

# Philip Henry Sheridan Biography

## Philip Henry Sheridan

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# Contents

<a href="#">Philip Henry Sheridan Biography.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Biography.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>

# Biography

Philip Henry Sheridan (1831-1888), American soldier, was noted for his part in the 1864-1865 Virginia campaigns of the Civil War.

Philip H. Sheridan was born in Albany, N.Y., on March 6, 1831, the son of Irish immigrant parents who soon moved to Somerset, Ohio. At the age of 14 he went to work as a store clerk. Inspired by the Mexican War, he secured an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1848. A year's disciplinary suspension delayed his graduation until 1853. Tours of duty in California and Oregon made him into a military jack-of-all-trades and doubtless helped him develop self-reliance and resourcefulness.

Following the outbreak of the Civil War, Sheridan received a captaincy in the 13th Infantry, and after several irksome administrative assignments he was made colonel of the 2d Michigan Volunteer Cavalry. After duty in northern Mississippi he was promoted on July 1, 1862, to brigadier general. Shifted soon afterward to the infantry, he competently commanded a division during the western campaigns.

In March 1864 Sheridan was ordered to Virginia to command the cavalry corps. Following an undistinguished performance at the Battle of the Wilderness, he led a long raid against Gen. Robert E. Lee's communications, which devastated Confederate supply depots and railroads.

On August 1 Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered Sheridan to take command in the Shenandoah Valley and dispose of Gen. Jubal Early's force, which had nearly taken Washington in July and still lingered threateningly in the lower valley. With 40,000 infantry and cavalry Sheridan defeated Early's vastly outnumbered force three times in September and October 1864 and finally dispersed the remnant at Waynesboro in March 1865. Meanwhile he had systematically devastated the valley. Sheridan then marched unopposed through central Virginia, reaching Grant in time to participate in the final campaign against Lee.

When the war ended, Sheridan was sent to police the Texas-Mexican border. In 1867, following passage of the Reconstruction Acts, he was assigned to command the Fifth Military District, comprising Louisiana and Texas. President Andrew Johnson, believing Sheridan too heavy-handed in civil affairs, transferred him to the Department of the Missouri to direct operations against the Plains Indians. He was promoted to lieutenant general in 1869, and after succeeding Gen. William T. Sherman as general in chief, he became a full general in 1888. Sheridan completed his memoirs shortly before his death on Aug. 5, 1888, in Nonquitt, Mass.