Overview of the Collection

**Creator**  
Kane, Thomas Leiper, 1822-1883

**Title**  
Thomas Leiper Kane papers

**Dates**  
1831-1880 (inclusive)
1831 1880

**Quantity**  
1 linear feet

**Collection Number**  
MS 0227

**Summary**  
The Thomas Leiper Kane papers (1831-1880) consist of correspondence between family members, with some additional letters, papers, and notes.

**Repository**  
University of Utah Libraries, Special Collections.
Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library
University of Utah
295 South 1500 East
Salt Lake City, UT
84112-0860
Telephone: 801-581-8863
special@library.utah.edu

**Access Restrictions**  
Twenty-four hour advanced notice encouraged. Materials must be used on-site. Access to parts of this collection may be restricted under provisions of state or federal law.

**Languages**  
English

Historical Note

Thomas Leiper Kane (1822-1883) was born 27 January 1822 in Philadelphia, the second son of John Kinzing and Jane Duval Leiper Kane. He had five brothers and one sister: Elisha Dent, John Kent, Robert Patterson, Elizabeth, John Kinzing Jr., and William Leiper. With the exception of John Kent, who died as an infant, and William Leiper, who died at age fourteen in 1852, all reached maturity and became respected members of their communities. Elisha Kent and John Kinzing Jr. became medical doctors; Thomas Leiper and Robert Patterson became lawyers. In addition, Elisha Kent became a well-known Arctic explorer and writer. At least three in the family were members of the American Philosophical Society, while the father was an officer from 1828 until his death in 1858. Robert Patterson followed his father’s example in acting as one of the trustees of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

Throughout his life, Thomas Leiper Kane had serious health problems, the most serious of which affected his lungs. Thus, on several occasions in his life, he went on extended travels in order to recover his health. Shortly after completing his studies in 1840, he went to England for several months and then to the Continent. When he visited the Mormons in the summer of 1846, he again did so partially to recuperate; moreover, he again became seriously ill with what is now thought to have been pulmonary tuberculosis. In 1852-1853, he again needed to take an extended trip away from the cold and wet of the winter in the northeastern United States, traveling to the West Indies. During the Civil War, he contracted pneumonia in addition to being wounded in the face, which later caused intense...
neuralgia weakening his eyesight and leg, which bothered him for many years. One of the motives for his
to Utah with his wife, Elizabeth, and two sons in 1872 was to regain strength by wintering
with Brigham Young in St. George. He died of pneumonia in 1883.

In spite of his recurring health problems, Kane still accomplished much. He gained admittance to the
Pennsylvania bar in 1846. Shortly after, he heard a public speech by Jessie C. Little, an elder in the
Mormon Church, concerning the injustices suffered by the Mormons. Kane was immediately interested
and, as a result, began assisting Elder Little, especially in the latter's efforts to obtain United States
government help in the form of the Mormon Battalion. Kane went to Washington, D.C., in the spring of
1846 and then traveled west to visit the Mormon exiles near Council Bluffs on the Missouri River. There
he assisted Captain Allen of the United States Army to obtain the five hundred volunteers to make up
the Battalion.

Having returned to Philadelphia to complete his recuperation following his illness he contracted
among the Mormons, Kane became involved in the slavery issue which was increasingly dividing
the nation. He became a leader of the Free Soil Party in Pennsylvania and supposedly operated a
station on the Underground Railroad. In 1850, following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, he
resigned his appointment as United States commissioner in protest to the law. Tradition has it that his
father, then judge of the United States District Court for Eastern Pennsylvania, considered the letter
in contempt of court and had Thomas jailed. Thomas's reforming beliefs continued as evidenced in
a letter written to his mother from the front in Virginia during the Civil War in which several months
prior to the Emancipation Proclamation, Thomas called not only for partial emancipation, but for full
enfranchisement of the Blacks. His participation in the Liberal Republican Convention held in Cincinnati
in May 1872 further demonstrates his continued commitment to reform of society. In addition, Kane
was the first president of the Pennsylvania Board of Charities.

Beyond his traveling to Council Bluffs and his work in obtaining a Mormon Battalion in 1846, Thomas
Kane also assisted the Mormons with careful instructions to John M. Bernhisel while the latter was a
delagate from the constitutional convention for the State of Deseret to the United States Congress.
In 1857, when increasing tensions between Mormons and the Federal government threatened to
result in fighting between the Mormons and the Federal troops traveling to Utah, Kane went to Utah by
way of the Isthmus of Panama, San Pedro, and San Bernadino, California, to arrange a compromise
between Brigham Young and the troops. Previous to this, in 1850, Kane delivered an address to the
Pennsylvania Historical Society on the Mormons in which he tried to reverse the negative opinion
commonly held of them. Later that year, he published the address in a small book.

Beginning in 1856, when he spent the summer exploring the north central and northwest parts of
Pennsylvania, Thomas Kane became a pioneer and developer. He moved his wife and two children
to Williamsburg, McKean County for the summer of 1857. Shortly after his resigning from the Union
Army, and undoubtedly after the birth of William Wood Kane in November 1863, Thomas moved his
wife and children permanently to McKean County. A letter written in January 1864 suggests the move
may already have occurred; one in May, however, describes the journey. For a period of time, the Kanes
lived in a barn while Thomas built a house for the family. At times, the ram he had installed to bring
water into the living quarters did not function, and the family had to carry all their water about a quarter
of a mile uphill. During the first winter, letters to the family in Philadelphia record freezing temperatures
within the living quarters themselves.

Thomas Kane built an empire for himself, cutting and sawing timber. Some of his original purchases of
land in the area were for their potential coal resources. He planned routes for railroads, especially the
Sunbury and Erie and the New York, Lake Erie and Western Railroad and Coal Company.

Thomas L. Kane apparently succeeded equally with his family. He remained close to his parents,
brothers, and sister. In 1853, shortly after returning from the West Indies, he married his second cousin,
Elizabeth Dennistoun Wood. They had four children: Harriett Amelia (Harry), born 11 July 1854; Elisha Kent (Lyly and Lashy), born 25 November 1856; Evan O'Neill, born 6 April 1861; and William Wood (Willie), born 17 November 1863. William changed his name shortly after his father's death to Thomas Leiper Kane II. Elisha Kent became an officer in the United States Navy, following partially his uncle's career. The other three children became medical doctors, as did Elizabeth Wood Kane.

Content Description

The Thomas Leiper Kane papers (1831-1880) consist of correspondence between family members, with some additional letters, papers, and notes. Most of the family correspondence is from Thomas L. Kane to his father, John Kinzing Kane, and his mother, Jane Duval Leiper Kane. Another sizable number of letters was written by Kane's wife, Elizabeth Dennistoun Wood Kane, to his parents. Several letters are from Thomas Kane to his brother, Elisha Kent Kane, with a lesser number from Elisha to Thomas. Letters between Thomas and Robert Patterson "Pat" Kane and between Thomas and John Kinzing Kane Jr., two other brothers, and a few letters between other members of the family, round out the family correspondence.

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Preferred Citation

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Administrative Information

Processing Note

Processed by James F. Cartwright in 1980.

Separated Materials

Photographs were transferred to the Multimedia Division of Special Collections (P0638).

Detailed Description of the Collection

Thomas Leiper Kane papers, 1831-1880
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv05563
## Family Correspondence

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<td>Thomas Leiper Kane to and from John Kinzing Kane Jr.</td>
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### General Materials

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**Names and Subjects**

**Subject Terms:**
Mormon Church--History

**Personal Names:**
Kane, Elisha Kent, 1820-1857
Kane, Elizabeth Wood, b. 1836
Kane, Jane Duval Leiper
Kane, John Kinzing

**Corporate Names:**
United States--Army--Mormon battalion
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

**Geographical Names:**
Council Bluffs (Iowa)
Nauvoo (Ill.)

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