

= Major General George Henry Thomas =

Major General George Henry Thomas , also known as the Thomas Circle Monument , is an equestrian sculpture in Washington , D.C. that honors Civil War general George Henry Thomas . The monument is located in the center of Thomas Circle , on the border of the downtown and Logan Circle neighborhoods . It was sculpted by John Quincy Adams Ward , best known for his work on the George Washington statue . Attendees at the dedication in 1879 included President Rutherford B. Hayes , Generals Irvin McDowell , Philip Sheridan , and William Tecumseh Sherman , senators and thousands of soldiers .

The sculpture is one of eighteen Civil War monuments in Washington , D.C. , which were collectively listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 . It is considered by art critics and historians to be one of the best equestrian statues in the city . The statue , which rests on an oval pedestal , and the surrounding park are owned and maintained by the National Park Service , a federal agency of the Interior Department .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

George Henry Thomas was a Union general in the Civil War and a principal commander in the Western Theater . During the Battle of Chickamauga , he was responsible for saving the Union Army from being completely routed , earning him the nickname " Rock of Chickamauga " . The Society of the Army of the Cumberland , composed of veterans , chose to erect a monument to Thomas utilizing bronze cannons captured from Confederate forces . John Quincy Adams Ward was selected to sculpt the statue and began the process in 1875 . The sculpture , which cost \$ 40 @, @ 000 , was paid for by the Society . On July 31 , 1876 , Congress appropriated \$ 25 @, @ 000 to pay for the pedestal and base , although the final cost was only \$ 20 @, @ 000 . The contract for the statue stated three of the horse 's feet had to be touching the ground . This was to make sure it wouldn 't receive the same type of criticism Andrew Jackson 's sculpture in Lafayette Square received and to avoid the " stagey , theatrical animal that poses and postures in so many of the public squares of the United States . " Thomas 's widow , Frances , gave Ward photographs of her husband and lent him Thomas ' uniform and saddle to help with the design . After he finished the plaster model in 1879 , Ward invited Thomas ' family , Society officers , and members of the press to his studio in New York to view the model . The reaction was very positive . The Society was so impressed with Ward 's work , they later selected him to design the James A. Garfield Monument and the Philip Sheridan sculpture as well , though the contract for the latter was eventually cancelled . Architects John L. Smithmeyer and Paul J. Pelz , best known for designing the Thomas Jefferson Building and Healy Hall , were selected to design the monument base . The Bureau Brothers Foundry cast the sculpture while stonework was provided by contractor M. K. Chase . The traffic circle where the monument was erected was previously known as Memorial Circle because nearby residents planted memorial trees in honor of their respective home states . The name was changed to Thomas Circle when the monument was installed .

= = = Dedication = = =

The memorial was dedicated on November 19 , 1879 , with an estimated 50 @, @ 000 people in attendance . Harper 's Weekly described the event as the grandest ceremony ever held in the city . The ceremony featured a two @-@ mile 2 miles (3 @. @ 2 km) military procession , led by General Thomas Turpin Crittenden , of around 500 Army of the Cumberland veterans , 1 @, @ 000 army troops , 1 @, @ 000 marines and sailors , state troops from Maryland , New York , and Pennsylvania , and generals Irvin McDowell , Philip Sheridan , and William Tecumseh Sherman . Music in the procession was performed by seven military bands , with the United States Marine Band in the first

position . The procession began east of the U.S. Capitol and marched past President Rutherford B. Hayes at the White House on its way toward the memorial site . Most of the buildings along the line of march , including nearly every building on Pennsylvania Avenue , were decorated with flags , streamers , and other decorations . The most elaborately decorated building along the line of march was the Quartermaster General 's office , located on the corner of 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW , which was decorated with numerous flags and a canvas bearing a portrait of Thomas . The circle and the homes surrounding it were extensively decorated . There were 38 poles , each 33 feet (10 m) high , placed around the edge of the circle , with the flag of every U.S. state at the time . A temporary platform seating 1 @, @ 500 people was erected around part of the circle for special guests and dignitaries .

The ceremony began with a prayer followed by the songs " Hail to the Chief " and " The Star @-@ Spangled Banner " . The statue was then unveiled accompanied by a thirteen gun salute . After the unveiling , a chorus of 100 men sang hymns with music performed by the Marine Band . General Anson G. McCook , a member of the Fighting McCooks who served under Thomas , delivered the dedication speech . Senator Stanley Matthews also gave a speech which included the presentation of the statue as an offering to the country . The statue was accepted by President Hayes on behalf of the American people . Hayes stated : " In the name of the people of the United States I accept this noble statue , so worthy of its subject , erected in honor of Gen. George H. Thomas by his comrades of the illustrious Army of the Cumberland . " The monument was the sixth equestrian sculpture erected in Washington , D.C.

= = = Influence and historic designation = = =

Art critics , historians , and Civil War monument researchers Kirk Savage and Kathryn Allamong Jacob consider the Thomas monument one of the best equestrian statues in Washington , D.C. According to Savage , it " enhanced the circle 's prestige by giving it a commemorative identity in this rapidly emerging landscape " and " served at once as a national monument honoring a war hero and a real estate amenity for an affluent urban setting . " It increased development at Thomas Circle and the surrounding area , although none of the stately homes around the circle are still standing . Along with seventeen other Civil War monuments , Major General George Henry Thomas was added to the National Register of Historic Places on September 20 , 1978 , and the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites on March 3 , 1979 . The sculpture and the surrounding park are owned and maintained by the National Park Service , a federal agency of the Interior Department .

= = Design and location = =

The monument is located in the center of Thomas Circle , at the intersection of 14th Street , M Street , Massachusetts Avenue and Vermont Avenue NW . Following a reconstruction of Thomas Circle completed in 2006 , new sidewalks and landscaping allowed visitors easier access to the monument and surrounding park . The monument is approximately 32 feet (9 @. @ 8 m) high while the statue itself is around 16 feet (4 @. @ 9 m) high . The bronze figures of Thomas and the horse are around twice life @-@ size . Thomas is depicted surveying a battlefield while at the top of a hill . He is holding the reins of the horse with his left hand and his right hand is holding his hat and gloves . Thomas is wearing a double @-@ breasted military coat and plain riding boots , while his sword hangs from his left side . The horse looks straight ahead as its mane and tail are blown by the wind . Its " dilated nostrils , erect ears , tense muscles , and waving , bushy tail " demonstrate the horse 's excitement . The horse was originally designed to be a mare . After it was pointed out that Thomas only rode stallions , additions were made to the sculpture , though the slender head and neck are still reminiscent of a mare .

The statue stands on an oval granite pedestal featuring two Baroque scrolls on each end . A bronze badge of the Army of the Cumberland , which Thomas had commanded , and a laurel wreath is also on each side of the pedestal . The circular granite base features four steps and four blocks protruding from the pedestal to the lowest step . Decorative gas lamps previously stood on the base

's four blocks , but these were removed sometime around 1922 .

Inscriptions on the monument include the following :

(pedestal east side) ERECTED BY HIS COMRADES / OF THE SOCIETY OF / THE ARMY OF
THE CUMBERLAND

(pedestal , west side) MAJ . GEN . GEORGE H. THOMAS / SAN FRANCISCO CAL . / MARCH 28
, 1870

(bottom of sculpture , east side) J. Q. A. WARD SCULP 1879

(bottom of sculpture , west side) BUREAU BROS & HEATON / FOUNDERS . PHIL