

**WILLIAM HALL, V.C.  
OF HORTON BLUFF, NOVA SCOTIA  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY NAVAL HERO**

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Read before the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, 25 February 1993

From the commencement of seafaring history, blacks have played a role, sometimes minor but sometimes relatively important. These black seafarers have had experience at sea as members of the crews of slave ships, as pirates, as privateers, as well as fishermen and traders. They have been part of the crews of whaling ships as well as crew members of small craft involved in the coastal trade of this and other countries.

The subject of this paper, William Nielson Hall, is but one example, albeit an outstanding one, of an individual from a small rural community who made a significant contribution to both the seafaring history and the military history of the colony of Nova Scotia as well as that of Great Britain and the United States.

Hall, a black man from Horton Bluff, Kings County, Nova Scotia, was the first Nova Scotian, the third Canadian and the first black person in the British Empire to win a Victoria Cross medal, the highest honour given to members of the military who have shown exemplary valour in conflicts in which the Empire has been involved since the inception of the award on 29 January 1856. He was also the first Canadian to win a Naval Victoria Cross. William Hall, A.B., Captain of the Foretop, won his cross as a black member of Captain William Peel's Naval Brigade at Lucknow on 16 November 1857. The two others who have received this coveted honour while serving in the Imperial Forces were Samuel Hodge, Private, 4th Battalion, West India Regiment in 1866, and William James Gordon, Lance Corporal, 1st Battalion, West India Regiment in 1892.

The two Canadians who received the Victoria Cross before Hall were Ensign Alexander Robert Dunn of Toronto, Ontario, who served in the 11th Hussars (British Army), in the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava on 25 October 1854, and Surgeon Herbert Taylor Reade of Perth, Ontario, who served in the South Wales Borderers, 61st Regiment of Foot (British Army), at the siege of Delhi on 14 and 16 September 1857. Only three other Canadians received the Naval Victoria Cross besides Hall — Lieutenant Roland Burke, Royal Naval Volunteers in 1918, Captain Frederick Thornton Peters, Royal Navy in 1942 and Lieutenant Robert Gray, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1945.

William Neilson Hall was born in Summerville, Hants County, Nova Scotia on 25 April 1829.<sup>1</sup> His parents were Jacob and Lucy Hall, both former slaves who had come to Nova Scotia as a result of the War of 1812. Jacob and Lucy had entered the British lines on board the *HMS Havanah* at different times during the war, but were both discharged from *HMS Ceylon* in Halifax, Nova Scotia on 13 May 1815.<sup>2</sup> Jacob had previously been a slave belonging to Robert Duncanson of Saint

Mary's County, Maryland, while Lucy had been a slave belonging to George Locker of the same county.<sup>3</sup>

The location of Jacob and Lucy's first place of settlement, after a short stay on Melville Island, Halifax harbour following the disembarkation, is uncertain. It does appear, however, that before long they had moved to Summerville, Hants County, where Jacob received employment in a shipbuilding yard owned by Abraham Cunard, the father of the famous Samuel Cunard, and Peter Hall, a merchant of Windsor, Nova Scotia. The family had apparently lived in Summerville until 1823, when they moved to Horton Bluff, Kings County. Jacob purchased a tract of land of about eighteen acres at Horton Bluff on 3 February 1848.<sup>4</sup>

According to Charles Bruce Fergusson Jacob Hall worked as a rigger and caulker<sup>5</sup> and therefore would most likely have been employed in the shipbuilding trade at the shipyard of either Ezra Churchill or J.B. North in the nearby town of Hantsport. Of Jacob Hall, we have no further information except that he put his mark on a petition of the black inhabitants of Lower Horton to the House of Assembly in 1850 seeking assistance to establish an African school for their children<sup>6</sup> and his name appeared on the census of 1851 for the area.<sup>7</sup> Since his name does not appear on the 1861 Census he must have died sometime during this decade. Lucy, William's mother, died on 19 September 1883.

William was the youngest son in a family of seven children—Jacob Henry, Charles Gideon, William Neilson, Margaret Maria, Lucy Ann, Mary Jane and Rachael Clara. The first six children were baptised together at the Methodist Parish of Horton and Cornwallis, situated in Grand Pré, King's County on 28 August 1834.<sup>8</sup> Rachael Clara, the youngest child, appears in the same parish records at the time of her marriage to William Robinson on 13 December 1856.<sup>9</sup> We have no further information at the present time on Jacob Jr., Charles, Margaret or Lucy Ann. However, it is known that Mary and Rachael lived with their brother William on his small farm on the Horton Bluff Road, following his return from England in 1876.

William Hall's formal education remains obscure. Hall's name did not surface during a perusal of the extant records of the common schools and grammar schools in Kings County from the years 1809 to 1882,<sup>10</sup> nor could he have attended the African school in Lower Horton because it did not come into existence until 1850, at which time Hall was a resident of Boston, Massachusetts. Perhaps William stayed with a relative in Halifax and attended the African school during his early youth, since navigation had been a subject taught to black males at this school since its founding in the autumn of 1835.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of Hall's early education he was undoubtedly a conscientious student when it came to the life of a seafarer. His life would reflect these characteristics until he returned to Nova Scotia in 1876 from the Royal Navy.

An interview D.V. Warner had with William Hall in September 1900 suggests he began his seafaring life in 1844 on board a small vessel sailing out of a nearby Hantsport.<sup>12</sup> Charles Bruce Fergusson claims, however, that Hall "began going to sea in 1845 as a sailor in the merchant service. Shipping on board the *Kent* of Kentville, Nova Scotia carrying a load of deals to London, then a cargo to Boston, Massachusetts, he remained a merchant seaman for about two years."<sup>13</sup>

Whichever of the above dates is correct for Hall's introduction into the life of a seafarer is not certain at this stage, however we know that Hall went to Boston sometime before October 1847.<sup>14</sup> Hall enlisted in the United States Navy under the name of William Harvey and first served as an ordinary seaman on board the *Franklin*. He next served on aboard the USS frigate *Savannah*, commanded by Captain Vorhees in the war with Mexico. He was later transferred to the U.S. battleship *Ohio* in August 1848, where he served along with J. Taylor Wood, a Confederate naval hero during the American Civil War.<sup>15</sup> Wood later sent a letter of certification on Hall's behalf to the Bureau of Pensions of the United States Navy in Hall's unsuccessful bid to receive a pension for his services in the Mexican War (13 May 1846 - August 1848). The Bureau, on 1 August 1899 stated that Hall, alias "Wm Harvey, enlisted May 22/48 and served as O.S. on the *Franklin* to Feb. 14/49, on the *Savannah* to Sept. 10, 1849 and on the *Ohio* to May 6/50, when he was discharged."<sup>16</sup> and therefore did not qualify for the Mexican War Pension or Bounty Land Claim because his service was rendered "subsequent" to the Mexican War.

Hall was discharged from the United States Navy in June 1849<sup>17</sup> and served for some time in trading vessels out of the port of Boston until he joined the Royal Navy in 1852. Hall, in an interview with his captain, R.J.G. MacDonald of the *HMS Bellerophon* in March 1869, said he required less than ten years service to entitle him to a continuous Service Pension, since he had served on *HMS Rodney* from approximately 2 February 1852 to 15 January 1856. R. Nowsworthy, in a letter to the Accounting General, Royal Navy, dated 8 April 1869, confirmed that Hall's entry into the service was on board the *Rodney*, but noted that the date had been 10 February 1852,<sup>18</sup> not 2 February 1852, as previously stated by Hall. Further proof of Hall's date of enlistment on board the *Rodney* is provided by the victualling list of the ship for that year.

The presence of persons of African descent in the merchant service or Navy of Great Britain was not a rarity as some historians may suppose. As early as 1757 Michael Pascal, first lieutenant of the *Roebuck* had a black slave boy as his servant on board his Naval Ship.<sup>19</sup> Blacks were considered "foreigners" who were willing to serve in the Royal Navy and came from every nation in the world:

There were men from every nation under heaven in the Navy, sometimes swept up in the press, but more often volunteers. Greeks, Danes, Italians, Portugeuse, Swedes, Hanoverians, Americans of every colony and every colour, they appear in almost all ships musters.<sup>20</sup>

Blacks had fought in the Navy of Great Britain during both the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and were therefore not a new phenomenon when Hall joined the Royal Navy in 1852. The policy regarding recruitment into British military forces for people of African descent was open enough for a reasonable number of blacks to serve in the several forces. A regulation cited in a history of the recruitment of the British Army of the 1840s describes the practice in force when William Hall enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1852:

The enlistment of foreigners is permitted, provided that in every regiment, battalion or corps, the number shall not exceed the proportion of one to fifty of natural born subjects.<sup>21</sup>

The first two years of Hall's service in the Royal Navy appear uneventful, however, with the outbreak in 1854 of the Crimean War, his career took a dramatic turn. Able-bodied Seaman Hall became part of a special force comprised of officers and sailors used in the soldier's general domain of activities and known as the Royal Naval Brigade. This Naval Brigade, formed on 1 October 1854, from among the personnel of *HMS Rodney*, commanded by George G. Randolph. W.B. Rowbotham in his *The Naval Brigades in the Indian Mutiny* noted that:

The term "Naval Brigade" has for many years been used to denote an armed naval force, of whatever size, landed from H.M.S. ships to work either separately or in conjunction with the Army. It is quite distinct in number and composition from the Army term "Brigade", which denotes a force of approximately 4,000 men, the composition depending upon circumstances. The employment of seamen, either as artillery men or infantry men, on shore in military operations conducted mainly by the Army is of very ancient origin.<sup>22</sup>

This brigade from the *Rodney* was responsible for manning the thirty-five guns in the siege batteries throughout the Crimean War. After arriving ashore on 17 October 1854, they fought from both the trenches and the gun batteries, with approximately three thousand seamen and marines. The brigade took part in the bombardment of Sebastopol, the Battle of Inkerman, the storming of the quarries, and the assaults on the Redan during the war. Casualties in the day to day fighting from the trenches and the gun batteries were severe, with the Naval Brigade suffering particularly. When a storm of hurricane force struck the Crimea coast on 14 November, damage was done to the tents of the men on shore by the high wind and with the advance of winter—coupled with the sinking of the ship laden with their supply of winter clothing—mortality was high, especially among the sick and wounded. Even among those who survived the voyage to Florence Nightingale's Barrack Hospital at Scutari, hundreds died from cholera and wound infections.<sup>23</sup>

Little further information is known of Hall's experience during this war, except that he was among the "list of officers and men who were serving in the Naval Brigade on the 5th November 1854 and was therefore entitled to the Clasp for Inkerman and Sebastapol."<sup>24</sup> These medals for the Crimean War were sent to Hall on 28 April 1856 while he was still serving on board *HMS Rodney*.<sup>25</sup> Hall, one of the survivors, received for his exploits the Crimean Medal with the clasps for Inkerman and Sebastapol as well as the Turkish Medal. He remained with the *Rodney* until his discharge on 29 January 1856.<sup>26</sup> Two days later Hall was entered on *HMS Victory*, a ship from which he deserted on 12 March 1856, and as a consequence forfeited his previous time served in the Royal Navy. For many months Hall's activities are unknown until 29 October 1856, when he is shown to have entered on the books

of *HMS Shannon*, commanded by James William Vaughan and captained by Sir William Peel, KCB, who had earlier won a Victoria Cross for his exploits in the Crimean War.

The *Shannon* left England for the China Station on 17 March 1857. The *Shannon* “anchored in Simon’s Bay on 7 May and sailed again on the 11 May, and on the 11 June was anchored off Singapore, when news came of the outbreak of the Mutiny in India.”<sup>27</sup>

The Mutiny was an uprising by the Indian troops of the Indian Armies who objected to the new gun cartridges which were said to be greased with the fat of pigs and cows—animals considered sacred to Muslim and Hindu doctrines. The Mutiny began at Meerut, India on Sunday, 10 May 1857, and quickly spread through other provinces of India. News had reached Calcutta of disasters at South Meerut and Delhi. Lord Canning, the Governor-General, immediately asked for assistance from Lord Elgin, former Governor General of Canada, who at the time was on his way to China with military reinforcements to quell the skirmishes which had recently broken out there. Elgin, while waiting at Hong Kong, consulted with Admiral Sir Michael Seymour and it was mutually agreed that, “the three ships *HMS Sanspariel*, (Capt. Key), *HMS Shannon* (Capt. Peel) and *HMS Pearl* (Capt. Sotheby) should be dispatched to Calcutta at once.”<sup>28</sup>

On the 23rd June 1857 Lord Elgin embarked with his staff for Calcutta. The *Shannon*, under Captain William Peel, sailed from Hong Kong on 2 July. A detachment of Royal Marines and the 90th Regiment embarked at Hong Kong for the journey to Calcutta. In early August the *Shannon* anchored off the mouth of the River Ganges and reached Calcutta around 29 August. During this time William Hall had played a major role in rescuing a seaman from drowning in the Ganges. A painting exists at the Maritime Museum, showing Hall standing in a boat ready to jump in for the rescue. Hall was obviously the right person for this endeavour as one of his contemporaries wrote: “He was always a man remarkable for his steady good conduct and his athletic frame, at a foot race in camp he had distanced by far all competitors, and I have never seen his superior either as swimmer or diver.”<sup>29</sup>

On arrival at Calcutta, “Capt. Key landed his Marines at Fort Williams, while Capt. William Peel, son of Sir Robert Peel, formed a naval brigade of 408 seamen and marines from his crew. He also prepared for use ashore the following artillery pieces which were to prove so useful later on: six 68-pdrs/, two 8 in. Howitzers, eight 24 pdrs., two small guns and, be it noted, eight rocket tubes.”<sup>30</sup> These “bluejackets” of the *Shannon* immediately prepared for service on shore. Their dress, hot weather version, consisting of a white frock and trousers with a blue collar edged with three white tapes and a black kerchief was established as the official uniform for petty offices, seamen and boys, on 30 January 1857.

On August 14 the brigade of the frigate, with their leader Captain Peel and other officers, began their trip to Allahabad, India. Lieutenant James William Vaughan had been left in charge of the *Shannon*, but on 18 September he embarked with reinforcements for “Peel’s Navy Brigade.” Lieutenant Vaughan and the reinforcements joined Captain Peel at Allahabad on 20 October. During the

remainder of the Mutiny this naval brigade was active alongside the army at nearly all battles of the Mutiny.

The Naval Brigade remained at Allahabad until the 28 October then left for Cawnpore. On 1 November the force attacked the mutineers at Kudjna, where Captain Peel took command, (following the death of Colonel Powell). The mutineers were soundly defeated and British forces continued their advance to Lucknow, the capital of the province of Oudh.

The attack on the city of Lucknow began on 14 November. This proved to be a long and costly battle for all sides. The British and their allies would not prevail at Lucknow until 12 March 1858. It was during the initial week of fighting on 16 November 1857, that William Hall won the Victoria Cross.

At the time of the attack on Lucknow on 14 November, the *Shannon's* Brigade strength was said to be about 200 seamen and marines, with six 24-pounders, two 8-inch howitzers and two rocket tubes mounted on hackeries. During this day heavy fire was experienced from both sides, with the British repulsing the enemy before the day was through. No forward movement was made by the British on the following day, 15 November; however, on 16 November a direct advance was completed on the Secunderabagh, pounding away the walls of the thick masonry enclosure, which had been held by the rebels. This stronghold was captured by mid afternoon on the 16th. Having overcome the defence force of this high walled enclosure, the key to Lucknow, the Shah Nujiff (a large mosque) remained the critical stumbling block to further victory.

At approximately four o'clock on the 16 November, Sir Colin Campbell, the Commander-in-Chief, gave directions for the British force to attack the formidable domed mosque. Commanded by Captain Peel, the Naval Brigade, along with the 93rd Highlanders and the Royal Artillery began the preliminary attack of the Shah Nujiff. "Peel's Brigade" with their heavy guns were able to come within several hundred yards of the walls of the mosque:

After pounding away at the walls of the Secunderabagh, Peel's guns were ordered on to the Shah Nujiff Mosque, and although covered by the [93rd] Highlanders, the sailors were exposed to a rattling fire from the mob over the wall. Sir Colin Campbell said that "Capt. Peel behaved very much as if he had been laying the *Shannon* alongside an enemy's frigate." Hand grenades fell among these, but Lieut. Young and William Hall, A.B., a Negro ran the 24 pounder which the sailors called the *Shannon*, close to the masonry, and fired round after round point blank at it."<sup>31</sup>

The Mutineers killed most of the crew until only Young and Hall were left. Between them they kept up a steady fire until the wall was breached. Upon entering the mosque, after a small gap had been opened by Hall and Young, the British discovered that the Mutineers had all retreated. For their endeavours during this fierce battle, Lieutenant Thomas James Young and William Hall won the coveted Victoria Cross. Two other men from the Naval Brigade, John Harrison, Boatswain's mate, and Lieutenant Nowell Salmon, also received the award, making in total four Victoria Crosses won by members of the Naval Brigade during the Indian

Mutiny. Seventeen more were won by members of other units during the three days of November 16, 17 and 18, 1857.

William Hall and Lieutenant Thomas James Young, who had performed their heroic deeds on the same day, were not to be gazetted for the Victoria Cross in the *London Gazette* until 1 February 1859. The citation for gallantry of Young and Hall read as follows:

Lieutenant (now Commander) Young, late Gunnery Officer of Her Majesty's ship "Shannon" and William Hall, "Captain of the Foretop" of that Vessel, were recommended by the late Captain Peel for the Victoria Cross, for their gallant conduct at a 24-pounder Gun, brought up to the angle of the Shah Nijiff, at Lucknow, on the 16th of November, 1857.<sup>32</sup>

In the case of Young and Hall a considerable amount of correspondence was exchanged before they were awarded the Victoria Cross. The Cross had been instituted on 29 January 1856 by Queen Victoria, with certain rules and ordinances to be followed in the awarding of this honourable medal. Young's and Hall's awards were made under ordination twelve which stated:

It is ordained that as cases may arise not falling within the rules above specified, or in which a claim, though well founded, may not have been established on the spot. We will, on the joint submission of our secretary of State for War, and of our Commander-in-chief of Our army, or on that of our Lord High Admiral or Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in the case of the navy, confer the decoration, but never without conclusive proof of the performance of the act of bravery for which the claim is made.<sup>33</sup>

The War Office correspondence in the case of Young and Hall shows they were definitely recommended for the Victoria Cross by their commander, Captain Peel. M.J. Crook, in his *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross: A Study in Administrative History*, summarizes what happened:

A number of his [Captain Peel's] recommendations had been incorporated in Lord Clyde's dispatches, following the procedure which had been laid down for all Naval Brigade submissions. However, on 1 January 1858 a week after three such recommendations had been published in the *London Gazette*, Commander Young submitted to the W.O. copies of recommendation made by Peel before his death which included, in addition to these three, the names of himself [as Lieutenant], and the Nova Scotia negro Able Seaman William Hall, claiming in addition that these Crosses had been promised by Peel in the presence of Lord Clyde... although these awards were recommended by the Admiralty there was nothing to show that Clyde had confirmed Peel's promise ... Sir John Pakington, the First Lord, wrote to Gen. Peel asking "whether in such circumstances the delay for reference to India is necessary or desirable"...

Peel replied to the First Lord "If you are satisfied that the omission of his [Clyde's part]... had been accidental I will submit the names of this Officer and Seaman to the Queen at once, as you wish, and so avoid the delay of a reference to India." Pakington replied accepting this proposal.<sup>34</sup>

A copy of a letter from Lt. Col. Henry H. Maxwell, dated Simla, 14 June 1858, to Young (in which both Young's and Hall's bravery is mentioned) congratulated Young with the closing remarks: "I never have known any man in my life more deserving of, and utterly qualified to wear, that distinction of heroes, the Victoria Cross, for which Sir William Peel so justly recommended you".<sup>35</sup> The actual recommendation by Captain William Peel for Thomas J. Young, William Hall, John Harrison, Nowell Salmon and Richard Southwell (who was killed) was contained also in the War Office correspondence. Further proof of Hall, Young and Salmon being promised the Victoria Cross is contained in a letter written by James William Vaughan to H.L. Wratlaw, dated Cawnpore, December 2nd [1857] in which Vaughan states: "You know that Young and Salmon and Hall (a black man) are named for the Victoria Cross. No such luck for me."<sup>36</sup> Young and Hall were finally gazetted for their medals on 1 February 1859 nearly a year and three months after their heroic deeds. Hall also received the Indian Mutiny Medal with clasps for Lucknow and the Relief of Lucknow.

William Hall continued serving aboard *HMS Shannon* after the capture of the Shah Nujiff on 17 November 1857 and rose from the rank of Able Bodied Seaman to that of Leading Seaman, to Captain of the Mast and eventually to Captain of the Foretop. After being paid off on 29 December 1858 Hall joined the *Donegal*, 2 August 1859, on which he served until 10 June 1862. It was on board the *Donegal* that Hall was presented with the Victoria Cross by Rear Admiral Charles Talbot, Commander-in-Chief, at a special ceremony in the presence of the officers and crew in Queenstown harbour, Ireland on 28 October 1859. For winning the Victoria Cross, Hall was entitled to a Pension of £10 a year from the Admiralty. This sum, he was entitled to received retroactive to the date of the act of gallantry of 17 November 1857, however, in perusing the records relating to the Victoria Cross pension, it would appear that he either did not begin receiving the money until 31 March 1863, or that the records of Victoria Cross pensioners were not recorded until this date. Hall continued to receive this £10 pension until his death on 25 August 1904.<sup>37</sup>

After being discharged from *HMS Donegal* on 10 June 1862 Hall entered on board *HMS Hero* on 29 July 1862.<sup>38</sup> Hall may have done service on this ship earlier as Lieutenant Thomas Bunbury Gough, R.N., midshipman on *Hero* at the time of the Prince of Wales' visit to Canada in 1860 stated that "We had one Victoria Cross man amongst them, [the *Hero* ship's company]; curious to say he was a Negro by name William Hall."<sup>39</sup>

Hall had stated that "after his discharge from the *Hero*, he had served for 2 years on the *Kangsoo* in the Chinese expedition under Captain Sherard Osborne".<sup>40</sup> On 17 February 1866, Hall volunteered for ten years continuous service on board *HMS Canopus*. This engagement was refused due to controversy regarding his date of birth. After clarification, Hall was allowed to volunteer for ten years



continuous service and entered *HMS Bellerophon* on 17 February 1866. He served on this ship until his discharge on 30 September 1870. He next entered *HMS Impregnable* in October 1870 and was discharged on 27 February 1872. The following day he entered on board *HMS Petrel*. Hall served his last stint in the Royal Navy on board the *Royal Adelaide*, from which he was discharged to pension on 4 July 1876, as Petty Officer, First Class.

Following his discharge, Hall returned to his home at Horton Bluff where he became a subsistence farmer. In 1901 the *Hants Journal* reported "He had left the sea and has settled on a little farm at Avonport Station, about 100 yards from the spot where he was born, and having never married he lives with his sister."<sup>41</sup> No further public mention is made of William Hall, until he travelled to Halifax on 19 October 1901 to take part in a parade along with the Royal British Veterans Association during the Royal Visit of the Duke of York (later King George V). After the Duke laid the corner-stone of the South African War Memorial at the Provincial Building, the Royal Couple continued their journey southward through the streets of Halifax. During this segment of the procession, Hall with his medals on was singled out by the Duke for conversation and special recognition:

Passing along Hollis Street, and along Pleasant Street, a very interesting episode occurred on the North side of the only arch erected—a fine conception—the arch being made to represent a portion of Balmoral Castle, the wood being painted to represent a stone structure. Here the Duke inspected the Royal British Veterans, drawn up in line to do honor to the Prince, who took a deep interest in the men, upon whose breast were displayed a variety of war medals." Among them was a Victoria Cross man, one of the three coloured men to enjoy this distinguished honor. The man was introduced to the Duke and Duchess—Wm. Hall of Avonport, Kings Co., who was Captain of the Foretop in the Royal Navy.<sup>42</sup>

On 25 August 1904, William Hall died at his home at Horton Bluff. He was buried, without military honours, at Stoney Hill Baptist Church Cemetery, Lockartville. He became a forgotten hero in Nova Scotia until in 1933, after an article written by John Hundevad had been published in *The Legionary*, members of Canadian Legion in Windsor and Hantsport briefly took an interest in the final resting place of this veteran. In 1937 some interested individuals, led by Alistair MacKinnon, the Provincial Secretary of the Legion, and J. Edward Borden, the undertaker who had buried Hall in 1904, found the location of the unmarked grave in the Stoney Hill Cemetery. Plans were put in place to have Hall's remains disinterred and reburied in a proper manner with a suitable memorial erected in his honour.

In 1945 a quiet reburial took place in the Churchyard of Hantsport Baptist Church, with Mr. Borden and local Legion members in attendance. On 9 November 1947, the memorial in honour of William Hall V.C., was unveiled. The ceremony was conducted by the Lucknow Branch of the Canadian Legion, assisted by the William Hall, V.C. Branch of Halifax, both named after Hall. Twenty-four other branches were also in attendance. The unveiling ceremony included the

participation of members of the Hall family, such as the late Mrs. Ethel Gibson, Ms. Edith Gray and Ms. Nina Ford Adams, along with Rear Admiral C.R.H. Taylor, C.B.E., Atlantic Command of the Royal Canadian Navy, a naval guard of honour, the Royal Canadian Naval band from Halifax, and other dignitaries to carry out the ceremony in an appropriate and deserving fashion.

Before his burial in 1904, Hall's medals were removed from his suit. In 1925 they turned up in the Wardroom, Royal Naval Barracks, Portsmouth, England. The medals were lent for display in the Atlantic Provinces Pavilion at "Expo '67" in Montreal. The Government of Nova Scotia showed an interest in purchasing Hall's Victoria Cross. After learning that John Sullivan's Victoria Cross, who had also served in the Royal Navy, was available for purchase, the Nova Scotia Government obtained this medal. In December 1967, it presented the Victoria Cross of Sullivan to the Wardroom of the Royal Naval Barracks, in exchange for the Cross of William Hall.<sup>43</sup> Hall's Victoria Cross, with his other medals, is held at the Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

A gymnasium at Canadian Forces Base Cornwallis, the Hantsport unit of the Navy Sea Cadet League, and a gun run at the International Tattoo, Halifax, Nova Scotia, have been named in honour of the "humble hero." When one reflects on the career of William Hall, a modest person hailing from a small rural community in Nova Scotia, and his attainment of honour and recognition both locally and internationally, one realizes how astonishing an individual he really was. His career, to a certain extent, demonstrates the abilities and achievements that blacks were capable of during the nineteenth century. It is essential that we view Hall as a worthy role model black Nova Scotians can emulate, but more importantly we must appreciate that his significance is more immense than that. He is a hero to all Nova Scotians and Canadians.

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## ENDNOTES

1. For place of birth see, D.V. Warner, "A Canadian Negro V.C.," *The Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, June 1901, p. 113. For record of his birth, see Micro. Churches. Methodist Parish of Horton and Grand Pré, PANS.
2. Micro. Miscellaneous. Blacks. War of 1812, PANS.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Micro. Deeds. Kings County. Deed No.185, 3 February 1848. The land was purchased from Joshua Borden of Horton for the sum of £40.
5. Charles Bruce Fergusson, " William Hall,V.C. " in *Journal of Education* (Fifth Series), Vol. 17 , No.2, December 1967, p.16.
6. RG 5, Series P, Vol.75, No.122, House of Assembly Petitions, PANS.
7. Micro, Kings County Census of 1851, PANS.
8. Micro. Churches. Methodist Parish of Horton and Grand Pré, PANS.
9. *Ibid.*
10. RG 14,Vol. 40-42, School Papers,1809-1882, PANS.
11. RG 5, Series P, Vol. 73, No. 69, Nova Scotia House of Assembly Petitions, PANS.
12. D.V.Warner, " A Canadian Negro V.C. ", *The Canadian Magazine...*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, June 1901, p. 113.
13. *Journal of Education* (Fifth Series) Vol. 17, No. 2 , December 1967, p.16.
14. National Archives of the United States, Mexican War Pension File.

15. See David Sutherland, "John Taylor Wood," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 13.
16. National Archives of the United States, Mexican War Pension File.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Public Record Office, (hereafter PRO), ADM 139/893, Continuous Service Engagement.
19. *The British Sailor, A Social History of the Lower Deck*, quoted in N.A.M Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy.* ( London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1987), p. 28.
20. N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*, p. 158.
21. Henry Marshall, F.R.S.E., *Military Miscellany; Comprehending a History of the Recruiting of the Army, Military Punishment &c.* ( London: John Murray, 1846 ), p. 88.
22. W.B. Rowbothan, ed., *The Naval Brigades in the Indian Mutiny, 1857-58* (London: Naval Records Society, MDCCCXLVII), p. xi.
23. PRO, ADM 171/24, p. 18.
24. PRO, ADM 171/24, p.22.
25. Frank and Andrea Cook, compilers, *Casualty Roll for the Crimea: The Casualty Rolls for the Siege of Sebastopol and Other Major Actions During the Crimean War 1854-1856.* (London: J.B. Hayward and Son, Medal Specialists, 1976), p. iv.
26. PRO ADM 38/4910, Muster Book, *HMS Rodney*.
27. Sir O'Moore Creagh and E.M. Humphris, eds., *Victoria Cross, 1856-1920: A Complete Record of the Recipients of the Victorian Cross from its Institution in 1856, to the 29th October, 1920 with Descriptions of the Deeds and Services for which the Award was given and with many Biographical and other details.* (Suffolk, England: J.B. Hayward & Son; The Medal Specialists, 1985), p. 6.
28. Major Lawrence L. Gordon, *British Battles and Medals*, (Aldershot, England: Gale and Polden Limited "The Wellington Press", 1946), p. 134.
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