

Nevertheless, he is “Our Hero”. His brothers Aaron and Henry also served in the 4th Regiment USCT and returned home safely.

### “Our Hero”

What does Alfred B. Hilton mean to Harford Countians? In order to understand Hilton the human being, his life, his experiences, and his probable thoughts and emotions, one must become familiar with the events and historical times that shaped his life.

For this coming African-American History Month, I would like to challenge Harford County residents to learn about and reflect on “Our Hero”. What was life like for a young free black man on a farm in a slave state? What likely possessed him to enlist in the Army? Did he feel pressure from prominent blacks such as the Fredrick Douglass encouraging men of color to take up arms? What were his beliefs about slavery? Did they play a part? Was it to earn money? Did he yearn for a more adventurous life?

What do you think Alfred Hilton and his brothers conversed about as they went off to battle? What

Page 4

possessed Sgt. Hilton to show such bravery during war? How does Hilton’s courage inspire us to be proud to be Americans, Marylanders, and citizens of Harford County? What is the personal meaning of Alfred Hilton’s service and death to each and every one of us?

For greater insight into the challenge, a must read is the *Harford Historical Bulletin*, Fall 2000, available at local libraries, or the Historical Society. As you read the *Bulletin*, research the places, names, and terms with which you are unfamiliar. Find a video on YouTube on the Battle of New Market Heights (Chaffin’s Farm). Use the website <http://www.19usct.com> to better understand the Maryland Regiments of USCTs.

Taking my challenge will, I guarantee, prove to be a rich and rewarding experience. You will come away with a far greater knowledge of and insight into the life of Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton -- “Our Hero” and “The Nations Hero”. Being such a very significant local African-American figure, I will discuss Hilton further in future pamphlets.

Page 5

Author: Jerome L. Hersl, Jr.  
Reviewed: Jim Chrismer  
Contact: [harfordcampaign42@gmail.com](mailto:harfordcampaign42@gmail.com)

## African American History of Harford County, Maryland

**Alfred B. Hilton**  
(1842 – 1864)

January 29, 2016  
Pamphlet 0004



## Campaign 42



**Bringing Communities  
Together Through  
Sharing History**

Aberdeen

**42**

Bel Air

**42**

Havre de Grace

**42**

The story of Harford County's Alfred B. Hilton of Gravel Hill has already been told. Despite his valor during the Civil War, he remains a relative unknown in his home county. This pamphlet will highlight Sergeant Hilton's experiences, in hopes that his legacy receives greater local recognition and understanding.

Monuments celebrating the recipients of the Medal of Honor, the country's highest military award, stand in a number of locations in the United States. Such public memorials exist in Indianapolis, Indiana; Riverside National Cemetery, California; Pueblo, Colorado; and on the hanger deck of the USS Yorktown in Charleston, South Carolina. Reflecting the spirit of all these national memorials, the Riverside monument serves to "commemorate the enormous courage, commitment and sacrifice of our greatest, national military heroes". One of these greatest national military heroes is "Our Hero" -- Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton (1842-1864), the only Harford County native to receive the Medal of Honor.

As color sergeant of the lead brigade, Hilton guided USCT troops against the enemy. While charging up the hill, unarmed, and shouldering the U.S. flag, he encountered the seriously wounded regimental flag bearer. Rather than allow the flag of the 4<sup>th</sup> USCT to touch the ground, Hilton relieved his comrade, and carried both flags as he fought his way up the slope in the face of artillery and gunfire.



The preserved flag of the Maryland 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, USCT. Property of the Maryland Historical Society

Inevitably, Sgt. Hilton received at least one serious injury to his right leg, but he never let either color to fall to the ground. A month later, after having his right leg amputated in a segregated Army Hospital in Fort Monroe, VA, the young Sergeant succumbed to infection. His commanding general recommended he be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



Alfred Hilton was a true War Hero who never enjoyed a Hero's welcome home. Following his lonely death, he received a military burial in what is today's Hampton National Cemetery, Hampton VA. In recent years military authorities changed his standard gravestone to that of a MOH recipient.