

Theodore O'Hara, ca. 1840



Known as "the soldier poet," Frankfort, Kentucky, native, Theodore O'Hara blended literary flair and a remarkable series of military exploits. An attorney, journalist, and Mexican-American War quartermaster of Kentucky volunteers, he led a unit of Kentucky filibusters in an expedition to seize Cuba in 1850. Civil War command of an Alabama regiment followed, but he is best known for his 1847 poem, "Bivouac of the Dead," written to commemorate the band of Kentuckians killed at the battle of Buena Vista. Often inscribed on soldiers' tombstones, lines of the poem appear on plaques at Arlington National Cemetery.

Donated by Governor Luke P. Blackburn, 1909.6

War is not just a compilation of dates that represent a series of battles. "[Kentucky Military Treasures](#)," an online exhibition that illustrates the personal stories of bravery, innovation, heartache and perseverance, provides evidence of the people and artifacts history books often neglect. To learn more about this item and others in the military collections of the Kentucky Historical Society, visit "[Kentucky Military Treasures](#)."