

# VOLUNTEER RIFLES!

## MARKSMEN WANTED!

By Authority of Governor Curtin, a Company will be formed this week of citizens of McKean and Elk Counties, who are prepared to take up arms immediately, to support the Constitution of the United States and defend the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I am authorized to accept at once for service, any man who will bring in with him to my head quarters a Rifle which he knows how to use.

Come forward Americans, who are not degenerate from the spirit of '76! Come forward in time to save the city of Washington from capture—in time to save the flag of the Union there from being humbled as it has been at Fort Sumpter.

THOMAS L. KANE.

Smethport, April 17, 1861.  
 Head quarters at the Bennett House, Smethport. Master Hall at the same place, and questions answered. Apply without further notice.

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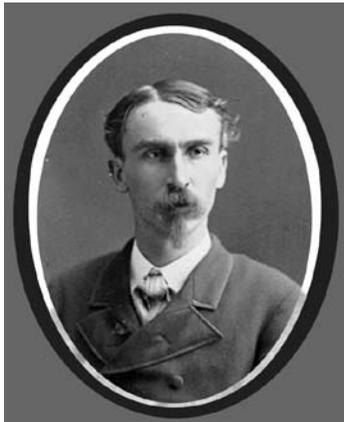
Thomas L. Kane  
 Smethport, April 17, 1861  
 Headquarters at the Bennett House, Smethport

For more information go to the  
 "Planet Smethport" website:  
<http://www.smethporthistory.org>

## CAPTAIN ASA HOWE CORY RECRUITS TROOPS FOUNDER OF CORYVILLE,

### NEWSPAPER EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Like Thomas Kane, in 1861 Asa Cory organized a regiment for the Civil War, Co. H, Fifty-eighth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers. Unfortunately he was forced to return to McKean County during 1862 following a severe case of frostbite. He served as the postmaster of Coryville, Pennsylvania, a small settlement in McKean County, which still bears his name. Asa Cory was earlier the editor and publisher of the *Beacon* and *McKean County Journal*. In 1839 he sold the press to William S. Oviatt.



Pat & Ernie Long Collection



Borough of Smethport  
 famous Smethport, Pennsylvania 16749



1861: Thomas Leiper Kane  
 Ross Porter Collection

TO:

SMETHPORT, PENNSYLVANIA  
 BIRTHPLACE of the Civil War BUCKTAILS



# SMETHPORT: BIRTHPLACE of the CIVIL WAR BUCKTAILS

505 W. Main Across from McKean County Courthouse



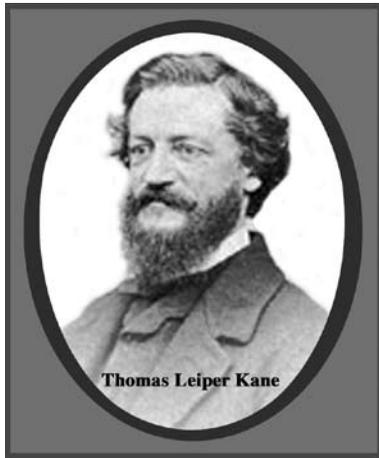
Richard Miller Collection

Major John A. Wolfe, Captain Ernest Wright, Lieutenant Daniel Blett: Across from the courthouse in Smethport Landregan saw a deer hanging at the butcher shop just east of the Bennett House, and with penknife cut off its tail and affixed it to his hat. Others followed suit, cutting strips of fur and adding it to their caps.

In April 1861, an important and proud chapter in U.S. Civil War was written in Smethport. Within days of the bombardment of Fort Sumter in 1861, the news reached the McKean County community. Immediately McKean County landowner and Philadelphian Thomas Leiper Kane wrote Pennsylvania Governor Curtin, offering to raise a militia in Elk and McKean Counties. Perhaps it was the same pioneering spirit Kane recognized in Smethport's founders that inspired him to choose the Bennett House Hotel in Smethport as his recruiting headquarters.

# GEN. KANE HEADQUARTERS AT BENNETT HOUSE

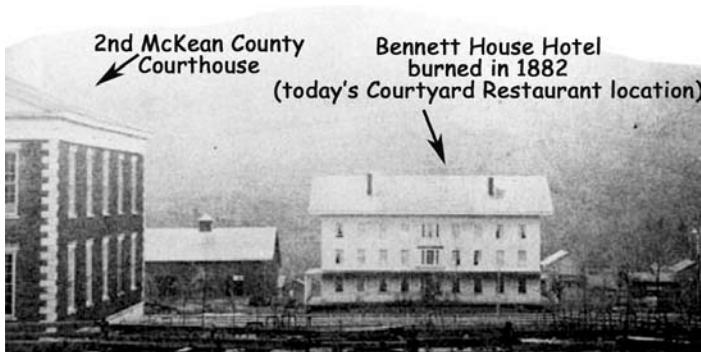
A seemingly innocent act by recruit James Landregan would propel the unit into history. Across from the courthouse in Smethport Landregan saw a deer hanging at the butcher shop just east of the Bennett House, and with penknife cut off its tail and affixed it to his hat. Others followed suit, cutting strips of fur and adding them to their caps. Kane approved, calling the men "the Bucktails". Thus the First Pennsylvania Rifles, 42nd Volunteers, gained a nickname which would follow them in battle.



Thomas Leiper Kane rallied his troops in Smethport. *Ross Porter Collection*

Men, mostly lumbermen, came clad in red flannel shirts and bearing their trusty rifles. Kane recruited approximately 700 men, enough to fill seven companies. Companies "A" and "E" came from Tioga County, "B" from Perry County, "C" from Cameron County, "D" from Warren County, "F" from Carbon County, "G" from Elk, "H" from Chester, "I" from McKean, and "K" from Clearfield.

Thomas Kane was elected Colonel and Charles Biddle Lieutenant



General Kane met with Bucktail recruits in front of the McKean County Courthouse and the Bennett House Hotel. *McKean County Historical Society Collection*

The Bennett House Hotel was located Across from McKean County Courthouse on the location of today's Courtyard Restaurant.



In April 1861 men from throughout the region congregated in Smethport to answer the call of Thomas K. Kane to join a militia. The Bennett House Hotel, site of Kane's recruiting headquarters burned in 1881. Today's Courtyard Restaurant, 505 W. Main rests on the location of the Bennett House Hotel

Colonel. In deference to Biddle's military expertise, Kane resigned his commission and Biddle led the group. The McKean volunteers marched to Cameron County, where they met the volunteers from there and Elk County.

The men built four large rafts with lumber they purchased, with their own money. The patriotic fervor had not reached the pockets of the lumber sellers, so the crafts did not come cheap, but the men were able to float down the Sinnemahoning and the Susquehanna River to Williamsport. From Williamsport they took a train to Camp Curtin in Harrisburg.

The Bucktails were originally Pennsylvania Reserves, but were attached to the Army of the Potomac and sent to Maryland to assist General Lew Wallace near Cumberland.



The Bennett House was located on the site of today's Courtyard Family Restaurant, 505 Main Street. The Bennett House was destroyed by fire in 1882. photo © Les Jordan Jr.

The Bucktails would distinguish themselves in battle, including Dranesville, the Seven Days Battles of Mechanicsville, Gaines Mill, New Market Crossroads and Malvern Hill, Second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and

Bethesda Church. The unit completed service May 31, 1864. Some mustered out, others reenlisted in the 190th Pennsylvania. Many never returned home. Of the original 82 men from McKean County, 22 died in service and another 28 were wounded.

The unit as a whole suffered large losses. At Antietam the regiment lost its colonel, a lieutenant and 28 men. Sixty-five were wounded. In just two days 110 men and officers were either killed, wounded or missing. Originally, using their own hunting rifles instead of government issued firearms, they became famous as skirmishers and sharpshooters.

Following the war most returned to McKean County. Some gained prominence, while others returned to farming or employment with the new railroads which were starting to make inroads in northern Pennsylvania. The highway from Williamsport to Kane was named "The Bucktail Trail" in their honor.



The McKean County Courthouse was the scene of a flurry of military activity in 1861 with the formation of a regiment led by Thomas Leiper Kane. It was in Smethport that the Bucktail regiment was invented by a recruit's creative addition of a deer buck tail from a local butcher across the street from the courthouse and just east of the Bennett House Hotel. photo credit - *McKean County Historical Society Collection*