

# MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS PRESENT AT ANTIETAM<sup>1</sup>

## GROUP ONE

Sergeant Moses A. Luce

**Organization:** Company E, 4th Michigan Infantry

**Entered Service:** Hillsdale, Michigan

**Birth:** 14 May 1842, Payson, Adams County, Ill

**Date Medal Issued:** 7 February 1895

**Date of Action:** 10 May 1864

**Place of Action:** At Laurel Hill, Va.

**Citation:**

Voluntarily returned in the face of the advancing enemy to the assistance of a wounded and helpless comrade, and carried him, at imminent peril, to a place of safety.

More about this award: On May 10, 1864, as General Grant's Army continued its march towards Richmond, Virginia, the Federal soldiers were met by a heavy fire from an advancing force of Confederate soldiers. Charging forward, five of the seven men under Sergeant Moses Luce were struck down as they pushed towards the enemy's works, and the devastating fire caused the advancing Union column to fall back. Sergeant Luce quickly found shelter in a ditch, then bravely raced to rejoin his lines, an enemy ball striking the stock of his weapon and another cutting the skin over his eye. From that position he could hear the cry of a wounded man, and on inquiring who it was, was told it was Sergeant La Fleur, a comrade. Dropping his musket, he raced to help his stricken friend. "When I reached him," he later said, he was lying prostrate on the ground, with his leg broken below the knee and was bleeding profusely. I tried to lift him in my arms, but finding that impossible, I kneeled down and told him to get his arms around my neck and get on my back (while) I remained on my hands and knees. Then rising, and in a stooping position, I carried him rapidly to the rear of our line." Turning his comrade over to others for treatment, Sergeant Luce then rejoined the fight. *(from HomeOfHeroes of unknown provenance)*

First Lieutenant William R. Shafter

**Organization:** Company I, 7th Michigan Infantry

**Entered Service:** Galesburg, Mich.

**Birth:** Kalamazoo, Mich.

**Date Medal Issued:** 12 June 1895.

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<sup>1</sup> The first group is said to have been present according to Antietam on the Web. The second group are two recipients who were in the 7<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry (who may have been present) as listed at the website <http://www.history.army.mil/html/moh/civwaral.html>

Date of Action: 31 May 1862.

Place of Action: Fair Oaks, Va.

Citation:

Lt. Shafter was engaged in bridge construction and not being needed there returned with his men to engage the enemy participating in a charge across an open field that resulted in casualties to 18 of the 22 men. At the close of the battle his horse was shot from under him and he was severely flesh wounded. He remained on the field that day and stayed to fight the next day only by concealing his wounds. In order not to be sent home with the wounded he kept his wounds concealed for another 3 days until other wounded had left the area.

Private George E Sidman

Organization: Company C, 16th Michigan Infantry

Entered Service: Owosso, Mich.

Birth: 25 November 1844, Rochester, N.Y.

Date Medal Issued: 6 April 1892.

Date of Action: 27 June 1862.

Place of Action: Gaines Mill, Va.

Citation:

Distinguished bravery in battle. Rallied his comrades to charge vastly superior force until wounded in the hip. He was a 16-year old drummer.

Lieutenant Colonel Frederic William Swift

Organization: 17th Michigan Infantry

Entered Service: Michigan

Birth: 30 January 1831, Mansfield Center, Conn.

Date Medal Issued: 15 February 1897

Date of Action: 16 November 1863

Place of Action: Lenoire Station, Tenn.

Citation:

Gallantly seized the colors and rallied the regiment after 3 color bearers had been shot and the regiment, having become demoralized, was in imminent danger of capture.

More about this award: Lieutenant Colonel Frederic Swift was one of two men awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic defense of the regimental colors of his unit in action against Confederate forces at Lenoire Station, Tennessee, on November 16, 1863.

Lieutenant Colonel Swift had been ordered to hold the line of the creek under an intense fire that soon demoralized his men, sending many into a panicky retreat across the creek.

"Fearing a stampede," he recalled, "I assumed the responsibility of moving the regiment across the creek and up to the top of the hill on the other side. One of the color guard was killed, another had his eye shot out, and a third was seriously wounded. Seeing the colors fall, I snatched them up and call to the men: 'We have fallen back just far enough; we will form here.' Someone asked: 'Who shall we form on?' and I replied: 'Form on me!' Personally bearing the flag, Lieutenant Colonel Swift then valiantly led his men in a daring charge that sent the rebel forces retreating in panic. The color bearer referred to in his account, whose eye had been shot out, was Private Joseph Brandle, who was the other man who earned the Medal of Honor in this battle.  
(quote is from Home of Heroes text by C. Douglas Sterner accompanying photo of Swift's gravesite)

Sergeant Charles Augustus Thompson  
Organization: Company D, 17th Michigan Infantry  
Entered Service: Kalamazoo, Mich.  
Birth: 1843, Perrysburg, Ohio.  
Date Medal Issued: 27 July 1896.

Date of Action: 12 May 1864.  
Place of Action: Spotsylvania, Va.

Citation:  
After the regiment was surrounded and all resistance seemed useless, fought single-handed for the colors and refused to give them up until he had appealed to his superior officers.

Colonel Orlando Bolivar Willcox  
Organization: 1st Michigan Infantry (1st Div/IX Corps at Antietam)  
Entered Service: Detroit, Mich.  
Birth: Detroit, Mich.  
Date Medal Issued: 2 March 1895.

Date of Action: 21 July 1861.  
Place of Action: Bull Run, Va.

Citation:  
Led repeated charges until wounded and taken prisoner.

Captain William H Withington  
Organization: Company B, 1st Michigan Infantry (17th MI at Antietam)  
Entered Service: Jackson, Mich.  
Birth: 1 February 1835, Dorchester, Mass.  
Date Medal Issued: 7 January 1895.

Date of Action: 21 July 1861  
Place of Action: Bull Run, Va.

Citation:

Remained on the field under heavy fire to succor his superior officer.

More about this award: The 'superior officer' was his regimental and then brigade commander Colonel Orlando Willcox, who himself was later awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery in leading repeated charges at that battle. Withington tended the wounded Colonel through their trial as prisoners of war at Richmond and Charleston, SC.

Willcox was in command of the 1st Division, IX Corps (of which the 17th Michigan was a part) at Antietam.

## GROUP TWO

Forman, Alexander A.

Rank and organization: Corporal, Company E, 7th Michigan Infantry. Place and date: At Fair Oaks, Va., 31 May 1862. Entered service at: Jonesville, Mich. Birth: Scipio, Mich. Date of issue: 17 August 1895. Citation: Although wounded, he continued fighting until, fainting from loss of blood, he was carried off the field.

Smith, Alonzo

Rank and organization: Sergeant, Company C, 7th Michigan Infantry. Place and date: At Hatchers Run, Va., 27 October 1864. Entered service at: Jonesville, Mich. Born: 9 August 1842, Niagara County, N.Y. Date of issue: 1 December 1864. Citation: Capture of flag of 26th North Carolina Infantry (C.S.A.), while outside his lines far from his comrades.