



Valor Across the Lone Star: The Congressional Medal of Honor in Frontier Texas

Charles M. Neal Jr.

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Valor Across the Lone Star: The Congressional Medal of Honor in Frontier Texas Charles M. Neal Jr. The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force that can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the armed services of the United States. While a formal system for recognizing acts of individual gallantry dates back to the American Revolution, it was not until the Civil War that a medal for rewarding bravery received wide-scale recognition. The Congressional Medal of Honor, referred to as such because the president of the United States presents it in the name of Congress, was first awarded in 1863.

In *Valor Across the Lone Star*, Charles M. Neal Jr., takes us back to the Texas frontier during the years of the Civil War and the Indian wars. Most of these Medal of Honor recipients were not native Texans but a diverse lot of individuals from across the United States and around the world.

Union sailor George Bell, although wounded in an assault on the CSS *Royal Yacht* in Galveston Bay, forced his fleeing crewmembers to return their launch to the ship to rescue other sailors, then guided the launch away from the scene to safety. . . . Pvt. George W. Smith, who, though gravely wounded in an Indian battle, fired his pistol until he was no longer able to, then begged his fellow soldiers to use his body as a shield.

Neal's colorful narrative brings great detail and understanding to these stories of conflict and heroism in Texas in the last half of the nineteenth century. He has, in the words of noted historian Jerry Thompson, "produced an excellent survey of brave and exemplary men." This reliable and engaging volume makes an important contribution to our understanding of the Texas military frontier. It includes several appendices that list all Texas recipients from the Civil War to the present, their burial sites around the world, the locations of their deeds, and other statistics.

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