

# Harry Thomas

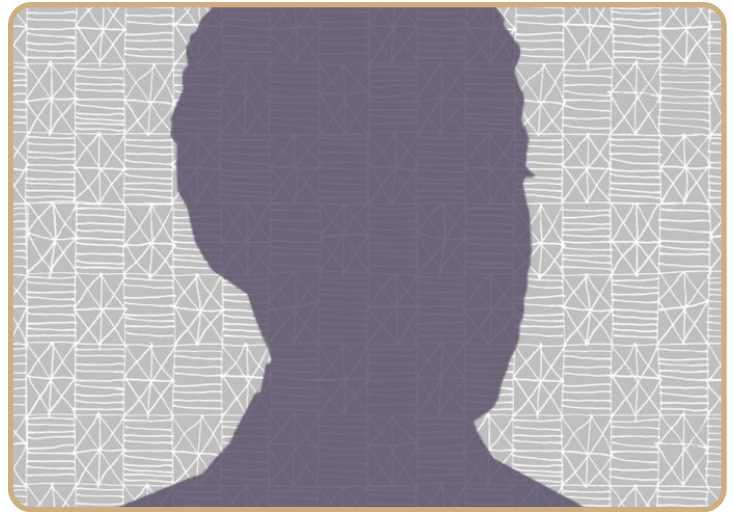
**Author:** Emily Hudson, Story Catcher

**Places:** Flat Rock/Little Rock, Bourbon County, Kentucky; Paris, Bourbon County, Kentucky; Johnstown, Pennsylvania

**Birth:** March 3, 1893

**Death:** October 25, 1967

**Professions:** Groom



## Birth, Childhood, Family

Harry Thomas was born in Flat Rock, Kentucky, in Bourbon County. His parents were William Thomas and Maggie Nichols Thomas. He had a brother, Joe Thomas, whose mother's name was Bell, and one niece, Willie Mae Morgan. Harry Thomas never married.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas served in World War I as a private in Company D 541 Engineers. He was stationed in France from July 18, 1918 to July 30, 1919 where he was a cook.<sup>2</sup>

## Career and Notable Achievements

Thomas worked as a stable boy and groom for James and Mary Dodge at Hillside Farm. The 600-acre farm, sometimes referred to as the Dodge Farm, became known for breeding horses and racing Thoroughbreds. James Dodge taught Thomas about horses. Thomas worked with Standardbred pacers and trotters before the farm had Thoroughbreds.

Thomas worked with many horses stabled at Hillside Farm. Wise Counselor was the most notable Thoroughbred. During the racing season of 1923, Wise Counselor started five times. The stallion lost only one race, finishing second to Energy at Latonia. Wise Counselor won the following events:

- Harold Stakes
- Queen City Handicap
- Kentucky Jockey Club Stakes

Wise Counselor also won the International Stakes at Belmont Park. Yet, he was best known as a broodmare sire.<sup>3</sup>

## Post-career, Legacy and Death

Hillside Farm sold their stable of horses in 1944 due to economic conditions brought on by World War II. During this time, Thomas helped with the cattle, tobacco, corn, and soybeans as a farm laborer. By the time the family brought horses back to Hillside Farm in 1960, Thomas had retired.

The Dodge family thought of Thomas as a member of their own family, often calling him “Cousin”. He is remembered by the family as a good worker. After retiring from Hillside Farm, Harry Thomas went to live with his niece in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He died there in 1967. He was buried at Cedar Heights Cemetery in Paris, Kentucky.<sup>4</sup>

## Sources

Kuster, Betsy. 2019. Interview by Karen Lanier. Chronicle of African Americans in the Horse Industry Oral History Project. Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. <https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt76rtq1h35vd>.

“Electronic Communication With Betsy Kuster: Wise Counsellor and Other Horses Groomed by Harry Thomas.” Letter to Betsy Kuster. 2021, February 24, 2021.

United States Selective Service System. World War I Selective Service Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration.

Kentucky, Bourbon County. Harry Thomas. June 5, 1917.

“Pennsylvania Veterans Burial Cards, 1777–2012 for Harry Thomas.” 1967.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Betsy Kuster Interview: Harry Thomas, African American Groom.

<sup>2</sup>“World War I Draft Record for Harry Thomas.”

<sup>3</sup>“Electronic Communication With Betsy Kuster: Wise Counsellor and Other Horses Groomed by Harry Thomas,” February 24, 2021.

<sup>4</sup>“Pennsylvania Veterans Burial Cards, 1777–2012 for Harry Thomas.”

