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Fig. 1. C. C. A. Christensen, *Winter Quarters*, tempera on muslin, 76 3/4 x 113 3/4 inches, c. 1865. This settlement of Saints contained nearly eight hundred dwellings and had a population of approximately thirty-five hundred people as of December 1846. The artist illustrates the first company to depart on their westward trek to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Gift of the Christensen grandchildren, Museum of Art, Brigham Young University.
“He Is Our Friend”
Thomas L. Kane and the Mormons in Exodus, 1846–1850

Richard E. Bennett

The study of Mormon history is anything but a static field of research. New sources of historical knowledge are continually coming to the fore, collection upon collection, document upon document, here a very little and perhaps there a great deal. New and revealing primary sources, like the Thomas L. and Elizabeth W. Kane Collection at Brigham Young University (BYU), are providing fresh historical insights. Thanks to the vision, foresight, and professional acumen of devoted archivists and librarians, such as David Whittaker at the Harold B. Lee Library, in acquiring, processing, and preserving such notable reflections as the Kane papers, the future of our history is indeed bright.

The purpose of this paper is to show how the Kane papers add to our present understanding of the early Mormon exodus era, particularly from 1846 to 1850. Specifically, this essay addresses what new information and insights they provide and especially how they enhance, correct, or confirm our knowledge of the following: first, the attitudes of President James K. Polk and his cabinet and others close to him toward the fleeing Latter-day Saints; second, the federal government’s request for a five-hundred-man Mormon Battalion; third, the Mormon settlement at Winter Quarters at the Missouri River in winter 1846–47 (figs. 1 and 2); and fourth, Kane’s lecture titled “The Mormons,” given and published in Philadelphia in 1850. Last of all, this article considers what Kane’s papers might suggest about the influence the Mormons had upon his life and thought.
Crossing Iowa

The martyrdom of Joseph Smith Jr. and his older brother Hyrum on June 27, 1844, in Carthage, Illinois, left The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints suddenly leaderless and created a crisis of succession that sorely tested the allegiance of thousands. Meanwhile, persecution against the Mormons intensified rather than diminished. This caused Brigham Young (fig. 3), the interim leader by right of his ecclesiastical position as president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to set out on a course of exodus to the Rocky Mountains. Young believed the journey to be necessary for the salvation of his people and of the Church itself. Beginning in early February 1846, the majority of approximately fifteen thousand Latter-day Saints, some well prepared but many not so, left their homes in and around Nauvoo, Illinois, most without consideration or sale, to seek refuge in the West.1

The longer they traveled without a firm destination in mind, the greater the risk of discouragement, despair, and even death. The Saints’

![Map of Mormon Camps, 1846. Adapted from a map created by the Geography Department, Brigham Young University.](image-url)
plan was to cross Iowa and reach Council Bluffs as quickly as possible. They would then ferry over the Missouri River and establish way stations at Grand Island and points farther west in present-day Nebraska. From these way stations, they would dispatch an express company of skilled farmers, builders, surveyors, and other pioneer laborers to some chosen valley in the Rocky Mountains in time to plant crops and build stockades and fortifications for the many thousands to follow. Funding to defray the enormous costs of so great an exodus composed primarily of faithful, but often destitute, people would have to come from the depleted tithing funds of the Church, the sale of the Nauvoo and Kirtland temples and other Church properties, contributions from the growing number of British converts, and from any work contracts that Church leaders could secure from the United States or British governments. All this had to happen in 1846 before the Saints could be interrupted by Missourians, Indians, or an interfering U.S. Army of the West, which was skeptical of Mormon intents and allegiances. This explains, in large measure, their very early wintry departure from Nauvoo in February 1846.2

These expedition plans soon collided with reality, however. Instead of crossing Iowa in six weeks, as expected, the Saints took over three months. Incessantly wet, inclement weather created mud fields so deep that their heavily laden wagons sank to the axles.3 Way stations had to be hastily established much sooner than planned, first in Garden Grove and then farther west at Mt. Pisgah, and crops had to be put in not only for the eighteen hundred in these advance companies but also for the many thousands soon to follow.4 Money, supplies, and patience were fast running out, and “Brother Brigham’s” 1846 enterprise was bogging down in a morass of mud, deteriorating health, poverty, and not a little ill will, as evidenced by increasing backbiting from detractors and defectors like James Strang, George Miller, and James Emmett, who viewed the Saints’ mounting troubles as vindication of their own counterpoint claims and ambitions. By the time Brigham Young and his advance company of Saints reached what

Fig. 3. Brigham Young, steel engraving, c. 1853. Church History Library.
is now Council Bluffs, Iowa, on June 14, everyone knew that moving the entire Church farther west that season was entirely out of the question.\(^5\)

Consequently, the immediate pressing issue Brigham Young faced was where in the wilderness the “Camp of Israel” (as they called themselves) could settle safely until spring 1847. The postponement of their original plans demanded a reformulation of their objectives and a serious reconsideration of how to survive the coming year with few or no provisions. Questions came to the forefront about how and where to raise money for supplies, purchase provisions, fix broken-down wagons, and attend to a thousand other physical needs, as well as how to live among wounded and warring Indian tribes, several of which were then being transplanted westward by government decree.

Beginning almost immediately, the Saints and their large herds of cattle began ferrying across the Missouri River, an arduous task that took months to complete. Those who could cross over that season could leave sooner for the Rocky Mountains in spring 1847. Abandoning all plans to reach Grand Island, Brigham Young decided to establish Winter Quarters on Indian lands—with or without government permission—on the west bank of the Missouri River near present-day Omaha. The several thousand Saints following behind, who had left Nauvoo during summer and early fall 1846, including the so-called “Poor Camps” of those forced out of their Nauvoo homes, would settle in various hollows and assorted encampments on the east side of the river. These small and scattered communities eventually coalesced into the city of Kanesville, predecessor to today’s Council Bluffs, Iowa. Uprooted, distended, and scattered over hundreds of miles in unfamiliar, if not hostile, surroundings, the wounded Mormons—victims of persecution, distrust, and blatant religious prejudice, and in a country unsure of their loyalties and political allegiances—faced a very uncertain future.

To this difficult equation was now added yet another destabilizing factor. Not unlike the “trail of tears” then decimating so many displaced Indian tribes, the Mormons’ forced migration exposed them to excessive toils and rigors of their journey; travel injuries; a lack of green vegetables and other nutritional foods; inclement weather; mosquito-infested, malaria-inducing sidebars and swamps of the Missouri River; and, not least of all, inadequate housing in the form of caves, hovels, hastily built cabins, mere wagon coverings, and tents. They were a people destined to suffer and die from overexposure, malnutrition, and poverty. And suffer and die they did in epidemic proportions in fall and winter 1846–47. The Mormon encampment at the Missouri must still be regarded as one of the most trying, dark, and difficult times in all of Mormon history.\(^6\)
Meanwhile, the Latter-day Saints worried about the country they were leaving behind. Mormon haters like Senator Thomas Benton of Missouri were poisoning opinion against them in Washington, an American war against Mexico was declared in May 1846 over control of California, a still unresolved debate existed with England over the Oregon Territories, and the U.S. Army of the West, commanded by General Stephen Watts Kearney, was waiting at Fort Leavenworth to receive orders from Washington. The Mormons had to wonder if they would be impeded by the American government they had come to distrust, if not disdain. Would they be caught in the middle of a political conflict that had little to do with them? Would they be forced to take sides in internecine Indian wars? Would Missouri yet again extend its hated shadow over Mormon intentions to build Zion? Could the Saints trust America any more than America could trust them? Both time and space had engulfed these weatherworn wanderers who desperately needed to find a winter quarters on possibly hostile Indian lands, secure provisions to last at least a year, and establish political goodwill with Washington.

“Possessed as You are of My Confidences”—
An Understanding Attitude

The U.S. Army of the West knew all about the Mormons and their wilderness wanderings, but instead of interfering, they came inviting. Thanks to intensive private negotiations in Washington led by Mormon agent Jesse Little, the fortuitous involvement of Thomas L. Kane, and the uniquely advantageous geographical location of the Mormon encampment at the Missouri, the Polk administration wished to signal a conciliatory attitude, a tone of compromise and understanding, born of political rather than humanitarian impulse. If the Mormons, restless and wandering but near the seat of action, could be persuaded to participate in the war against Mexico with a battalion of five hundred or more of their best and healthiest young men, then perhaps a deal could be made that would prove mutually beneficial. The Mormons needed money and provisions; the government desperately wanted more men close at hand to help wrest California for the Stars and Stripes.

Onto this complicated stage of delicate negotiations entered Thomas Leiper Kane, an idealistic, twenty-four-year-old lawyer looking for a cause. He was born to socially elite parents in Philadelphia: John Kintzing Kane, a jurist and judge, and Jane Duval Leiper. His father, a leading Pennsylvania Democrat, had served as attorney general of the state before his recent appointment by President James K. Polk (fig. 4) to the U.S.
Colonel Thomas L. Kane and the Mormons

District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Small in stature and ever delicate in health, Thomas had a philanthropic and compassionate nature. During his life he would become a crusader for antislavery, prison reform, women’s rights, the abolition of capital punishment, and many other humanitarian causes. His mother once noted: “I do rejoice that the Almighty has given you such talents, with a heart to use them to benefit your fellow man; and if He only grants you health and strength, I feel assured your future course will be a source of pride to all of us.”

A Protestant by birth and upbringing, Kane was more liberal in his Christian views and shied away from Evangelicals and everything he perceived as religious fanaticism.

In 1846, Thomas’s more famous brother, Elisha Kent Kane, who had just returned from a diplomatic mission to China, enrolled as a surgeon in the U.S. Navy. Elisha would later be remembered for his explorations in the high Arctic in search of the lost British explorer Sir John Franklin and for his scientific expeditions that opened the way for “the American route to the pole.” Both brothers were devoted patriots who were more committed to serving their country in trying and unpredictable circumstances than they were to enjoying the comforts of home.

Although the Kane papers do not reveal what specifically triggered Thomas Kane’s interests in the Mormons, apparently his concerns on the subject had “weighed upon” his mind for many months. By mid-1846, he had determined to find his own adventure and to help his country secure both Oregon and California for the Republic, and as a humanitarian, he planned to help a beleaguered body of religionists who were angry enough to consider aligning themselves with British, rather than American, interests. Furthermore, at a church service in Philadelphia on May 13, Kane had met Jesse Little (fig. 5), a Mormon agent charged with seeking government contracts and whom Judge Kane described as “an honest man.” Little’s instructions from Church leaders were that “if our government shall offer any facilities for emigrating to the western coast,
embrace those facilities, if possible.” Thomas Kane provided Little access to administration officials, including President Polk. In the process, Kane became a friend and confidante of the Mormon emissary. As a result, young Kane was soon drawn into the midst of a very delicate round of negotiations involving an American administration seeking immediate military support for its war on Mexico and a Mormon leadership hoping for understanding and financial opportunity. Little indicated to President Polk that if the Mormons, who were in desperate, destitute circumstances, were unsuccessful in gaining support from Washington, they might seek for it elsewhere.

[We] . . . are true hearted Americans . . . and we have a desire to go under the outstretched wings of the American Eagle. We would disdain to receive assistance from a foreign power, although it should be proffered, unless our government shall turn us off in this great crisis and will not help us, but compel us to be foreigners. Means for the gathering of poor we must obtain . . . and if I cannot get it in the land of my fathers, I will cross the trackless ocean where I trust I shall find some friends to help.

Thus, Kane quickly became a trusted arbiter. When Little mentioned he was about to return to the Mormon “Camp of Israel” somewhere in western Iowa Territory, Kane determined to go with him as affidavit of his American loyalties on the one hand and his sympathies with the Mormons on the other. The two men departed Washington within days of one another on a journey of some two thousand miles. Kane planned to join up with Brigham Young, if not at Council Bluffs then wherever the Mormon companies might be on their westward trails, and accompany them all the way to Upper California.

The Kane papers clarify the fact that President Polk wanted “definite information of the character of the leading Mormons,” for the information he had received was “so various and conflicting,” so “partial” or “prejudiced” as to make it “out of the question for the government to decide what course it would be proper, or even safe, to pursue in regard to them.” Moreover, Polk, while not wanting to distance himself from

Fig. 5. Jesse Carter Little. Little met Thomas L. Kane in 1846 and wrote him a letter of introduction to Brigham Young. Church History Library.
those in his administration and party who were critical of the Mormons, hoped to signal a working sympathy for the Latter-day Saints. Among those most wary of Mormon intentions were Senator Thomas Benton; John C. Edwards, governor of Missouri; perhaps Amos Kendall, former postmaster general; and William Medill, commissioner of the Office of Indian Affairs. Medill worried less about the possible collusion of the Mormons with western tribes and more about their contributing unknowingly to intertribal warfare, especially among the Sioux and Pawnee. Yet new documents now make it clearer than ever before that many were sympathetic with the Mormons. “This much . . . seems to be conceded,” Kane’s father wrote to his traveling son,

that they have been wronged by the State which they had chosen for their home, and that the honour of the nation requires that the wrong be not renewed where the power of the Union can be directly exerted for their protection. If then you are satisfied that your fellow travelers have not left their Americanism behind them, I think you will be safe in saying to them that they will carry with them the sympathies of their countrymen, and the guarantee of National Faith for their future repose.

Judge Kane elaborated further on his feelings in another letter.

Circumstances have made me much more familiar than I ever expected to be, with the character of the Emigrating Mormons and their habit and tone of life. My son . . . on a confidential errand from the President . . . has acquainted me from time to time with his observations regarding them. The result is, that I am thoroughly convinced of the general integrity and right mindedness of this persecuted sect—that they form a class of simple, industrious, kind spirited, and enterprising people . . . and in spite of their fanaticism, altogether deserving a different fortune. . . . They will carry to California abundant American feeling, and a determination to plant a permanent American colony in the Sacramento Valley.

Taken at face value, such previously unknown statements reveal much about the government’s sentiments and of the trust the president had in Thomas Kane. Wrote Polk in a confidential letter to Kane in June 1846: “Possessed as you are of my confidences you may have it in your power to import to those entrusted with the interests of the United States in that distant region, information of importance.” That same month, Judge Kane informed his son that “there is no man in whom the President has more absolute confidence.” Judge Kane, who had once discouraged his son from becoming involved in the Mormon issue, was now convinced that his son might be “the means of doing a great good, not only to the people with whom you march, but the country under whose flag they are to live—for it is a good to the country, as well as the Mormons, to bind them together by a sense of mutual benefits.”
Thomas Kane later admitted he was granted authority to negotiate secretly on Polk’s behalf and to do whatever necessary to ensure the loyalty of the Mormons to the government of the United States. “Invested with amusingly plenipotential powers civil and military, I ‘went among the Mormons,’” he later wrote. “This is a little State Secret. Mr. Polk knew it. General Kearney knew it. One Col. Allen detailed by Kearney to march off a Battalion knew it. But probably no one else.”24 In bearing the goodwill and invitation of the president of the United States, Kane had to keep his mission secret from those in Washington who were opposed to federal assistance for Brigham Young and his Mormon followers.

As previously recognized, Jesse Little trusted Kane and recommended him “unhesitatingly” in his letters of introduction (fig. 6). Writing from St. Louis on June 22, 1846, Little said Kane bears “by my request to the President Papers of Great Value to us and enough for me to say that I have proved him well—and do most cheerfully recommend him as a true friend.”25

“I Can See No Reason Why . . . Not” —
Thomas L. Kane and the Call of the Mormon Battalion

Kane caught up to the Mormon encampment in early July, a few days ahead of Little. Kane had traveled upriver from St. Louis, where he first conferred with General Stephen Kearney and then followed after Captain James Allen, who met with Mormon leaders for the first time at Mt. Pisgah on June 26, 1846. A gracious military officer, Allen gained local leader William Huntington’s permission to address the Saints; on behalf of the president of the United States, Captain Allen invited the Mormons to enlist in the army of the West. “Shocked by [this] audacity to ask them to assist a government they popularly distrusted,” Huntington said that he “followed [Allen] with an address, as the old saying is ‘by answering a fool according to his folly.’”26 Nonetheless, Huntington then provided Allen with a letter of introduction addressed to the authorities at Council Bluffs. Parley P. Pratt then galloped west to tell Brigham Young of Allen’s appearance. As indicated earlier, Allen’s invitation for a Mormon Battalion of five hundred of their most able-bodied men was not well received by the Saints initially. It took the earnest pleadings of their file leaders, the calm presentations of Captain Allen, and the assurances of newly arrived Thomas L. Kane, who was bearing the written promises of the president of the United States, to persuade the Saints to give up their men at a most difficult, trying time.27

In yet another revealing letter, Kane informed President Polk about the call of the battalion. “I have the honour to inform you that the happiest
Fig. 6. Letter of introduction from Jesse C. Little, June 22, 1846. In nineteenth-century American society, etiquette required that persons unknown to one another be introduced by a third party. In the case of Thomas L. Kane and the Mormons, Jesse C. Little acted as this third party, providing Kane with letters of introduction to Brigham Young and other Church leaders before Kane headed west to the Mormon settlements in Iowa Territory. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
results are to be anticipated from the wise policy observed by you with regard to the Mormon people,” he wrote in cipher the night before the battalion marched away. He continued:

The volunteers whom you have caused to be raised will be on the road to Santa Fe and the Pacific tomorrow or the day after . . . as true hearted Americans bearing the American flag.

I arrived here just in time to be of service to Capt. Allen who was ordered by Col. Kearney to the duty of enrolling [the Mormons].

. . . The favour granted by you was at first imperfectly understood by some of the people and they therefore needed the strongest assurances to encourage in them promptitude of action. 28

In return, Brigham Young negotiated a hard bargain. In addition to receiving cash in advance for the battalion enlistment, Young wanted permission from the federal government to stay on Indian lands, “any” Indian lands, either Pottawattamie on the Iowa side or Omaha on the west side of the Missouri River for at least two years (fig. 7). 29 It was critical that the Mormons winter on the west of the Missouri so as not to have to cross the river again the following spring when it would be swollen with the mountain spring runoffs. Young was concerned about having an early spring departure for the Rocky Mountains.

The Kane papers also confirm that Kane assisted in getting Captain Allen’s permission ratified by the necessary Indian agents and departments as quickly as possible. “I have no hesitation in saying that while I can see no reason why the Mormon people should not winter in the valleys of this neighborhood,” Kane wrote to President Polk, “I consider it exceedingly important to them to be allowed the privilege of so doing.” 30 Judge Kane, in forwarding this letter to President Polk, added his own recommendations: “Circumstances which I have detailed to you in conversation makes it important that this arrangement . . . should be formally sanctioned by the Executive at the earliest day.” 31

Kane did more than write about the enlistment of the Mormon Battalion; we now know that he made several sketches of this important event. One of four he drew is entitled “Enlisting Camp of the Mormons, July 14, 1846” (figs. 8 and 9). It may well be the only contemporary drawing that captures the Mormon Battalion as it headed west to the encampment grounds on the east banks of the Missouri River in what is present-day Council Bluffs, Iowa. This drawing is also significant for evidencing Captain Allen’s presence, the immense herds of Mormon cattle, and the various and scattered Mormon encampments at the “Bluffs.” 32
Fig. 7. Letter from Indian Subagent R. B. Mitchell, Council Bluffs, July 21, 1846. This letter was obtained for the Mormons by Thomas L. Kane, and it granted them permission to “stop, remain & make cultivation and improvements upon any part” of the land not already in use by the Native Americans themselves. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
Fig. 8. “Enlisting Camp of the Mormons, July 14, 1846.” Kane included this sketch in a letter to his father dated July 25, 1846. It depicts the Mormon Battalion moving west to their Missouri River enlistment grounds near Council Bluffs. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Fig. 9. Another sketch from Thomas Kane’s papers. The text at the bottom reads, “My waggon—the first camp of the distant prairie of the Platte July 29th 1846 (Horseback Sunrise).” L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
Winter Quarters—The Mormon Settlement

The Kane papers contain important corroborating information about Winter Quarters, the Mormon pioneer settlements in 1846–47 on lands now part of Florence, Nebraska, and Council Bluffs, Iowa. While Kane may have exaggerated in counting fifteen thousand Mormons at the Missouri River, there were indeed about seven hundred log and mud houses on the west bank. Correspondence between Kane and Brigham Young confirm the fact that the Mormons also wintered their large cattle herds “some 15 or 30 miles north.” Furthermore, the papers provide the names of 250 heads of households who petitioned for a post office in what later came to be called Kanesville, in honor of Thomas L. Kane. The collection also documents that a Mr. Beach and a Mr. Eddy of St. Louis definitely operated “a very good store at Winter Quarters,” which affirms the work of Bishop Newel K. Whitney while in St. Louis, Missouri, to establish trade and commerce with Missouri mercantile outlets. While it is true that Missouri expelled the Mormons from the state in winter 1838–39 due to the extermination order of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, the irony is that many more Latter-day Saints would have died at Winter Quarters without provisions from Missouri in winter 1846–47.

The Kane papers further reveal the names of leading Philadelphia residents, inspired and influenced by Thomas Kane, who donated a sum of $399.20 to the cause of the suffering Mormons at Winter Quarters. These included Kane’s own father, Judge John K. Kane (who donated $50, a sum comparable to approximately $2,500 in today’s currency), Joseph D. Browne ($50), and Thomas P. Cope ($25). Thomas Kane was more than a mere publicist of Mormon difficulties; he was an active fundraiser in their behalf.

“Your Vindication Became My Own Defense”—Kane’s 1850 Lecture

This evaluation of the unique contributions of the Kane papers would not be complete without looking at the circumstances surrounding Kane’s famous lecture titled “The Mormons,” which he delivered in Philadelphia in 1850 and eventually published for a very large reading audience. A highly sympathetic, if not somewhat embellished, account of the Mormon plight, Kane’s address focused on the terrible sufferings of the Mormon “Poor Camps” when they were driven from Nauvoo in fall 1846 and left no doubt as to the terrible injustices heaped upon them. Giving this lecture was a courageous act since Kane had a reputation to uphold and was addressing audiences not always friendly toward the Saints or those speaking in their behalf. But he did so even when he was extremely sick.
The germ of Kane’s address had been planted in a letter he wrote to Josiah Quincy (fig. 10), former mayor of Boston and former president of Harvard University, dated February 14, 1848. Kane’s account in this letter captures a cruel moment in Mormon exodus history, one not addressed adequately even by those Mormons who lived through this ordeal. His descriptions are incomparable in evoking a genuinely sympathetic attitude toward the tattered remnants of a wounded and persecuted people who were being driven from their Nauvoo homes at gunpoint into an unforgiving wilderness.

They [Mormon poor camps] compose, originally, the refuse, lame, aged, sick, and pauper members of the church, who were found unable to attempt the great California pilgrimage [the Mormon exodus west to the so-called “Upper California,” which then included present-day Utah] of 1846. On this account, their friends who started at that date, concluded, it seems, an especial treaty or armistice for their benefit, with the anti-Mormon mob, and left them behind in Illinois under its protection. This treaty covenanted, . . . that they were in no wise to be molested until another asylum could be prepared for their reception beyond the Rocky Mountains. Just so soon, however, as the Mormon host has made a progress of some months upon its travels, and could safely be considered out of the way, the instrument—oaths, seals, and ribbons—was broken by the anti-Mormons without ceremony or excuse, and the cripples who relied upon it, were ordered to take up their beds and walk. Upon this, the helpless beings, driven to desperation, made a remarkably resolute defence of their Holy City. . . . It was bombarded, however, by an overwhelming force.

. . . Few had enough to satisfy their hunger. Exposure and fatigue had combined to visit many of the nominally robust of them with the ague, and the bilious remittent fever. . . . I have not the satisfaction of a doubt that among those I looked upon thus shivering in the sharp night air of autumn, many whom the screening of a roof might have saved, died looking across the stream upon their comfortable homes, in which the orthodox bullies of the mob were celebrating their triumph in obscene and drunken riot.40

Fig. 10. Josiah Quincy. Quincy served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, mayor of Boston, and president of Harvard University. He was a friend of Thomas L. Kane. Library of Congress.
Kane’s descriptions of these Mormon sufferings forestalled the growing tide of public anti-Mormon sentiments and earned a much-needed measure of American sympathy, at least until the public announcement in 1852 of the practice of polygamy.

The writing of his final essay is a story in and of itself. Suffice it to say that Kane almost died writing it. “I gave myself four weeks,” he confided in a later letter to Brigham Young. “I was full of my subject, but suffered so much from pain and weakness as to be unable the major portion of the time to hold a pen in my hand. However, at it I went in spite of the entreaties of my friends and family.” After giving the lecture, he fainted before reaching home and lay in bed for many days. Only gradually did his health improve.

Conclusion

Why did Kane come to respect and admire the Mormon people so deeply? What began as a patriotic duty, a humanitarian goodwill gesture, developed into a genuine and profound friendship with and affinity toward this suffering people. His papers confirm at least five reasons.

First, Kane and the Mormons were partners in sickness. The Latter-day Saints fell ill and died at Winter Quarters at distressing rates. While there, Kane, ever prone to the ague and tuberculosis, also faced death and was kindly nursed back to health by his fellow sufferers. In September 1850, Kane wrote to his Mormon friends, “It is now four years since I left the camp where your kind nursing saved my life.”

Second, Kane was so extensively criticized for defending the Mormons that he almost unconsciously became one with them. “The personal assaults upon myself made your cause become so identified with my own, that your vindication became my own defence;” we became “partners in iniquity” so to speak, and “we were compelled either to stand or fall together. This probation it is that has made me feel our brotherhood and know how dear to me you have grown.”

Third, Kane and the Mormons shared much in common. “I have tried you and proved you and learned to love you,” he remarked, “for all God has given you of his goodness. I have known too that my feelings were reciprocated & that you have all along felt toward me as I have felt toward you.” A genuine affection developed between Kane, Brigham Young, and the Mormon people.

Fourth, Kane’s visit to the Mormon camps genuinely changed his outlook on life, thoroughly deepened his humanitarian impulse, and strengthened his religious convictions. “I think I have become morally a changed man,” he wrote of his association with this people in peril.
Though I do not agree with our Religionists; with a less artificial formula of expression it is substantially true, I believe, that there is a crisis in the life of every man when he is called upon to decide seriously and permanently if he will die unto sin and live unto righteousness, and that till he has gone through this, he cannot fit himself for the inheritance of his higher humanity, and become truly pure and truly strong “to do the work of God persevering unto the end.” Without endorsing the cant of preachers either, I believe that Providence brings about these crises for all of us by events in our own lives which are the evangelists to us of admonition and preparation. Such an event I believe was my visit to you.

I had many disregarded hints and warnings before, but it was the spectacle of your noble suffering for conscience sake made first a truly serious and abiding impression upon my mind, commanding me to note that there was something nobler and higher than the pursuit of interests of Earthly life, and taught me worthier the aspirations of a Spirit made after the image of Duty. I trust to seek the better part.\textsuperscript{45}

Finally, Kane admitted his association with the Mormons had soured him from pursuing politics and encouraged him to pursue other humanitarian causes. “I have lost almost entirely the natural love for intrigue and curious management which I fear was once a noticeable defect of my character. . . . No, should I have lived, my place would have been in the ranks of the supporters of causes called desperate and at the head of unthanked and unrewarded pioneers of unpopular reforms.”\textsuperscript{46}

Thomas L. Kane lived longer than he ever anticipated, dying in 1883 at age sixty-one. During his lifetime, he maintained a steady correspondence with his friends in the Rocky Mountains. In 1857, he helped broker the essential compromise between the Mormons and Johnston’s army during the march on Utah Territory by another U.S. Army. Kane went on to serve nobly in the Union Army during the Civil War. He wrote Brigham Young often and even advised him on such matters as the writing of his will and the establishment of Brigham Young Academy. Kane’s influence and legacy continue into the twenty-first century at Brigham Young University. Although a friend to the Saints, Kane never aligned himself with them. Yet these last words express his feelings toward them: “I request you to receive my heart for deposit in your Salt Lake City Temple that after death it may repose where in metaphor at least it was when living.”\textsuperscript{47}

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9. Jane Kane to Thomas L. Kane, July 1846, Thomas L. and Elizabeth W. Kane Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
10. Grow, “Liberty to the Downtrodden,” 47. For more on Kane’s religious views, see Matthew Grow’s essay herein.
12. Thomas L. Kane to Elisha Kent [?] Kane, May 29, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. For more on Kane’s motives for becoming involved with the Mormon’s, see Matthew Grow’s and Edward Geary’s essays herein.
13. Thomas L. Kane to Elisha Kent [?] Kane, May 29, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. See also Richard E. Bennett, “The Lion and the Emperor: The Mormons, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and Vancouver Island, 1846–1858.” *BC Studies* no. 128 (Winter 2000/2001), 47–52.
14. John K. Kane to William [Mathoit?], October 1, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
18. John K. Kane to Thomas L. Kane, June 18, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
20. John K. Kane to Thomas L. Kane, June 15, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
21. John K. Kane to William Macleod [?], October 1, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
22. James K. Polk to Thomas L. Kane, June 11, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
23. James K. Polk to Thomas L. Kane, June 11, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
24. Thomas L. Kane to Elizabeth D. Wood, May 19, 1852, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
25. Jesse C. Little to “Dear Brethren,” June 22, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. Little wrote a similar letter to Sam Brannan on the same day. Jesse C. Little to Sam Brannan, June 22, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
28. Thomas L. Kane to President James K. Polk, July 21, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. Forwarded to the president by John K. Kane, with his letter of support, August 18, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. “This sanction is desirable, not only to tranquilize the honest apprehensions of the mass[es], but to disprove the intimations and affected doubts of the few whose sympathies are adverse to the United States.” Many times Kane wrote to his father in code lest anyone, Mormon or otherwise, discovered the full extent of his mission.
The Kane papers clearly show that Judge Kane was more instrumental in supporting his son’s efforts in behalf of the Mormons than previously appreciated. Not only did he decode his son’s writings, but he also often pled his cause and spoke ever favorably of the Mormons with the president himself.
30. Thomas L. Kane to President James K. Polk, July 21, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
31. John K. Kane to James K. Polk, August 29, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
32. Thomas L. Kane to John K. Kane, letter of introduction for Orson Hyde, July 25, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. On the reverse side of the sketch is the following entry: “The eye is on a high hill. Capt. Allan’s tent. [A] Immediately on the right at its foot begins the road that comes from [Mt.] Pisgah to the Missouri (B) and continues all along the Prairie Bottom, marked here & there by wagons drawn by ox teams . . . The distant line of timber. [C.] marks the course of the Missouri. Some trees small mark the course of a creek in the meadow at the right & front. The other marks mean wagons[,] tents or cattle the more speckly[,] generally cattle which crowd every hill-side and meadow, and the low speckles on the distant prairie bottoms are camps. The nos. 1.2.3.4.5.6. denote relative distance.”
33. Brigham Young to Thomas L. Kane, August 2, 1846, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
34. “To the Honorable Postmaster General of the United States,” in an undated letter of Thomas L. Kane, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
35. William S. Appleby to Col. T. L. Kane, June 20, 1848, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.
36. For more on this topic, see Richard E. Bennett, “‘We Had Everything to Procure from Missouri:’ The Missouri Lifeline to the Mormon Exodus, 1846–1850,” *Mormon Historical Studies*, 8 nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Fall 2007): 91–108.

37. William S. Appleby to Col. T. L. Kane, June 20, 1848, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. For a full treatment of the fundraising efforts of the Mormons in east coast American cities, in large part inspired by Kane, see Bennett, *We’ll Find the Place*, 302–11.


39. Quincy was mayor from 1823 to 1829 and president from 1829 to 1845.

40. Thomas L. Kane to Mr. Quincy, February 14, 1848, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.

41. Thomas L. Kane to Brigham Young, Fall 1850, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.

42. Thomas L. Kane to “My dear friends,” September 1850, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.

43. Thomas L. Kane to “My dear friends,” September 1850, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.

44. Thomas L. Kane to “My dear friends,” September 1850, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.

45. Thomas L. Kane to “My dear friends,” September 1850, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.

46. Thomas L. Kane to “My dear friends,” September 1850, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections.

47. Thomas L. Kane to “My dear friends,” September 1850, Kane Collection, Perry Special Collections. For more on the Utah War, see William MacKinnon’s essay herein. For more on Kane’s Civil War service, see Matthew Grow’s and Edward Geary’s essays herein. For more on Kane’s correspondence with Brigham Young see David Whittaker’s essay herein.