

SERGEANT DANIEL BISSELL US Army (Deceased)

Often mistakenly confused with BG Daniel Bissell, SGT Daniel Bissell enlisted as a fifer with the 8th Connecticut Regiment of the Continental Army. In 1777, he reenlisted as a corporal in the 5th Connecticut Regiment and a few months later he was promoted to sergeant and transferred to the 2nd Connecticut Regiment. SGT Bissell was present at the Battle of White Plains, and also at Trenton and Monmouth. He was slightly wounded in the cheek during the Monmouth campaign.

In the summer of 1781, he was selected by George Washington to undertake a spy mission to learn about the dispositions and plans of the British Army in New York City and spread rumors that delayed any departure they might make from the city. His cover for this assignment was that of a deserter. To bolster his cover, he deserted from his regiment and entered New York City. Bissell was soon forced to enlist in Benedict Arnold's Corps to escape the press gangs. By this time, he was seriously ill and was put in the unit's hospital. He unconsciously revealed his role as a spy to a doctor in the British hospital during a bout of delirium. After 13 months behind enemy lines, Bissell escaped and returned to the Continental Army. By 29 September 1781, he was returned to his unit as an Orderly Sergeant.

On 10 June 1783, he was presented the Badge of Military Merit for conspicuous gallantry and sustained outstanding conduct related to his espionage mission. His citation read in part that he had "...performed some important service within the immediate knowledge of the commander-in-Chief, in which fidelity, perseverance, and good sense of the said Sergeant Bissell were conspicuously manifested...". Washington's presentation of the badge to SGT Bissell represents the first formal recognition of the role Military Intelligence soldiers have played in combat operations. The Badge of Military Merit fell out of disuse for a number of years but was resurrected as the Purple Heart in 1932.

SGT Bissell died in August 1824. He was posthumously inducted in the Hall of Fame in 1988. The Bissell Room at Fort Meade and Bissell Street at Fort Huachuca are named in his honor.

In this painting, General Washington presents the Badge of Military Merit to SGT Elijah Churchill of the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons and SGT William Brown of the 5th Connecticut Regiment, 3 May 1783. SGT Bissell was the third recipient of the award

