



Thomas Leiper Kane

Born: January 27, 1822 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Died: December 26, 1883 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Clerk of Court: 1847-1858

Mr. Kane served in the Union Army during the Civil War and led the noted Bucktail Regiment of Pennsylvania. He was wounded in the battle of Gettysburg. He was the brother of Elisha Kent Kane, the famous arctic explorer.

He served as the Clerk of the Court from 1847 to 1858.

At the time of his death in 1883, the following obituary notices appeared that well summarize his life and career:

Colonel of the Bucktails.¹

Death in Philadelphia on Wednesday of Gen. Thomas L. Kane.

General Thomas L. Kane, died in Philadelphia on Wednesday. He was the second son of Judge John K. Kane, of that city, and a brother of Elisha Kent Kane the Arctic explorer. Having overtaxed himself in study, he was sent, at the age of sixteen, to Norfolkshire, England, to reside with an aged kinsman, to whose property he was by family arrangement to succeed. Finding it a condition of his fortune that he should become a British subject, he broke with his relative, and left England for the continent, where his education was completed. He studied law and was admitted to practice; but an adventurous spirit possessed him, and he forsook his profession to find, in the western wilds of America, its satisfaction. With his brother, Elisha Kent Kane, whose exploits have filled the world with

¹ *Colonel of the Bucktails*, THE PITTSBURGH POST (PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA) (Dec. 28, 1883), <http://www.newspapers.com/image/87567865>

their renown, he had early planned extended travel, and when his brother entered upon his Arctic explorations he went west of the Missouri, where his residence in the Indian villages of the plains was one of continual adventure.

In 1846, while on a confidential mission from President Polk to New Mexico, he fell in with the Mormons, just then driven from Nauvoo, whose wretched condition excited his pity and moved him to efforts for their amelioration. President Buchanan, in 1858, complimented him in his message for his mediatory offices in pacifying Utah. In 1848 he was Chairman of the Free Soil State Central Committee. At the time of the passage of the fugitive slave law of 1850, he was a United States Commissioner [and Clerk of the Court], but spurning its provisions, he resigned his place in a letter which was construed as contempt of court. The action of the District Judge in committing him was, however, overruled by Judge Grier, of the Supreme Bench.

In 1860, abolitionist though he was, he deprecated war. He counselled peaceful measures, advocated the Crittenden compromise, and made numerous trips to Washington, as the winter advanced, to plead with his old Southern friends in Congress. Yet, when the rebellion broke out, he was the first volunteer from Pennsylvania, reconciling his course with the peace principles which he had professed on the score that he went forth as an armed policeman to restore order. Although he had raised a regiment he was himself mustered in as a private. When subsequently elected Colonel, he resigned on the following day in favor of one recommended by General Scott as [] proficient in military tactics. He was a rigid disciplinarian, but did not thereby forfeit the love and confidence of his men. In the first victory gained by the Army of the Potomac his regiment was prominently engaged, he maneuvering it with singular skill and receiving a ghastly wound in the mouth. He was promoted at last to a Brigadier General's command. Perhaps the most important in its results of his irregular services was his rejoining his brigade before the battle of Gettysburg. He was [entrusted] by the War Department with the important message to General Meade not to place any reliance on the telegraphic cipher, as it had been intercepted and was understood by the enemy. As the rebel General Stuart's command was between the capital and Meade's army, it was hazardous to attempt to reach it. This he succeeded, however, in doing, passing all the rebel lines in safety, except one, when he was captured, but extricated himself in a very ingenious manner. His brigade did great service at Gettysburg, and having been disabled by wounds, he withdrew from active command after the battle, and in doing so issued this order to his men: "The hard fighting is over. If there is to be more of it soon, I will be with you. If not, farewell, and may God bless and reward you for your noble conduct, but for which neither I nor any of the thousands of this army would have a home, country, pride, or honor to return to. If you should not see me again in the brigade, I hope you will remember long and affectionately your friend and commander." The career of the famous Bucktail Regiment which Kane helped to organize, and of which he was Lieutenant Colonel, would fill a large volume.

The father of General Kane owned a large tract of land on the mountain which is now crossed by the Erie road, and on the apex of which stands Kane, which was founded by Judge Kane, and the bulk of the family property descended to his son, the General. He was a Republican in politics, but went into the Liberal movement in 1872, through friendship for Greeley, and stumped the State. He returned to the regular party in 1876, and in 1880 was one of the Old Guard of three hundred and six at Chicago. His friends say he mistook the Convention for the battle-field, because, as the last vote was being taken, he mounted a chair and shouted to the forces acting with him – “Be steady, men!”

General Thomas L. Kane²

Death of a Well-Known and Prominent Philadelphian.

Philadelphia, Dec. 26. – This morning General Thomas L. Kane, one of the most prominent citizens of this State, died at his residence, No. 1304 Walnut street, in this city, aged 61 years.

He was born in this city and had an eventful life. At the age of 16 he went to England to live with an uncle and from thence visited the continent. When a young man he returned home and took an active part in politics, being an unconditional abolitionist. He traveled considerably, and in 1846, while on a confidential mission from President Polk to New Mexico, he fell in with the Mormons, just then driven from Nauvoo, whose wretched condition excited his pity and moved him to efforts for their amelioration. President Buchanan, in 1858, complimented him in his message for his mediatory offices in pacifying Utah. In 1848 he was chairman of the Free Soil State Central Committee. At the time of the passage of the Fugitive Slave law of 1850 he was a United States Commissioner [and Clerk of the Court], but spurning its provisions, he resigned his place in a letter which was construed as contempt of court. The action of the District Judge in committing him was, however, overruled by Judge Grier of the Supreme Bench. Kane afterwards appeared as a corporator of the Underground Railroad, asserting practically the abstract right of a member of society to break any law against his conscience, provided he does so openly and without attempting to evade its penalties. In June, 1852, he was an anti-slavery speaker in New York, going thither in the face of threats of violence, and in the same year boldly asserted the policy of meeting force with force.

He entered the army in 1861 and was Lieutenant-Colonel of the famous Bucktail regiment. Although at first raising a regiment himself he enlisted in the service as a private. He was several times very severely wounded, besides suffering much in Rebel prisons. In politics he was a Republican, being one of Grant's 306 at Chicago in 1880. He was a man of large means, and was identified with a number of financial institutions, while always a supporter of charities. He was a brother

² *General Thomas L. Kane*, THE MORNING NEWS (WILMINGTON, DELAWARE) (Dec. 27, 1883), <http://www.newspapers.com/image/153981709>

of the late Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, the Arctic explorer, and leaves a brother in
Wilmington, Dr. John K. Kane. He will be buried on Friday at Laurel Hill.