

The Life of General Stonewall Jackson



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Mary L. Williamson

Christian Liberty Press

Arlington Heights, Illinois

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2011 Printing

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Christian Liberty Press

502 West Euclid Avenue
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004
www.christianlibertypress.com

Second Revised Edition
Revised by Michael J. McHugh and Edward J. Shewan
Layout and editing by Edward J. Shewan
Cover design and graphics by Eric D. Bristley

Set in Garamond and Tiffany

Printed in the United States of America

Acknowledgment

Special thanks are extended to Mr. James L. Marks for granting us permission to utilize the images of Thomas J. Jackson located on the cover of this book and Robert E. Lee located in the body of the book. Information on these paintings by Hong Min Zou is available from Mr. Marks' gallery. You may write to:

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Preface

It is the publisher's firm belief that the people of America today need to be exposed to the lives of great and good American patriots who were followers of Jesus Christ. The life of General Thomas J. Jackson is worthy of just such attention, for it helps to remind us that truly great Americans are those who seek to remain loyal to God and to the U.S. Constitution.

In this brief sketch of the famous Civil War general, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, Mary L. Williamson has attempted to portray the wonder of his matchless military genius, his uprightness of conduct, his firm belief in an overruling Providence, and his unflinching submission to the divine will of the Lord Jesus Christ. These traits of character formed the cornerstone upon which Christ erected the edifice of his greatness, and upon which young people of our day would do well to build.

In preparing this work, the author carefully studied the classic reference work, written by Professor R. L. Dabney, on the life of General Thomas Jackson. Professor Dabney was Jackson's chief-of-staff during the War Between the States and had firsthand knowledge of Stonewall Jackson's personal character and military exploits.

This book is respectfully presented to the public in the hope that it will bless the lives of all who read it.

Michael J. McHugh
Arlington Heights, Illinois

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**The Confederate Memorial at Stone Mountain Park,
near Atlanta, Georgia**

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General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson and His Officers

Chapter 1

An Orphan Boy

1824–1841

Thomas Jonathan
“Stonewall”

Jackson was born on January 21, 1824, at Clarksburg in western Virginia. His family came from Scotch-Irish stock. His great-grandfather, John Jackson, was born in Ireland but his parents moved to London



**Birthplace of Thomas Jonathan Jackson
Clarksburg, Virginia**

when John was only two years old. John Jackson grew to be a great businessman. In 1748 he came to the New World to make his fortune and landed in the State of Maryland. A short time later, John Jackson married Elizabeth Cummins.

John Jackson soon moved West with his wife and eventually bought lands in what is now known as Upshur County, West Virginia. Since land was cheap then, he soon owned a large piece of land and became a rich man for those times. He was greatly aided by his brave wife Elizabeth. In those days the Indians still made war upon the settlers. It is said that in more than one of those Indian raids Elizabeth Jackson aided in driving off the Indian warriors. This good woman was noted for her fine mind, good looks, and great height.

When the great War for Independence started, John Jackson and several of his sons marched off to war and at its close came back safe

to their Virginia home. In these lovely and fertile valleys, John Jackson and his wife Elizabeth passed long and active lives. The husband lived to be eighty-six years old while his wife lived to the great age of one hundred and five years. Her God-given strength of body and mind fitted her to rear a race of mighty men. Thomas Jackson was the great-grandson of these good people.

The father of Thomas Jackson was a good and kind man named Jonathan Jackson. This gentleman worked as a lawyer in the State of Virginia. He is said to have been a hardworking and godly man. Thomas's mother was Julia Neale, the daughter of a merchant in the village of Parkersburg on the Ohio River. Mrs. Jackson was a loving mother and devout Christian. Thomas had one brother, Warren, and two sisters, Elizabeth and Laura Ann.



Father of "Stonewall" Jackson

Shortly before Laura Ann was born, her sister Elizabeth became sick with a fever and died. Her father, worn out by care and misery, was also taken ill and, two weeks after her death, he was laid in a grave by her side. The dual loss of her husband and daughter undoubtedly caused Mrs. Jackson to prematurely give birth to Laura Ann on March 27, 1826.

After the death of Jonathan Jackson, it was found that he had not left any property for his widow and children. They were now without a home, so a private charity decided to give the widow a small house. Here she sewed and taught school, caring as well as she could for her little fatherless children.

In the year 1830, Julia married Mr. Woodson, a lawyer, who was pleased with her youth and beauty. Her children—Warren, Tho-

mas, and Laura Ann—were now claimed by their father's family because they did not approve of the new marriage. As her new husband was not a rich man and her health was failing, she was eventually forced to give them up. Six-year-old Thomas and little Laura Ann, then only four years of age, were sent away to their grandmother Mrs. Edward Jackson, who lived at Jackson Mills. Warren had to be sent off to his Uncle Alfred Neale in faraway Parkersburg on the Ohio River.

After living at their grandmother's for only a few months, Thomas and Laura Ann were summoned to visit their mother who was desperately ill. She had become ill after she gave birth to a son named Wirt Woodson and, with little time left, she wanted to see her children. Death for her had no sting and Thomas said, many years later, that her dying words and prayers had never been erased from his heart. In the latter part of 1831, she was laid to rest not far from the famous Hawk's Nest on New River, West Virginia.

Thomas and Laura Ann were once again sent to Jackson Mills to live with their grandmother Jackson in Lewis county. They were happy there and came to know something of a real home. Their Uncle Cummins and Aunts Rebecca and Polly also lived there and grew fond of the children; they and grandmother Jackson took good care of Thomas and Laura Ann. Across the brook from the house was a large grove of sugar maple trees where the children would go to play "making sugar." It was a great pleasure for Thomas to build bridges for his little sister to walk on in crossing the brook; and many were the delights of the cool and fragrant forest.

As it turned out, their good life came to an end when their grandmother died in August of 1835. Since their aunts had married and moved on, their were no women left to raise the children. Laura Ann was sent to Aunt Rebecca White who lived near Parkersburg and Thomas was sent to live with Aunt Polly and her stern husband, Mr. Isaac Brake, near Clarksburg. Though Thomas could not live with his sister Laura Ann, he always cherished the warmest

love for her. The very first money he ever earned was spent in buying Laura Ann a pretty silk dress.

Young Thomas was a handsome child with rosy cheeks, wavy brown hair, and deep blue eyes. It is said of him that, as a child, he was strangely quiet and manly. The sadness of his young life made him grow up very fast. When he was only eleven years old, he went one day to the home of his father's cousin, Judge John G. Jackson, in Clarksburg.

While eating his dinner, he said to Mrs. Jackson in a quiet way, "Uncle and I don't agree. I have quit him and shall not go back any more." This kind cousin tried to show him that he was in fault and that he should go back to his Uncle Brake. He only shook his head and said more firmly than ever, "No, uncle and I don't agree. I have quit him and shall not go back any more." It seems that his uncle had tried to govern him by excessive force instead of through his sense of right and wrong. This strange child calmly made up his mind not to stay where there would be constant warfare.

From Judge Jackson's residence he went that evening to the home of another cousin who also tried to persuade him to return to his Uncle Brake. Thomas only said, "I have quit there. I shall not go back there any more." The next morning he traveled alone on foot for eighteen miles until he came to the home of his Uncle Cummins Jackson, the half brother of his father.

There he soon felt quite at home again with his kind uncle. Uncle Cummins was a bachelor who owned a fine farm and mills. He was quite fond of his little nephew and took time to teach Thomas all the arts of country life. He treated him more as an equal than as a child, for he saw immediately the decent nature which he had to deal with.

In the fall of 1836, his brother Warren came to Jackson Mills to visit Thomas. Warren, who was now fifteen years old, had opened a school in Upshur County and had become a young man of learning. Thomas greatly admired him and was eager to go with him to

visit Laura Ann who now lived at the home of Uncle Alfred on the Ohio River. When the brothers arrived at Uncle Alfred's, they had a joyous reunion with their beloved sister.

At that time, they heard of many people who were making a great deal of money by cutting wood on the river islands of the Ohio and Mississippi and selling it to passing steamboats. Warren eventually induced Thomas to leave their uncle's home to seek their fortunes in the great western part of the country. From Parkersburg they rafted downstream and no one heard from them for several months. In February of the following year, they returned to their kind relatives, ragged and ill with chills and fever.



Warren and Thomas on the Ohio River

Their story was that they made a raft and floated down to one of the lonely islands in the Mississippi River near the Kentucky shore where they cut wood for steamboats on the river. Here they spent the winter alone with little food, in the midst of a dense forest surrounded by the rushing waters of the great Mississippi. Eventually, illness forced them to seek their way home. Warren and Thomas stopped at the home of their Uncle Brake but Thomas boldly said that he was going back to his good Uncle Cummins. As a result of

this experience, however, disease had laid so firm a hold upon Warren that, after lingering a few years, he died at the age of nineteen.

Thomas began to take private lessons from a neighbor Mr. Robert P. Ray; later, he went to a country school a little distance away at a place called McCann's Run. As a student, he showed no aptness for any study except arithmetic. When called upon to recite a lesson, Thomas would flatly say that he did not understand it and therefore was not ready; nor would he go to the next lesson until he had learned the first perfectly. Thus he was always behind his class.

He was never bad-tempered at school but was always ready for a fun game. When there were games of "bat and ball" or "prisoner's base," he was sure to be chosen captain of one side and that side generally won. Furthermore, if he was treated fairly by his playmates, he was gentle and yielding; however, if he thought himself wronged, he did not hesitate to fight it out. It is said that he would never admit that he had been beaten in a fight and was always ready to renew the contest when his foe challenged him again.

In the summer, Thomas worked on the farm and became of use to his uncle in many ways. One of his most frequent jobs was to haul great logs of oak and pine from the woods to the sawmill. He became a respected driver of oxen and was known throughout the countryside as a young man of great strength and courage. From the ages of nine to sixteen, his life passed between the school and the farm. He was then like his father, low of stature, but afterwards he grew tall.

During 1840, Thomas turned his thoughts toward spiritual matters in spite of his uncle's worldly influence. He would walk three miles to attend church each Sunday and listen with unabated attention to the longest sermons. He also chose to study the Scriptures carefully to share fully in the joys and duties of the Christian life. As he continually read God's Word, he became quite a student of the Bible. He even taught his good friend Joe Lightburn the truths he learned. Ironically, they both rose to the rank of general on opposite

sides during the War Between the States. Lightburn eventually became a Baptist minister after the war. As for the young Tom Jackson, he reportedly considered going into the ministry prior to the war. Thomas, however, was discouraged from following this calling due to his lack of education and his apprehension about speaking in public.

In 1841, Thomas's life changed when he was offered a new position by his Uncle Cummins. On June 11, he was made constable of one half of Lewis County. This seventeen-year-old was now seen with his bag of bills and account books going up and down the hills of the county. In this work, he had to be firm and exact, for it was now his task to collect money due for debts.

The following story is told of his nerve and skill in doing this unpleasant duty. A man who owed a debt of ten dollars promised to pay it at a given time. The day came and the man did not keep his word. Young Jackson paid the money out of his own purse and then watched for the man who would not pay his debt. The very next morning, the man came riding up the street on a good horse. When the man dismounted from his horse, Jackson immediately confronted him with not



Jackson and the Debtor

keeping his word and was going to take the horse for the debt. When the latter resisted, a fierce fight took place in the street. In the midst of the fight, the man mounted his horse and started riding off.

Jackson, however, sprang forward and seized the bridle. Seeing that he could not get the man off the horse in any other way, he led it to the low door of the Weston livery stable. The man hit him right and left with his whip but Jackson clung to the bridle and pulled the horse into the stable. The man was forced to slide off his horse and Jackson was able to seize the animal and the bill was paid.

Though this life in the open air was good for the health of our hero, it did not benefit his morals. He was kept away from home and was thrown with the worst class of people in Lewis County. His Uncle Cummins, moreover, was keeping “bachelor’s hall.” He kept race horses and nobody except Thomas could ride for him if a contest was close. It was said through all that country that if a horse could win, it would prevail if young Tom Jackson rode him in the race. Young Thomas, therefore, began to spend more time seeking the world’s treasures and had less time for the Lord.

This young man was thrown early upon the world without mother or father or any godly influence, except for the preaching and reading of Holy Scripture, to keep him in the right way. In this wild, rough life, God had begun to plant the seed of His Word in the heart of this orphan boy. Even now, the great God, who has said that He will be a father to the fatherless, was opening up a way to make Himself known to young Jackson. Thomas Jackson would come to love the Lord in future years because the Lord first loved him.