit and much valuable information.

Filling in the history of Patriot Brown has been a task involving research into everything available about early Columbia, but a rather definite picture has resulted of the fifteen busy years Brown lived in this frontier settlement. The few writers of the period mentioned him in terms showing that he was one of the leading spirits in civic and military activities, taking his place beside Benjamin Stites, John S. Gano and Oliver Spencer.

Private collections and those in the Hamilton County, Ohio, Court House, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Library, Cincinnati Public Library, Ohio Historical and Philosophical Society, Library of Congress and United States War Department have been consulted

We trust this little publication not only adds its share of known facts but will encourage further research into the history of the other known recipients of the badge of the Purple Heart which General George Washington created to "open to all the road to Glory in a patriot army and a free country."

MARIE DICKORÉ.

Cincinnati, Ohio,  
May 3, 1943.

# CHAPTER I

## *THE ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART*

The Purple Heart, badge of the Military Order of Merit established by General George Washington, on August 7, 1782, with the significant words, "The road to Glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all." is the coveted badge of the enlisted men and non-commissioned officers fighting on every front in the United States Service.

By his order Washington created the oldest decoration for valor on the battle field except the Cross of St. George of Russia and for the first time in the history of the United States Army an honor badge for distinguished service was provided for enlisted men and non-commissioned officers. Washington's decree made the order perpetual and retro-active with these words, "This order is also to have retrospect to the earliest days of the war, and to be considered as a permanent one," However, it was obscured for about one hundred and thirty-five years, principally because the Book of Merit was lost, perhaps destroyed when the City of Washington was burned in the War of 1812.

In three American families a bit of purple-sprigged silk or faded purple cloth was proudly treasured together with the tradition that it had been bestowed by General George Washington upon a Revolutionary War hero for exceptional valor. These traditions were not substantiated by government data until, about 1920, some scorched papers came to light in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress which gave a clue to three patriots. Only two badges are known to exist today and the names and deeds of but three recipients are known. One of these badges of the Military Order of the Purple Heart came with its proud possessor, Sergeant William Brown, to Columbia (now part of Cincinnati), Ohio, in 1789, when the settlement was an outpost in the western country. Although the badge was nothing more substantial than a piece of dull purple cloth, cut heart-shaped and embroidered with the word "MERIT," it was so charged with patriotic significance that its influence has carried on down through one hundred and sixty years. Today the revived Order of the Purple Heart is a handsome medal of gold and purple enamel and honors the heroes of the two recent world wars.

The three gallant Revolutionary soldiers upon whom General George Washington bestowed this signal honor and of whom we know anything were Sergeant Elijah Churchill, Sergeant William Brown and Sergeant Daniel Bissell,

all of Connecticut. The meager facts gleaned in the Library of Congress were published, in 1924, by John C. Fitzpatrick, assistant chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, in his "Spirit of the Revolution." In the following year a coat of faded blue homespun on which was pinned a badge of purple sprigged silk edged in silver braid was given to the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Hampshire and prompted that organization to reprint the Fitzpatrick article with the known documents about the order.

General Orders. August 7. 1782. General George Washington:

"Headquarters, Newburgh  
Wednesday, August 7, 1782

"The General, ever desirous to cherish a virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings over the left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding. Not only instances of unusual gallantry, but also of extraordinary fidelity and essential Service in any way shall meet with a due reward. Before this favor can be conferred on any man, the particular fact, or facts, on which it is to be grounded must be set forth to the Commander-in-Chief accompanied with certificates from the Commanding officers of the regiment and brigade to which the Candidate for reward belonged, or other incontestable proofs, and upon granting it, the name and regiment of the person with the action so certified are to be enrolled in the book of merit which will be kept at the orderly office. Men who have merited this last distinction to be suffered to pass all guards and sentinels which officers are permitted to do.

"The road to glory in a patriotic army and a free country is thus open to all-this order is also to have retrospect to the earliest stages of the war, and to be considered *as* a permanent one."

Certificate accompanying the Purple Heart Badge:

"George Washington Esquire  
General and Commander in Chief of the Forces  
of the United States of America & &  
To all to whome these presents shall come, sendeth Greetings

"Whereas it hath ever been an established maxim in the American Service that the Road to Glory was open to All, that Honorary Rewards and Distinctions were the greatest Stimuli to virtuous actions, and that distinguished Merits should not pass unnoticed or unrewarded:

and

"Whereas, a Board of Officers whereof Brigadier General Greaton is President, bath been constituted and appointed for the purpose of investigating the several pretensions of the Candidates for the Badge of Military Merit; and said Board having reported in the Words following, viz.

"That Serjeant Elijah Churchill of the 2d Regiment of Light  
"Dragoons, in the several Enterprises against Fort St. George and  
"Fort Slongo on Long Island, in their opinion acted a very con-  
"spicuous and singularly meritorious part, that at the Head of  
"each Body of Attack, he not only acquitted himself with great  
"gallantry, firmness and address: but that the surprize in one  
"instance, and the success of the attack in the other, proceeded  
"in a considerable degree from his Conduct and management"; --

Now therefore Know Ye, that the aforesaid Serjeant Elijah Churchill, hath fully and truly deserved and hath been properly invested with the Honorary Badge of Military Merit, and is authorized & entitled to pass and repass all Guards & Military Posts as fully and amply as any Commissioned officer whatever; And is Hereby further Recommended to that favorable Notice which a Brave and Faithful Soldier deserves from his Countrymen.

Given under my hand & Seal at the  
Head Quarters of the American Army  
this first day of May, 1783.

By His Excellency's  
Command  
Jona. Trumbull, Jr., Secy."

This appears to have been the original form from which the scribes made copies for the men. It is endorsed.

"Certificate for The Badge of Military Merit  
granted to Sergeant Churchill, 2d Light Dragoons  
to Sergt. Brown, 5th Connt.  
to Sergeant Bissel, 2d Connt."

Much interest was aroused by these publications and an endeavor has been made to locate descendants of the three patriots and learn what family tradition could add to the known facts.

Sergeant William Brown's Purple Heart and a decoration received for valor at the storming of Stony Point were in the Matthews family of Glendale, Ohio. Bishop Paul Matthews, a great-grandson, was the last to possess this priceless relic, but in moving about from one city to another it was lost. Daniel Bissell's badge was destroyed when his house burned. Churchill's badge was attached to his application for a pension and for many years it was assumed that it had been returned as requested. Recently it was found in Michigan in the possession of a great-grandson.

When plans were going forward to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of Washington's birth there was much agitation to continue his plan to perpetuate the honoring of the enlisted man and the non-commissioned officer as part of this celebration. Accordingly President Herbert Hoover issued an order to the Secretary of War to revive this Order of the Purple Heart to be given to heroes of the World War. After Pearl Harbor it was again revived for gallant service in the Pacific, later for valor on all fronts of the second World War. It is a matter of great pride that the 1932 order went out over the signature of General Douglas MacArthur.

GENERAL ORDERS  
No.3

WAR DEPARTMENT  
Washington. February 22. 1932.

PURPLE HEART:-By order of the President of the United States, the Purple Heart. established by General George Washington at Newburgh, August 7, 1782, during the War of the Revolution, is hereby revived out of respect to his memory and military achievements.

By order of the Secretary of War,

Douglas MacArthur,  
General,  
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

C. H. Bridges,  
Major General,  
The Adjutant General.

This order by General MacArthur has the honor of consummating General George Washington's wish that the Purple Heart be a permanent decoration.

## Chapter II

### ***WILLIAM BROWN IN CONNECTICUT***

In tracing the background of William Brown we learn that his great-great-grandfather, Francis Brown, was born about 1630 in England. This Francis was apprenticed to Henry Wolcott of Windsor and in 1649 bought out the rest of his time. In 1651 he was a small trader in Connecticut and in 1656 bought and sold land in Farmington. He settled in Stamford, Connecticut, where he married Martha, widow of John Chapman, on October 17, 1657. We can learn of only one child, Joseph, to whom he gave land in Stamford in 1683, and again in 1686 when Joseph was living in Rye.<sup>(1)</sup>

Francis Brown had an unquenchable love of liberty and a deep appreciation of the rights of the individual. In 1662 he headed a petition to the General Court at New Haven asking for the franchise for all citizens, for an equalization of the rates of the several colonies under jurisdiction of New Haven and for a school in the colony. In 1663 he was named a constable at Stamford to the discomfort of his opponents. However, he stood in high favor with his party and was sent to the General Assembly in 1665, in 1667 and again in 1669. He served in the militia and in 1669 was named a selectman for the town of Stamford. In 1670 he served on a committee to find a teacher and organize a school, and in 1672 was one of three citizens appointed by the town council to treat with the Indians.

Francis Brown's son, Joseph, was listed as one of the proprietors of Stamford in 1683. Of his eight children, Jonathan was born in that town on May 14, 1701. Jonathan married Mary Slason, November 19, 1730, and of their six children a son, Jonathan (father of William Brown), was born in 1735. This Jonathan married Abigail Hanford on July 1, 1760, and of their children William was the first-born. His birthday was February 12, 1761, and he was destined to become one of the heroes of the American Revolution and to receive the Purple Heart from General George Washington.

William Brown's mother was Abigail Hanford, and his wife, Ruth, was also a member of this family whose ancestor, the Reverend Thomas Handford, migrated from England, where he was born in 1633, to Scituate, Massachusetts, in 1643. He was ordained at Norwalk, Connecticut, in 1652, where he was listed as a freeman in 1650. He married twice. His first wife was Hannah Newberry, and his second was Mary Ince, widow of Jonathan Miles, whom he married at New Haven on October 22, 1661. The "d" of Handford was dropped by the family prior to 1665.<sup>(2)</sup>

The third Hanford to marry into the Brown family was Thaddeus, born in 1780, son of Ebenezer and Lucretia Hanford, who married Abigail, eldest daughter of William and Ruth Brown. Thaddeus and Abigail together with three grown children are buried in the little pioneer graveyard of the old Salem Church near Mount Washington, Hamilton County, Ohio. Of this family we have learned only the name of Lieutenant William Brown Hanford in the United States Ordnance Department who traces his descent from Edward, oldest son of Thaddeus and Abigail Hanford.

The pioneer characteristics and fine traits of both the Browns and the Hanfords burgeon in their descendants. Each war has found them in the United States Service fighting to preserve that liberty which their immigrant ancestors sought in America.

## CHAPTER III

### ***SERGEANT WILLIAM BROWN IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION***

William Brown of Stamford, Connecticut, just turned sixteen on February 12th, enlisted on April 9, 1777, in Litchfield for the duration of the war. He was a member of Captain Samuel Comstock's Company of the 8th Regiment, Connecticut Line, which was raised in January of that year.

These men went into the field at Camp Peekskill for drill and training. In September they were ordered into Pennsylvania to serve under General McDougall, They fought at Germantown, October 4, 1777, and wintered at Valley Forge. In the campaign of 1778 they took part in the Battle of Monmouth, June 28<sup>th</sup>, later encamped at White Plains and wintered at Redding. In the summer of 1779 the troops were stationed on the east side of the Hudson and when General Washington laid plans for the storming of Stony Point and called General Anthony Wayne in to take charge of this attack some of the brave boys from Connecticut were picked and detached to Meig's Light Regiment for this precarious expedition which took place on the night of July 15, 1779. <sup>(1)</sup>

Family tradition relates a story about a medal or a rosette won by William Brown for valor at the storming of Stony Point. However official records on this are lacking and a careful check of Dawson and Johnson brings forth no information that the enlisted men or the non-commissioned officers received decorations.

After wintering at Morristown the 8th Regiment, Connecticut Line, summered with the main army on the Hudson and after wintering 1780-1, at "Camp Connecticut Village" above Robinson's House, it was consolidated with the 5th Connecticut Regiment for formation in the big and final campaign of the war. Sergeant William Brown's name was still on the roll of Captain Comstock's Company in February, 1783. He had advanced in rank steadily from the time of his enlistment. He was made a corporal on May 8, 1779, and a sergeant on August 1, 1780. In July of 1783 he was on his way home.

The complete story of how young William Brown was chosen to lead the handful of patriot boys in the "forlorn hope" at the Siege of Yorktown or how they carried it out successfully is told nowhere in detail. We can only piece it out from such meager records as are at hand and invest them with the glowing colors of our imagination.

General Lafayette moved in upon Cornwallis who had entrenched himself at Yorktown awaiting aid from the British fleet. General George Washington arrived with more American and French troops to take command. It was a crucial time. Two British redoubts impeded the progress of the troops. Of these the French soldiers were to take the outer redoubt and the Americans under Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hamilton were to storm the inner redoubt next to the river. Strategy necessitated a surprise move and so a small group of a dozen or more of the bravest soldiers were chosen to lead in a swift "forlorn hope" to surprise the British and try to force an opening for Hamilton's men. Washington knew well his ardent patriotic soldiers. Sergeant William Brown was placed in command of this "forlorn hope." Not waiting for the abatis to be cut away or the obstacles to be cleared, young Brown and his little band swarmed over it in the face of a murderous musket fire, yelling and clamoring to the great confusion of the British who fell back, thus allowing Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton to follow up the advantage created by Sergeant Brown and his men. The redoubt was captured in a brief fifteen minutes. The "forlorn hope" was a thrilling success. Called so because there was grave doubt in the minds of the officers that the men would return alive, it is one of the cherished pages of history as written by the Continental Army.

Soldiers do not waste many words on deeds of heroism and the simplicity with which Sergeant Brown's achievement is recorded by the board of five officers chosen by Washington to pass on the candidates for the Purple Heart is in itself significant of the deed and of the pride in it by his superior officers. Major Nicholas Fish, a member of this board, took part in the assault on the redoubt at Yorktown, hence had first-hand knowledge of Sergeant Brown's mettle. On April 24, 1783, this board reported favorably on the two non-commissioned officers who were the first to be so honored, Elijah Churchill and William Brown, both sergeants from Connecticut.

Of Brown they said,

"2d. Serjeant Brown, of the late 5th Connecticut Regiment, in the assault of the Enemy's left Redoubt at York-town, in Virginia, on the evening of the 14th of October, 1781, conducted a forlorn hope with great bravery, propriety and deliberate firmness, and that his general character appears unexceptionable.

"The Board are therefore of opinion that Serjeant Churchill of the 2d. Regiment of Light Dragoons, and Serjeant Brown, of the late 5th Connecticut Regiment, are severally entitled to the badge of Military merit, and do therefore recommend them to his Excellency, the Commander-in-Chief, as suitable Characters for that honorary distinction.

J. Groaton, Gen., Prest."

The report was approved in General Orders by the Commander-in-Chief, dated,

"Sunday. April 27th, 1783

"The Board appointed to take into consideration the claims of the Candidates for the Badge of Merit Report: That Serjeant Churchill of the 2d. regt. of Light Dragoons, and Serjtant Brown, of the late 5th Connecticut regt, are in their opinion severally entitled to the badge of Military merit, and do therefore recommend them to his Excellency the Commander-in-chief, as suitable characters for that honorary distinction. The Commander-in-chief is pleased to order the before named Serjeant Elijah Churchill of the 2d. regt. of Light Dragoons, and Serjt. Brown, of the late 5th Connecticut regiment, to be each of them invested with the badge of merit. They will call at Head Quarters on the third day of May, when the necessary Certificates & Badges will be ready for them."

In conformity with these orders the successful candidates were invested with the honorary Badge of Military Merit and received the necessary certificates at Headquarters on the third of May. 1783. The badges were as described in the general orders of the 7th and 11th of August, 1782. A copy of the certificates is among the papers in the Library of Congress.

It is disappointing that no record has as yet been found that gives us a picture of this first ceremony in which Churchill and Brown, the first two recipients of the Purple Heart, were invested with this memorable badge of honor established by the youngest democracy then in the world. Since they were invested at the same ceremony we accept the fact that their badges were identical. Materials were scarce in the war-ridden country and the ladies were called upon to assist. Washington left it to their ingenuity to provide "purple cloth or silk" and an "edging of narrow lace or binding."

The Churchill badge which has come to light in recent years is of faded purple woolen material embroidered with the word "MERIT" which is wreathed with a vine of leaves. This matches the description given by Bishop Paul Matthews of the badge treasured in the William Brown family. We have no idea what the third badge looked like which was bestowed upon Sergeant Daniel Bissell on June 8, 1783. It is said that his Purple Heart was destroyed when his house burned. It may be the one which is in the Museum at Exeter, New Hampshire.

Weary after six years of fighting, of hunger and cold and privation, William Brown, no longer the young lad of sixteen years, full of the joy of living and the fighting spirit of 1776, trudged homeward in July, 1783, to Connecticut. He was now a man, tried and true by six years of hardships endured for the sake of that freedom and patriotic zeal that burned in his veins, a heritage from Francis Brown who had fought the lurking Indians and helped conquer the wilderness that his descendants might have a home. Sergeant Brown carried in his pocketbook thirteen government notes representing his pay for six years and two months of service, and on the facings of his coat he wore proudly the badge of purple which proclaimed that he had served his country uncommonly well, In his heart he carried the picture of his lovely young cousin, Ruth Hanford, She was waiting for him and together they would establish a home in the country he had helped free.

The January 1, 1784, entry in the old Town Council Records of Stamford tells a quaint story: "William Brown, in a document stating that he had served the government as a soldier six years and two months, reports the loss of his pocketbook in July last, on the road to New Canaan, containing thirteen government notes, all his earnings for his military services. He asks to have the loss made up to him which was granted."<sup>(2)</sup> What a blow this loss must have been to him and how he and Ruth rejoiced when Town Council reimbursed him!

All the excitement of the past six years made Stamford seem a bit dull to the young soldier who had been so conspicuously honored by General George Washington. His companions in the service, too, were restless. There was much discussion of the new western lands that were being opened for settlement. Not only was land cheap but there was much to do there to clear the woods of Indians and the forest of trees. Stephen Betts, one of the boys who had seen service at Yorktown, the Clasons, the Millers, David Strong, Jacob Kingsbury and others were all anxious to try their luck in the new country, And there was talk that "Mad Anthony Wayne," whom they all adored, would be sent out to take charge of the military' forces,

Brown decided to throw in his lot with these neighbors. His money would go further and he could do better for his family. Ruth, too, was a brave pioneer spirit, eager to adventure into the unknown western country.

## CHAPTER IV

### *WILLIAM BROWN IN COLUMBIA*

Columbia on the Ohio was a lively little frontier settlement. It was the first stop after Marietta, hence every flatboat, ark, pirogue and keelboat laden with goods and settlers stopped here. Almost every day more families arrived and Fort Miami was crowded, often two or three families had to be accommodated in one apartment of the fort until cabins could be built.<sup>(1)</sup> By 1790 about fifty cabins had been built in Columbia.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Indians proved to be a real menace. Hunting deer, bear and other game for food, taking grain to the mill to be ground, gathering maple sap, cutting trees for new log cabins, all were hazardous for the white men. Many settlers were killed, women and children carried off as captives, cabins and crops fired, horses stolen. The Indians resented the intrusion of the white man into the Little Miami's fertile valley that had been the Indian's granary and their pathway to the fine hunting ground of Kentucky. In 1790 as many as one hundred and fifty men were under arms in Columbia to provide protection. Smaller stations or forts were built as out-posts against Indian depredations and to afford shelter when settlers, working in their fields in Turkey Bottom, were surprised by the enemy. A company of militia was organized and drilled regularly according to Baron von Steuben's manual. Non-compliance with the order to carry firearms to church and other gatherings was punishable by a fine. Life was not easy or luxurious but it offered a great future for the intrepid pioneer.

The little settlement grew in number of inhabitants whose leader, Major Benjamin Stites, anticipated the realization of his dream of a great city, the capital of the western country. In-lots and out-lots sold briskly. Stites gathered about him a group of men who had been distinguished in the East for civic or military service. They bought lots marked off on Stites' "plan of the Town of Columbia," meadow land for grazing and rich alluvial-soil fields in Turkey Bottom that yielded more bushels of corn to the acre than had been known in the East. In 1793-1794 Columbia had a considerable population, all the land was cleared and fenced and all available space planted or used for grazing and the number of armed men had been increased to two hundred.<sup>(3)</sup>

But when Dr. Daniel Drake wrote of Columbia in 1852 he called it "the early but extinct village of Columbia." He did not explain that floods, greater than those known of before, had wrecked Fort Miami and the early cabins, destroyed the crops and discouraged further settlement. Stites' untimely death in August, 1804, followed closely on October 23d by that of William Brown, left the little village without strong leadership. Cincinnati profited by this decline of Columbia whose leading men now moved down the river to the prosperous trading and shipping center.

We have no exact date for the arrival in Columbia of William and Ruth Hanford Brown. The United States Census of 1790 for Stamford, Connecticut, shows the name of Abigail Brown, widow. She was the mother of William Brown, but neither he nor his wife, Ruth, are listed as living there at that time. Major Stites' settlement at the mouth of the Little Miami seems to have attracted them and that they were among its earliest pioneers we learn from that prolific writer and historian of early days in the Miami Country, Dr. Daniel Drake. He mentioned them in two of his works. In an address before the Medical Library Association he stated. "\* \* \* Columbia, of which our first physicians were the only attendants. It was settled by Benjamin Stites, John S. Gano and their associates, thirty-eight days before Cincinnati. The memory of its early inhabitants is still fresh in my heart. The Ganas, Stites, Goforths, Spencers, Kibbeys, Smiths, Millers, Browns, Fosters, Dunlaveys, Reilys, Broadwells, Flinns and Hilditches were among the most accomplished or intrepid pioneers of Ohio."

In his "Memoirs of the Miami Country, 1779-1794," Dr. Drake, with the instinct of a physician for the course of human life in a community, recalls the first marriage and the first child born in Columbia, a son of Benjamin Stites, born early in 1789 and named John Gano Stites. Dr. Drake continues, "The first female child was born afterwards. She was named Ruth and is now the respectable wife of one of our fellow citizens, Samuel R. Miller, Esqr. Her father was William Brown, who had been an officer in the revolution and commander of a forlorn hope in the siege of Yorktown."<sup>(4)</sup>

As the bits of information, gathered here and there about Sergeant Brown and his family fall into place, the story of their lives takes on form and color. We picture the home site with its house comfortably large enough for William and Ruth and their children. We can see the various buildings, Brown's shop, the flower beds, the wood pile, Ruth's kitchen garden. We know the names of six of the children and hope that some day we will learn about the other three.

On the acre lot adjacent to the Browns, on the south, was the home of Thaddeus Hanford, husband of William and Ruth's eldest daughter, Abigail. This piece of property changed hands several times. In 1807 title to it was taken from Samuel Hilditch by Thaddeus Hanford who in turn conveyed it, May 31, 1810, to John Maphet for \$400. This deed gives us a clue to William Brown's occupation, because it notes that the lot is "bounded as follows, William Brown, Shoemaker, on the north, Col. Oliver Spencer on the east, and a cross street on the south and running with the street that leads from the stone school house to Cincinnati, to the place of beginning."

The school house has been lost to history but it was the Columbia Academy of which Brown was trustee together with Benjamin Stites, Samuel Hilditch, James Matthews and Edward Meeks, Jr. The "street that leads \* \* \* to Cincinnati" is now part of our Columbia Boulevard.

On June 6, 1810, Maphet sold the lot with its residence for \$400 to Vincent Shinn, Ruth Brown's second husband.

William Brown was one of the proprietors of Columbia as we learn from a Hamilton County record, dated Columbia, August 19, 1801, in which the proprietors, because of a dispute over the mode of taxation, relinquish the idea of establishing a town according to the plat made on paper by Benjamin Stites. As early as 1794, according to this instrument, the proprietors had given up the idea of a town here. Probably floods were the cause. Stites' signature is the first and William Brown's is the second. It seems that each settler in this new town bought one or two of the half-acre in-lots and a five-acre out-lot.

We do not find a record of Brown's first purchase of lots in Columbia according to this plan. We know he bought the acre, numbered 234 and 261, also another half-acre lot, No. 288, from Joseph Lambert, and these three lots were not included in the seventy-six lots of the estate when it was settled by the administrators. However, we do have a record of forty-five half-acre in-lots Brown bought for \$19.67 from John Cleves Symmes on March 24, 1798, and recorded in 1816 when his estate was in the courts for settling.

Next he bought eleven half-acre in-lots from William Burt, April 6, 1798, for \$175. Property in the little settlement had increased in value. On July 30, 1799, Brown bought twelve half-acre lots from Daniel Lambert for \$90, and on August 17, 1802, he bought eight half-acre in-lots from Benjamin Stites for \$57. His last purchase was the completion of the sale of the three half-acre lots, numbered 234, 261 and 288, from Joseph Lambert. The consideration was \$48.<sup>(5)</sup>

After his sudden death on October 23, 1804, Ruth Brown, his widow, and Thaddeus Hanford, were appointed administrators. On July 2, 1819, the seventy-six lots in Brown's estate, upon petition of the heirs, were ordered sold by the sheriff on order of the court.<sup>(6)</sup> The home site is not included in these seventy-six lots which were advertised in the newspaper but were sold separately by the administrators in 1825. From the court records of appraisal we learn that the land was valued at \$2300, a considerable increase over the \$341.67 he paid for the seventy-six lots.

The Sheriff's list of voters in Hamilton County for the year 1798 does not show the name of William Brown but in the following year when candidates for the General Assembly of the Northwest Territory were voted upon, the signature of "William Brown, Esqr." is shown and he voted for Aaron Caldwell and Francis Dunlavy who were elected. Among other names written in and for whom scattering votes were cast was that of "William Brown, Esqr." who received twelve votes.<sup>(7)</sup>

As a proprietor of Columbia and a leader in its civic life Brown was also called upon to serve Hamilton County. The Orphans Court of the "territory of the United States North West of the river, Ohio, Hamilton County," held its sessions in Cincinnati and met the first Tuesday of February, 1801, with the following judges sworn in, John Mercer, William Brown, Samuel Findlay, and Joseph Prince, Esquires. The court sat until March 4, 1801, when it adjourned.<sup>(8)</sup>

Columbia had the curious custom of boarding its poor at various farm houses, the pauper being sold at auction to the lowest bidder. Some of these bids did not exceed one dollar a week and this sum had to be worked out by the pauper. All matters relating to the overseeing of the poor were regulated by two of the justices of the peace and the records of a case have been preserved that came before William Brown for jurisdiction.<sup>(9)</sup>

Having a family of nine children their education was a task which Brown solved by organizing a school in Columbia. We know that John Reily taught school here and that Francis Dunlavey conducted some of the classes. In the deed by which Benjamin Stites conveyed the property on Third street, adjacent to the Presbyterian Burying Ground, to Daniel Hilditch, James Matthews, William Brown, Esqr., and Edward Meeks, Jr., as trustees of the School Society, recorded August 4, 1804, we learn about this "Stone School House."<sup>(10)</sup> It was advertised to be sold at auction the following August.<sup>(11)</sup>

In 1793 William Brown was actively interested in the building of roads to and from Columbia for the better protection of the settlements in the Miami Country. The Territorial Legislature ordered a road from Ephraim Kibbey's draw-well in Columbia to Crawfish Creek (now Delta Avenue), thence to Duck Creek, thence to White's Station, a distance of six miles. John Reily was appointed surveyor with William Brown and Aaron Mercer as assistants. A little later in the year Kibbey was appointed surveyor with Francis Dunlavey and William Brown as assistants to correct and improve the road from Cincinnati to Columbia. The road districts were laid out with Brown's house and his meadow as landmarks.

The Indians' ruthless incursions into the Miami Country forced the inhabitants of Cincinnati and Columbia to band together for their common protection. A fund was subscribed and large rewards offered for the "first ten Indian scalps with right ear appendant" taken between the 18th of April and the 25th of December, 1794. in the territory bounded by "the middle of the Ohio River, ten miles above the mouth of the Little Miami River directly northward the same distance from the Little Miami for twenty-five miles above where Harmar's trace first crosses the said Miami; thence due west, crossing the said little Miami, until it shall extend ten miles west of the great Miami, thence southwardly, keeping the distance of ten miles from the said great Miami, to the Ohio, to the beginning." Subscribers to this fund who brought in the first ten scalps were paid \$135; non-subscribers, "except the federal troops," receive \$100. For the second ten scalps subscribers were paid \$117 and non-subscribers \$95. The committee for Cincinnati consisted of Levi Woodward, Darius C. Orcutt and James Lyons. William Brown headed the

committee for Columbia and serving with him were Francis Dunlavey and John Reily. The advertisement ran several times during this period in the *Centinel of the Northwest Territory*, but no report has been found showing how many Indian scalps with right ear appendant were brought in.

Assessor Daniel Reeder's tax list for Columbia Township of Hamilton County for the year 1796 showed that there were two hundred and twenty-seven property holders with families in the little town. Among these was William Brown who owned property valued at \$234 and he was assessed eighty-five cents for taxes.<sup>(12)</sup> In this year we find that he served as appraiser for the estate of Ephraim Baker.

The Miami Country needed all its military men in the struggle against the Indians and Sergeant William Brown was looked to for assistance in drilling the men and in handling various emergencies. When President Washington sent General Anthony Wayne out to Cincinnati in the spring of 1793 to take charge of subduing the Indians one of Wayne's first acts was to call upon Columbia to furnish him with a "company of spies" which was raised and organized by Captain Ephraim Kibbey, Lieutenant William Brown and Ensign Ashbel Gray. This company of scouts was ordered to march to the headquarters of General Wayne's army at Greenville where they were kept busy learning the movements of the enemy and reporting them to the General. "The men were very much excited," writes Ezra Ferris, "over this prospect to serve."

None of this story is conjecture but as we try to fit together the known pieces of the picture of William Brown's life in Columbia, we have to use some inference to complete the details. We have noted the activity in road-building with which Brown was identified in 1793 and we have noted that he headed the Columbia committee in charge of awards for taking Indian scalps in 1794. Both were much needed in the protection against the savages. He was called to assist in the organization and command of this scout company under General Wayne but we have found no further information about him until 1797 when he became Adjutant of the militia under Colonel Oliver Spencer.

General Wayne was familiar with Brown's ability as a non-commissioned officer because Brown was one of the Connecticut men chosen to take part in the storming of Stony Point, and Wayne remembered the hero of the forlorn hope at Yorktown. It was but natural that the General should call Brown to his aid and that he took part in Wayne's campaign and was present at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. If this is true it was another significant achievement added to his record of Germantown, Valley Forge, Stony Point and Yorktown.

It was after Wayne's victory that Brown was called upon more and more to assist in the organization of the Hamilton County Militia. He was chosen adjutant to serve under his neighbor, Colonel Oliver Spencer; he was placed in charge of recruiting members for the militia; on June 1, 1803, he was named the first Major of the First Battalion of the Second Regiment of Militia, and on August 10, 1804, he was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel of the second Regiment by Governor Edward Tiffin.<sup>(13)</sup> The following month he was engaged in raising a troop of dragoons to serve under General James Findlay. But his useful career was cut short on October 23, 1804, by death.

The obituary in the *Western Spy*, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 31, 1804, gives us an understanding of his importance. "The community has lost a valuable citizen and the militia an excellent officer \* \* \* his activity and industry in the settlement of this country contributed not a little to its present enviable situation."

He was buried with full military honors. Alas, the grave is not marked and is no longer known. We believe, however, that, since he was a Presbyterian and because the little Presbyterian graveyard was next his land and to the school of which he was a trustee, that he was laid to rest in this lovely spot overlooking the broad Ohio River. Great floods have destroyed the early buildings of Columbia, the silt and debris carried by the waters have buried many of the headstones in the little pioneer graveyard. Some day it may be possible to probe the ground and perhaps find his headstone.

# CHAPTER V

## ***WILLIAM BROWN'S FAMILY***

According to the obituary in the October 31, 1804, issue of the *Western Spy*, "Col. William Brown left his widow and nine children to lament the loss of an affectionate husband and a tender parent." Of the nine children we have the names of but six, Abigail, Nancy, Ruth, William, Sarah and Isabella. The first three are not mentioned in the records of the Probate Court where Ruth Brown and Thaddeus Hanford filed their petition for letters of administration of Colonel Brown's estate. The estate was in the courts until September 19, 1825, when it was finally sold and the sale ordered recorded. Because many Hamilton County records were destroyed during the fire caused by the Court House riot of 1884, the story of Brown's estate is not clear. It appears that the commissioners who had been appointed to dispose of it refused to partition the thirty-eight acres because that would impair the value of the land; therefore, it was not until 1825 that a sale could be completed advantageously.

In the meantime, Ruth Brown married Vincent Shinn, son of Vincent and Elizabeth Budd Shinn, Quakers, of New Jersey, and a cousin of the Reverend Asa Shinn, founder of the Methodist Protestant Church. Vincent Shinn had come to Milford in the Little Miami Valley in 1804 and bought a farm from Richard C. Anderson in what is now Mount Washington, the easternmost suburb of Cincinnati. He settled in Columbia to work at his trade as a cabinetmaker and there met the Brown family. He and Ruth were married April 20, 1810, and lived in the Thaddeus Hanford homestead until Shinn cleared his farm and built a house in 1814. There they lived until Ruth died in 1836. They had no children.

The daughters of Ruth and William Brown married men who were of importance in their day. Each established her own family and the descendants are numbered among Cincinnati's proudest citizens. Romance tinged their lives and the colorful pages on which are written the stories of these five young pioneer women of Columbia would each make a delightful story of its own. Unfortunately we can only touch on the highlights in this limited brochure.

Abigail, the eldest daughter, was born in Connecticut and came with her parents to Columbia as a little girl of four years. Here in the frontier settlement she grew up and married Thaddeus Hanford (1780-1850), who also had come from Connecticut and was a relative of her mother. Their home was next door to Abigail's parental home but they must have moved to the eastern valley of the Little Miami for, as we have already noted, they are both buried in the little Salem Church cemetery near Mount Washington and here also sleep three of their grown children, Amanda (1813-1843), John (1816-1844), and Harriet A, (1821-1844). Abigail's headstone tells us that she died August 14, 1844. There was an older son, Edward (1807-1884), but we know nothing more of the family except that a great-grandson bearing the proud name of William Brown Hanford (1888- ), was in the United States Ordnance Department some years ago.

The second daughter, Nancy, was born in 1786, also in Connecticut and came as a tiny girl to Columbia with her parents. She married Reverend Oliver Langdon (1769-1828), of Red Bank, Columbia Township, on May 1, 1808. The Langdons were a New England family with a proud Revolutionary War record. Several of them had come from Vermont by wagon over the mountains and by flatboat down the Ohio, arriving at Columbia on December 23, 1806. They lived in part of Oliver Spencer's house near the tanyard until their cabin was built in the spring. The three brothers, John, Oliver and Solomon, bought three hundred acres on the Little Miami River between Duck Creek and the Red Bank. Six of Nancy and Oliver's eight children grew up and their descendants include the Langdon, Mattoon, Punshon, Hopkins, Schroth, Burton, Gates, Laws and Bailey families. Nancy died March 7, 1824, and her husband on September 21, 1828. Both are buried in the Fulton Presbyterian graveyard which is adjacent to the one established by her father next to the old stone school house.

Ruth, as reported by Dr. Daniel Drake, was the first white girl child born in Columbia. This was in 1789. She married Samuel R. Miller, son of Captain Edward Miller and his wife, Elizabeth Rockwell. Captain Miller was commander of Fort Washington during May and June of 1799. Later he and his family moved to Clermont County, Ohio. Young Samuel was a land owner in the Stites Purchase, was appointed one of the administrators of Benjamin Stites, served as one of the judges of the Circuit Court with Judge George O. Torrence, and, after he and Ruth had moved to Cincinnati, became recorder and then treasurer of the city. He was elected to the Ohio Legislature, first as representative and then as senator. In the War of 1812 he was appointed Lieutenant of the First Battalion of General Findlay's regiment and fought in the

Battle of the Mad River. Ruth survived him and died in 1860 at the home of her son-in-law, Peter Outcalt. The descendants of Ruth and Samuel include the Miller Dodd, and Outcalt connections. Judge Dudley Miller Outcalt, recently of the Hamilton County Common Pleas Court, is now (1943) Major Outcalt of the United States Air Forces.

The only son, William, born 1795 at Columbia, was too modest in his mode of living to leave any great record such as that of his illustrious father. He moved to Madison, Indiana, that busy town on the Ohio noted as a steamboat building center. Here his line died out with just a flare of charming romance nipped in the bud which prevented his granddaughter from becoming a "Second Lady of the Land" as the wife of a westerner who became Vice President of the United States. The romance frustrated by a too-strict mother was cherished by both into lonely old age and death.

The second youngest daughter, Sarah, born in 1799, married the scion of a wealthy Massachusetts family, young Nathaniel Ropes IV of Salem. Carrying on the traditions of his merchant-prince forebears, Nathaniel sought his fortune inland rather than at sea. The Little Miami valley with its fertile fields producing more golden corn per acre than was credited in the east, drew him like a magnet. He was impressed with the mills and the attendant flourishing business of shipping grain, flour and whiskey. When the famous Halley Mills at the mouth of Clough Creek were offered for sale to settle the estate of Samuel Halley who had died intestate, young Ropes saw his opportunity and grasped it. The mills, distilleries, cooperage, the largest stone house in the valley (still standing with its three stories and cellar), and the surrounding fields and orchards promised gold. The connected mercantile business house located in Cincinnati seemed perfect for his needs.

Young Sarah Brown belonged to a leading family of the valley and was endowed with beauty and charm as well as a goodly fortune. She and Nathaniel established their home in the eastern valley of the Little Miami where he supervised his mills and shipping interests. He was interested in the doctrines of Swedenborg and became the "receiver" in the Little Miami Valley for this church. In this connection it was but natural that he and Sarah should entertain that quaint missionary of Swedenborg and of pomology, "Johnny Appleseed." The tradition that some of the gnarled old remnants of the apple orchard yet to be seen near the mill on Clough Creek grew from Johnny's seedlings is surely not a myth.

Sarah did not forsake her Presbyterian faith but was held in high esteem by the Swedenborgians and in the records of its church there is an item mentioning her death on January 7, 1873. Of their nine children five grew up and did not marry. True to the traditions of the Ropes family they returned to Salem, Massachusetts, where they reestablished the grandeur of the old home and gardens which they perpetuated as a museum. In Cincinnati they endowed a chair in English Literature at the University of Cincinnati.

In 1818 there came to Cincinnati a handsome young Virginian, a college professor with a flair for business, named Thomas Johnson Matthews who had been born in 1787 in Leesburg, Virginia. He taught at Transylvania College, Lexington, Kentucky; at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, and became the first president of Woodward College in Cincinnati where he also formed a connection with a mercantile house. The lovely Isabella, youngest daughter of William and Ruth Brown, attracted him greatly and they were married in 1823 when she was but eighteen years old. He was a Quaker, but to please his wife, joined her church which was the Presbyterian. Of their eleven children the first-born, Stanley, was noted as soldier, United States Senator from Ohio, jurist and Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The descendants of William Brown of the Purple Heart in this branch are among the noteworthy families of Cincinnati, serving city and church. A brother-in-law of President Rutherford B. Hayes married one of the daughters and a grandson of President Grover Cleveland's uncle Jeremiah married a granddaughter of Isabella and Thomas Matthews. Another granddaughter established the Episcopal Order of the Transfiguration and her brother is Bishop Paul Matthews of the Episcopal Church. And a great-great-grandson, Lieutenant James H. Cleveland, received the 1932 medal of the Purple Heart for distinguished service in World War I, thus continuing the traditions established by his ancestor.

Although Sergeant William Brown's precious badge of the Purple Heart has been lost, the spirit of patriotism and the characteristic of achieving with gallantry which it represented lives on in the family from generation to generation.

## CHAPTER VI

### *THE PURPLE HEART IS REVIVED*

Subsequent to the Revolution the Order of the Purple Heart seems to have fallen into disuse and no further awards were made. The badge vanished from public sight and reference to the scanty official records concerning it ceased. In recent years, after a few of the official papers were discovered among the George Washington manuscripts in the Library of Congress and interest in this rare decoration was aroused by the publication of articles reminding the nation of the existence of the order, agitation for its restoration resulted in its revival in 1932 to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of George Washington's birth.

The frailty of such materials as were used during the Revolution was recognized and a beautiful model was designed and struck for heroes of the first World War. The new decoration consists of a heart-shaped medal, its face gold bordered and its center of purple enamel. On the obverse is a relief bust of George Washington in the uniform of a General of the Continental Army. Its reverse is gold with the inscription, "For Military Merit." The Washington Coat of Arms is incorporated in the ring which attaches it to a purple ribbon, bordered in white.

The award of the Purple Heart for acts or services performed prior to February 22, 1932, is confined to those persons, who, as members of the Army, were awarded the Meritorious Service Citation Certificate by the Commander-in-Chief, American Expeditionary Forces, or who were wounded in action in any war or campaign under conditions which entitle them to wear a wound chevron.

For acts or services performed subsequent to February 22, 1932, the decoration was authorized to be awarded to persons who, while serving in the Army of the United States, performed any singularly meritorious act of extraordinary fidelity or essential service. Over seventy thousand of the new medals were issued by the War Department prior to December 7, 1941.

After the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the Purple Heart was awarded to heroes in the Pacific. The War Department widened its scope as various battle fronts developed and the Purple Heart is now being awarded to persons who, while serving in any capacity with the armed forces of the United States are wounded in action against the enemy. The Purple Heart is given for the first wound and the Oak-leaf cluster for wounds received at a later action. The Purple Heart is also awarded posthumously now.

A group of patriots who had been awarded the Purple Heart medal in accordance with the February 22, 1932, order, organized and incorporated the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Its purpose is patriotic, fraternal, historical, and educational. Its object is to perpetuate the memory of our first Commander-in-Chief, General George Washington; to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members; to assist worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory and history of our honored dead; to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States of America, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws. It is the only national organization composed exclusively of veterans wounded in action, under conditions that entitle them to wear a wound chevron, or who have been awarded the Meritorious Citation Certificate for gallantry in action above and beyond the call of any duty.

The Purple Heart medal is proof that the patriot wearing it displayed the self-discipline, the devotion and the fortitude that spell military merit. Those entitled to wear it have pride in the soldierly conduct that won it and in the badge itself which, except for the Cross of St. George of Russia, is the oldest decoration for valor in the world. It is a treasured heritage from the Father of our Republic and has become the cherished tie that binds the fighting men of all our wars. No other organization has this historic foundation. None is so all-inclusive. It is the highest honor that can come to a veteran and carries with it great responsibility as a disciple of the principles of George Washington.

In establishing the badge of military merit, the Purple Heart, George Washington carried out his wish to "cherish a virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military merit" and to reward "any singularly meritorious action," and so he opened "the road to glory in a patriotic army and a free country" to all. The gallant deeds of the two men who received this Purple Heart from their Commander-in-Chief on May 3, 1783, Sergeant Elijah Churchill and Sergeant William Brown, and the third, Sergeant Daniel Bissell, who received his decoration on June 8, 1783, are an inspiration to future generations of Americans.

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