Military Appreciation Day and Unveiling of *North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts* at the North Carolina Museum of History June 4

Join the [North Carolina Museum of History](https://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org) and the [North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs](https://www.ncdva.gov) Saturday, June 4, 2022, for a day to honor our state’s military history. The event begins with the induction of the inaugural class of the North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts, followed by the unveiling of the display that recognizes the first individuals to receive this honor.

The North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts display is a collaboration between the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the North Carolina Museum of History designed to highlight the accomplishments of North Carolinians who have served our country. The North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts committee members will annually select North Carolinians for induction. Honorees to the North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts are to be persons who, by the excellence of their military career in or connection to civic service, have brought substantial honor, recognition, and esteem to themselves, their families, and the state.

In addition to emphasizing the honor brought to North Carolina by the sacrifice of our state’s military veterans, the mission of the North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts is to promote equal and inclusive opportunities for veterans and their families in all aspects of society.

**The 2021 Inaugural Inductees**
The first official class of inductees to receive this honor includes eight members. Three of them are still living, and the oldest inductee, Norman C. Gaddis, is 99 years old.

The following is a list of the eight members who will be inducted June 4.

**Edwin Anderson (1860–1933)** was born at Masonboro Sound, near Wilmington. His US Navy career spanned four decades, beginning with graduation from the United States Naval Academy in 1882. Anderson was cited for gallantry at Cienfuegos, Cuba, during the Spanish-American War in 1898, and he received the Medal of Honor for his role in the occupation of Veracruz, Mexico, in 1914. For providing humanitarian aid to Japan following a 1923 earthquake, he gained international attention. At his retirement in 1926, Rear Admiral Anderson was the highest-ranking military officer from North Carolina.

**Elmer Gibson (1903–1994)** of Greensboro is an overlooked figure in the integration of the United States armed forces. He was called to the ministry at age 16 and began preaching at St. Matthews Methodist Episcopal Church in Greensboro, the largest Black church in North Carolina at the time. Gibson joined the US Army in 1941 as a chaplain and was stationed in Louisiana, Arizona, Mississippi, and Alaska. Gibson and the men of his regiment were often the targets of discrimination and violence. He later served as an adviser to President Harry Truman on the integration of the military and led some of the military’s first integrated church services.

**Bennis Blue (1953–)** of Harnett County and four other women became the first female officers of the 82nd Airborne Division on June 15, 1978. Although Blue likes to say she was not the first female officer in the 82nd, she was the first one of the five to report that morning—technically making her the unit’s first female officer. Captain Blue served as a supply officer with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 7th Support Group, at McKee Barracks at Crailsheim, Germany, in the 1980s. After her military service, she earned her Ph.D. from Ohio State University and became an English professor at several colleges in North Carolina and Virginia.

**John Thompson (1925–2022)** of Kannapolis enlisted in the US Marine Corps after high school in 1943 because he liked the dress blue uniforms. He was sent to Montford Point, a segregated portion of Camp Lejeune for training Black US Marines, where he joined the boxing team. Prohibited by military policy from serving in a frontline combat unit, Thompson served in an ammunition company in the Pacific theater. After the war, he attended what is now NC A&T State University and taught public school in Guilford County for 23 years.

**Norman Gaddis (1923–)** of Dandridge, Tennessee, flew P-40s and P-51s in World War II and F-4s in Vietnam. On his 73rd mission during the Vietnam War, his aircraft was struck by enemy fire, forcing him to eject. Gaddis was the first US Air Force colonel to survive a bailout and capture in North Vietnam. He was taken to the Hoa Lo Prison—the infamous “Hanoi Hilton”—where he was held as a prisoner of war for almost six years. After retiring from the US Air Force in 1976, Gaddis moved to Winston-Salem and worked at Wake Forest University.

**Theodore “Ted” Triebel (1941–)** was born in the Panama Canal Zone, where his father, Admiral Charles Triebel, was stationed. The younger Triebel graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1964 and became a naval aviator. He served several tours in Southeast Asia on
board USS *Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63) and USS *Midway* (CV-41). Triebel was on his 327th mission when forced to eject over North Vietnam and was taken prisoner on August 27, 1972. After 215 days in captivity, he was released on March 29, 1973. Triebel later commanded the Naval ROTC program at Duke University, NC State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

*Madelon Battle “Glory” Hancock (1881–1930)* was the daughter of Samuel Westray Battle. Born in Pensacola, Florida, she grew up in Asheville, where her father was the personal physician of the Vanderbilt family. She attended school in Raleigh and New York, where she met Colonel Mortimer Hancock of the British army, whom she later married. Within days of the outbreak of World War I, she volunteered as a nurse, spending nearly the entire war in Belgium and France. Her cheery demeanor earned her the nickname “Morning Glory” from her patients. She received 12 decorations from three countries for her wartime service, making her the most decorated woman of the war.

*Elizabeth Barker (1920–2020)* of Elkin decided to enlist in the US Army after seeing a flyer reading “Uncle Sam Wants You.” In March 1943, she joined the Women’s Army Corps and was assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion in Birmingham, England. After serving in England for eight months, she was stationed in Rouen, France, where the 6888th worked in an old aircraft hangar separating backlogged mail that was stacked to the ceiling. Upon returning home, Barker attended Winston-Salem Teacher’s College—the first woman at the school to use the GI Bill. She later taught school for more than 30 years.

**A Proclamation from the Governor**

Governor Roy Cooper will proclaim June 4, 2022, as “North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts Day.” A proclamation and medal to honor will be presented to the inductees and/or their representatives. The event will take place in the Daniels Auditorium at the North Carolina Museum of History in downtown Raleigh at 10 a.m. Following the proclamation, there will be an unveiling ceremony of the North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts display.

**Distinguished Guests**

The event’s distinguished guests will include:

- Secretary Walter E. Gaskin, North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Secretary Reid Wilson, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Director Ken Howard, North Carolina Museum of History
- CBS 17 Anchor Bill Young, Emcee
- Keynote Speaker: Rear Admiral Laura M. Dickey, Fifth District Commander of the United States Coast Guard
- The eight Inductees and/or Their Representatives
For the Public

The North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts is free of charge. The display adjoins Answering the Call, the museum’s newest military exhibition. The public is welcome to join the induction ceremony; however, it will be first come, first served.

During the June 4 event, visitors also will be able to:

- Talk with military reenactors and take in their displays
- Enjoy a concert of patriotic music by members of the North Carolina Brass Band
- Listen to presentations and watch videos
- Savor the taste of barbecue from a local food truck
- Learn about the state’s military museums and historic sites
- Take a curator tour of the exhibit Answering the Call: Experiences of North Carolina’s Military Veterans, 1898–1945

Visitors also will be able to join the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for DNCR Day on the Bicentennial Plaza outside the museum.

Special Thanks To

- North Carolina Military Hall of Firsts Committee Members
- Corning Foundation
- Smithfield’s Chicken ’N Bar-B-Q
- North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources