

Medal of Honor Recipients

The idea of a Medal of Honor was conceived by U.S. Senator James Grimes of Iowa in 1861. It was approved by Congress during the Civil War to recognize soldiers who had distinguished themselves during armed conflict. The measure provided for awarding a medal of honor "to such noncommissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier like qualities, during the present insurrection." Congress made the Medal of Honor a permanent decoration in 1863. Nationally, over 3400 medals have been awarded.

The following Medal of Honor recipients have roots in eastern Polk County. All three lived in Mitchellville for part of their lives. Two of the recipients received medals for service during the Civil War and were friends of Thomas Mitchell, founder of Mitchellville and first white settler in Polk County. Another recipient was honored for his service during World War II. That soldier spent his final years in Mitchellville.

LEWIS A. GRANT (1829-1918)

Rank and organization: Colonel, 5th Vermont Infantry. Place and date: At Sale m Heights, Va., 3 May 1864. Entered service at: Bellow Falls, Vt. Born: 17 January 1828, Winhall, Vt. Date of issue: 11 May 1893. Citation: Personal gallantry and intrepidity displayed in the management of his brigade and in leading it in the assault in which he was wounded.

MILTON RUSSELL (1836-1908)

Rank and organization: Captain, Company A, 51st Indiana Infantry. Place and date: At Stone River, Tenn., 29 December 1862. Entered service at: North Salem, Ind. Birth: Hendricks County, Ind. Date of issue: 28 September 1897. Citation: Was the first man to cross Stone River and, in the face of a galling fire from the concealed skirmishers of the enemy, led his men up the hillside, driving the opposing skirmishers before them

HERSEHL FLOYD "PETE" BRILES (1914-1994)

Rank and organization: Sergeant, Company C, Tank Destroyer Battalion with the 9th Infantry, World War II. Place and date: Scherpenseel, Germany, 26 November 1944. Entered Service at: Des Moines, Iowa. Birth: Colfax, Iowa Date of Issue: 23 August 1945. Citation: On two separate occasions he raced across bullet swept land to lift wounded comrades from the burning turrets of their tank destroyers, moments before the ammunition exploded.

Sources: Black, Senator Dennis H. *Mitchellville: City of Heroes*. Booklet prepared by Iowa State Senator Dennis H. Black from his research on Iowa's Medal of Honor Recipients. 2006.
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Briles, Sgt. Herschel Floyd "Pete" Briles. State Historical Society of Iowa. pp 1-2. Online. America Online. 15 Jul 2007.
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