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Preface

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Preface

The L. Tom Perry Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University has been acquiring manuscripts relating to the life of Thomas Leiper Kane for many years. The focus of searching out and collecting these manuscripts has been to discover more about Kane's relationship with the Mormons from 1846 until his death in 1883. Over the years, items of significance have been catalogued in the Perry Special Collections' Mormon Americana collection. In 1996, the Lee Library was able to obtain a significant Kane family archive consisting of journals, scrapbooks, letters, and other manuscripts and photographs that, when combined with the university's existing Kane materials, for the first time allowed scholars an in-depth look at the life and work of this influential friend to the Latter-day Saints. These documents reveal important information about his family life, his service in the American Civil War, his business interests, and his political dealings. The documents also include an extensive collection of journals, scrapbooks, and correspondence belonging to Thomas's wife, Elizabeth Dennistoun Wood Kane.¹

During the 2008–9 school years, staff at Perry Special Collections prepared a public exhibition of significant manuscripts focusing on Thomas Kane and his relationship with the Mormons. During the exhibition, the library sponsored a lecture series by prominent scholars on various aspects of Kane's interactions with the Latter-day Saints. These public lectures have been transformed into the essays that appear in this volume.

Thomas Kane (January 27, 1822–December 26, 1883) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the second-oldest son of John K. Kane and Jane Duval Leiper. Thomas's father was well connected to the political and

aristocratic powers of east coast America. He was a personal friend of U.S. presidents Andrew Jackson and James K. Polk, and these connections served his son Thomas well in his later attempts to defend the Latter-day Saints.

From 1840 to 1844, Thomas lived in England and France, where he caught the spirit of social reform and a broad religion of humanity. He was influenced by Auguste Comté, who seems to have encouraged his life's work of assisting those who were downtrodden. After returning to America in 1844, Thomas studied law. He was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1846 but was not interested in practicing as a lawyer. His early interest in politics led him to associate with his father's friends; it also taught him the value of newspapers and other publications in shaping popular opinion. After James K. Polk became president, John Kane was appointed attorney general of Pennsylvania and later a federal judge; for several years, Thomas worked as his father's law clerk.

Although he favored peace, Thomas Kane came to see the need for the United States to engage in a war with Mexico. He enlisted in the Pennsylvania militia as a private, and in 1846 the governor commissioned Kane as a lieutenant colonel in the state militia; thereafter he carried the title of Colonel Kane. Working for a variety of causes, he made friends with people like Horace Greeley and George Dallas, with whom he worked in the American Society for Promoting the Abolition of Capital Punishment in 1845.

In January and February 1846, Kane read accounts in the Philadelphia newspapers of the forced exile of the Mormons from their homes in western Illinois. Shortly after the declaration of war against Mexico in May, Kane sought out Mormon leaders in Philadelphia. He first met Jesse C. Little, who gave Kane the latest information on the Mormons and their plight. He then obtained letters of introduction to Mormon leaders from Little, met with President Polk to obtain his assurances and assistance, and headed west, where he eventually assisted with the call of the Mormon Battalion and began his lifelong friendship with Brigham Young and other prominent Latter-day Saints.

In addition to his involvement with the Mormons, Kane was active in the antislavery movement and worked with the Underground Railroad. He also fought in the American Civil War for the Union Army (leading a group of western Pennsylvania sharpshooters called the Bucktails), fighting at Gettysburg and in other battles. After the war, he became involved in land development and was a developer of Kane, a small town in northwestern Pennsylvania. He also involved himself in prison and educational reform, helped to establish a medical school, served as the first president of the Pennsylvania Board of State Charities, and helped

organize the New York, Lake Erie, and Western Railroad and Coal Company along with other such social and economic institutions. But it was the Mormon connection that was the major thread that ran through his life—and his friendship with Brigham Young remained a significant part of that tapestry.²

The Kane lecture series was presented chronologically according to specific themes of Kane's relationship with the Mormons. In this volume, we have altered the original order of presentation but have generally maintained a chronological sequence. Although there is some necessary overlap in a few places, each essay can be read separately for insight into the various aspects of Kane's defense of his Mormon friends.

In the first essay, Matthew J. Grow introduces readers to the rich life of Thomas Kane by providing the larger context of Kane's America. As the major scholar of Kane, Grow offers new insights into the life and times of the man who did so much for the Saints. The second essay, by Mormon trails historian Richard E. Bennett, probes the earliest meetings of Kane and the Mormons, meetings that took place as the Mormons were beginning their exodus to the American West. Here, Kane assisted with the call of the Mormon Battalion, conveyed the interests and concerns of President James K. Polk, and began his friendship with Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders. In the third essay, Utah historian Thomas G. Alexander takes a closer look at Kane's ongoing role as a mediator in various episodes that continued to plague Utah's efforts to obtain statehood through the nineteenth century. The fourth essay, by William P. MacKinnon, an authority on the Utah Expedition, focuses on the events surrounding the Utah War of 1857–58, in which Kane proved his skills as an unofficial peacemaker. In the fifth essay, Edward A. Geary provides a vivid portrait of Thomas and Elizabeth themselves, their marriage as a partnership, and the challenges that came to them both as Thomas developed his relationship with the Mormons. The sixth essay, by Lowell C. (Ben) Bennion and Thomas R. Carter, examines the important trip the Kanes made to Utah in 1872–73 and invites readers to view the social world of polygamous Mormonism through the eyewitness accounts and pen of Elizabeth W. Kane; the authors provide fuller identification of the various homes where the Kanes stayed during their trip from Salt Lake City to St. George with Brigham Young, homes that Elizabeth had disguised in her book, *Twelve Mormon Homes* (1874). The authors provide a closer look at the Kanes' stay with the Pitchforths in Nephi, a stay that Elizabeth devoted significant space to in her published account. In the final essay, David J. Whittaker provides a more personal view of the friendship of Brigham Young and Thomas Kane. Using excerpts from their extensive correspondence, this

essay invites readers into the powerful friendship that existed between these two men, revealing the deep feelings each had for the other and some of the consequences of that friendship. Finally, this volume includes a bibliography of published material on Kane that will lead serious readers to the literature on this interesting individual and his family.

All the essays work together to further illuminate the interesting and complex life of one of the major friends of the Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century. In a time when Mormons found few supporters outside their faith, Kane's friendship provides insights for the twenty-first century, an era in which tolerance and friendship could offer solutions in a world of violence and intolerance.

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1. For an overview, see David J. Whittaker, "New Sources on Old Friends: The Thomas L. Kane and Elizabeth W. Kane Collection," *Journal of Mormon History* 27 (Spring 2001): 67-94.

2. For more on the life of Thomas L. Kane, see Matthew J. Grow, "*Liberty to the Downtrodden*": *Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009).