

Edwin M. Neville

"Herewith I enclose the Medal of Honor [presented to men who have distinguished themselves in battle] which has been awarded you by the Secretary of War"

- U. A. Nichols, Assistant Adj.-General

Edwin Michael Neville overcame a life-threatening disability to become the most decorated soldier in Waterbury history. On April 6, 1865, during the battle of Saylor's Creek, Neville captured a rebel flag for which he received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Neville was born in Waterbury January 27, 1843, the second son of Michael and Ann (Delaney) Neville. He enrolled at St. John's College in the autumn of 1859 and studied there until 1862, when he enlisted in the Third Regiment of Rhode Island. He was discharged from military service three months later when he suffered through a life threatening disability.

Undeterred, Neville returned to Waterbury to muster up recruits for the First Connecticut Cavalry, and joined the army again. He was commissioned as second lieutenant and soon promoted to captain. The regiment was assigned to General Philip Sheridan and engaged the enemy more than ninety times. The regiment fought cavalry, infantry, artillery, in the field and behind breastworks, and its capture of prisoners, guns and flags was considerable. General Sheridan said Neville was one of his bravest men.

At the end of the war Neville was appointed to the staff of General George Armstrong Custer. The Battle of Saylor's Creek was a crushing defeat for the Confederacy. The Union Army captured seven Confederate generals, thousands of soldiers and 14 pieces of artillery. General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox three days later. Neville was in the detail that escorted General Grant to receive Lee's surrender.

After the war, Neville continued his military service as adjutant-general in the National Guard. He received a testimonial as "Companion of the First Class" from the Loyal Legion of the United States "for faithful



service in maintaining the honor, integrity and supremacy of the Government." In 1869, he went to Paris to sell military weapons as an agent for Remington Arms, and was trapped in the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. He escaped Paris in a hot air balloon.

On his return Neville studied law and was admitted to the New York bar in 1872. He continued a successful law practice until he succumbed to illness in Waterbury, October 4, 1886, at the age of 44. Captain Neville Drive in Waterbury is named in his honor.