

# GENERAL GEORGE HENRY THOMAS

*As Portrayed by Robert Thomas*



George Henry Thomas was born on July 31, 1816 in Newsom's Depot, Virginia. Thomas was appointed to West Point in 1836, and was a career United States Army officer and a Union General during the American Civil War, one of the principal commanders in the Western Theater.

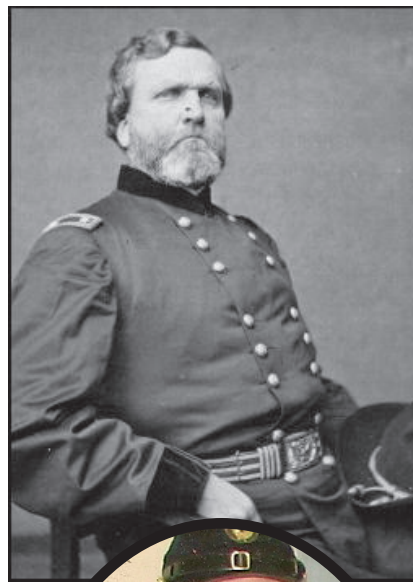
At the outbreak of the Civil War, 19 of the 36 officers in the 2nd U.S. Cavalry resigned, including three of Thomas's superiors—Albert Sidney Johnston, Robert E. Lee, and William J. Hardee. Many Southern-born officers were torn between loyalty to their states and loyalty to their country. Thomas struggled with the decision but opted to remain with the United States. His Northern-born wife and his dislike of slavery probably helped influence his decision. In response, his family turned his picture against the wall, destroyed his letters, and never spoke to him again. During the economic hard times in the South after the war, Thomas sent some money to his sisters, who angrily refused to accept it, declaring they had no brother. Thomas served in the Mexican-American War and later chose to remain with the United States Army for the Civil War, despite his heritage as a Virginian. He won one of the first Union victories in the war, at Mill Springs in Kentucky, and served in important subordinate commands at Perryville and Stones River. His stout defense at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863 saved the Union Army from being completely routed, earning him his most famous nickname, the "Rock of Chickamauga." He followed soon after with a dramatic breakthrough on Missionary

Ridge in the Battle of Chattanooga. In the Franklin-Nashville Campaign of 1864, he achieved one of the most decisive victories of the war, destroying the army of Confederate General John Bell Hood, at the Battle of Nashville.

After the end of the Civil War, Thomas commanded the Department of the Cumberland in Kentucky and Tennessee, and at times also West Virginia and parts of Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama, through 1869. During the Reconstruction period, Thomas acted to protect freedmen from white abuses. He set up military commissions to enforce labor contracts since the local courts had either ceased to operate or were biased against blacks. Thomas also used troops to protect places threatened by violence from the Ku Klux Klan.

President Andrew Johnson offered Thomas the rank of lieutenant general, with the intent to eventually replace Grant, a Republican and future president, with Thomas as general in chief, but the ever-loyal Thomas asked the Senate to withdraw his name for that nomination because he did not want to be party to politics.

In 1869, he requested assignment to command the Division of the Pacific with headquarters at the Presidio of San Francisco. He died there of a stroke while writing an answer to an article criticizing his military career by his wartime rival John Schofield. None of his blood relatives attended his funeral. He was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, in Troy, New York.



George Henry Thomas is portrayed by Robert Thomas.