

Major General Thomas Carmichael Hindman

He was born on January 28, 1828, at Knoxville, Tennessee, one of six children of planter and Indian agent Thomas Hindman and Sallie (Holt) Hindman. In 1841 the father bought a new plantation in Ripley, Mississippi, where Thomas went to local schools and private schools, graduating with honors from Lawrenceville Classical Institute near Princeton, New Jersey.

At the age of seventeen he joined the Second Mississippi Regiment under Colonel Clark in Tippah County, Mississippi, to fight in the Mexican War. His company was assigned to garrison duty at Monterrey and saw no action. This did not prevent him from working his way up through the ranks. His writing skills earned him a position as adjutant and he mustered out as a lieutenant.

After the Mexican war Hindman returned to Ripley and passed the bar exam. His brother Robert was engaged in a gunfight with a fellow named William Falkner. Robert's gun misfired and Falkner stabbed him to death and was subsequently found not guilty of murder by reason of self-defense. Shortly afterwards, Falkner killed a Hindman family friend and was again acquitted. Thomas Hindman and Falkner then engaged in a gunfight and neither was wounded.

Hindman moved to Helena, Arkansas, in 1856 and established a law practice. His marriage to Mary Watkins Biscoe, the daughter of a wealthy planter, enhanced his financial status and his political opportunities. He and fellow future Major General Patrick Cleburne formed a friendship and became business partners. Hindman and Cleburne were both wounded in a gunfight on the streets of Helena with the anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic Know-Nothings. They were exonerated and, afterwards, went to Hindman's parents' house in Mississippi. Hindman received praise for his actions and became a force in Democratic politics after the Know-Nothings were defeated.

Hindman ran successfully for a seat in the United States House of Representatives in 1858 and was reelected in 1860. He became a strong advocate for secession and when Arkansas withdrew from the Union he resigned his seat. After Fort Sumter, he helped raise the Second Arkansas Regiment and was named as its colonel.



By September of 1861 he had been promoted to brigadier general and was a brigade commander at the Battle of Shiloh where he received a minor wound when an artillery shell struck his horse. After this battle he was promoted to major general. He was dispatched to Little Rock and charged with the task of organizing the state against a Union invasion. His extreme actions of burning all the cotton fields, declaring martial law, and harsh treatment of troops made him very unpopular with civilians and troops. But he was credited with saving Little Rock from a Federal invasion. He was moved to Tennessee where he was wounded at the Battle of Chickamauga and again at the Kennesaw Mountain, the last leaving him partially blind and unable to return to duty.

In 1866 the Federal Government indicted him for his activities during the war and he fled to Mexico City with his family. At first he tried to practice law in Mexico City, but soon joined other Confederate refugees in Carlotta where he again tried to practice law and engaged in coffee planting. Conditions in Mexico were unfavorable to Hindman's efforts, and in 1867, he returned to Helena. His combative spirit quickly embroiled him in Reconstruction politics. In the 1868 election, he urged conservatives to take the oath of allegiance so that they could vote against Republican candidates. He was unique among conservatives, however, in encouraging acceptance of African-Americans suffrage and organization of black voters into support of the conservative cause.

On September 28, 1868, an assassin fatally shot him through a window at his home. Law officials never arrested anyone for the act. The motive of the killer was never determined, although political opponents, personal grudges, and even

domestic problems were among the reasons considered. He is buried at Maple Hill Cemetery in Helena.

