

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park



William Carney



Sgt. William H. Carney

54th Massachusetts Infantry

Born: Feb. 29, 1840

Died: Dec. 9, 1908

Sergeant William Harvey Carney enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry at the New Bedford recruiting station and later became the first African American to earn the Medal of Honor. At Fort Wagner on July 18, 1863, Carney carried the U.S. flag into the Confederate fort under intense fire and safely returned the colors to Union lines saying, "The old flag never touched the ground, boys."

Image courtesy of Carl Cruz Collection, New Bedford Historical Society