

MEDALS AND MEMORIES MINUTES



A.B. William Edward Hall
Image: Nova Scotia Museum

William Edward Hall was the first Canadian seaman, first black in the British Empire and third Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross. Before receiving the V.C., Hall had earned a medal from Turkey and one from England with clasps for Sebastapol and Inkerman. When

Quartermaster Hall retired as a petty officer, first class in 1876 he left behind a distinguished 28 year naval career which included a seven year stint as a gunnery instructor. Hall earned his V.C. Nov. 16, 1857, when he and Lieutenant Thomas Young were the last men standing from his ship, the *Shannon's*, gun crews. One 24 pounder and these two men were the last hope to breach the wall of the heavily fortified Shah Najaf mosque in Lucknow, India. The *Shannon* and her crew were part of a much larger effort to relieve a British garrison besieged during the Indian mutiny. Hall and Young were at such close range to the mosque's seemingly impregnable wall that debris from their shell blasts rained upon them; each recoil sent them out into a hail of concentrated enemy gunfire to bring back the gun, reload and fire again. Finally they succeeded in opening up a breach large enough to allow in Highlander troops. Hall's V.C. citation read, "Finally in one of the most supreme moments in all the age of a long story of courage, Hall fired the charge which opened up the wall and enabled the British to push through to the relief of the garrison and ultimately to the quelling of the mutiny and the restoration of peace and order in India." Hall, was born in Horton, Nova Scotia to former slaves who had found freedom in Canada during the War of 1812.

AUDIO ~ ONTARIO BLACK HISTORY SOCIETY <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/obho/scenes/index.html> (needs RealPlayer installed)