

President Grant Enjoys “Down to Earth Visit” to Kane, PA

Ulysses S. Grant had been President only a few months, when he accepted an invitation to spend a brief vacation at the mountain home of his friend and comrade in arms, General Thomas L. Kane.

The coming of President Grant was a great event in the life of the fledgling little town in the wilderness. He attended church services at the log school. The little building was crowded to the door that Sunday when President Grant attended, the people of the village coming in considerable numbers to see the President and to have the honor of attending church with him.

A reception was given one evening, when the President was in town, at the **Kane Mansion**, to which the citizens generally invited. There are a number of the people of the town who still remember attending this reception.

President ‘Dunked’ and Arrested

Another incident of the Grant visit deserves mention. A fishing trip was planned. The President was to be taken to a near-by trout stream for a day of fishing. President Grant and General Kane, with William O’Connor as guide forming the party. By order of General Kane the horse he had ridden in the was, “Old Clarion,” was to be ridden by the President. General Kane and the guide, William O’Connor, each rode one of the younger horses, Nellie and Jennie, known on the Kane estate as the “colts.”

O’Connor, as guide, led the way through the woods to the stream selected for fishing, and by instruction was to reach the stream where it was comparatively deep. Arriving at the proper place, he rode his horse through to the opposite bank. The President followed, mounted on “Old Clarion.” No sooner did the President’s horse enter the water than the watchful O’Connor saw that he was going to lie down in the stream, and he shouted to President Grant to whip him

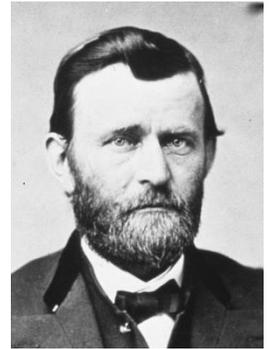
hard; but the hero of Appomattox had confidence in “old Clarion” and said the horse was merely putting his head down to get a drink. His security was short lived, however, as the old horse, true to his habit of former years, quickly laid down in the stream and began to roll in the water. However, with the aid of O’Connor, both horse and rider were safely gotten out on the bank. General Kane at first was nowhere to be found on search, however, he was found behind a near-by tree, apparently enjoying the discomfiture of the President.

Later in the day, the guide was instructed to lead on so as to strike the Smethport Road at the point nearest Elk County, but O’Connor knew a shorter way to cross the neighboring county line. The party moved on, and had crossed into Elk County but a few hundred feet with Constable Ostrander of Smethport appeared and placed the three men under arrest for fishing out of season. They were taken before Squire Parsons of Wilcox and fined. General Kane paid the fines amounting to \$125.

The Kane homestead was commodious and well-appointed, though located in the great virgin forest of McKean County. It possessed practically all the refinements and comforts of a home in the city. Beautifully situated on the little hill overlooking the town, surrounded with a forest park of some twenty acres, the place was an ideal one in which the tired President could secure much needed rest during the hot summer months.

General and Mrs. Kane were ideal hosts and did everything in their power to make the stay of their distinguished guest both pleasant and interesting. He quickly responded to the new surroundings. The cool, bracing atmosphere, the beauty of the forest, abounding with springs of the finest water, cultured and agreeable friends at

the home of General Kane—all these appealed to Grant and made him forget his usually reserved. He conversed with vivacity and his manner had a freedom quite different from what would be expected from the grave and dignified President.



President Relaxes in Rural Surrounds

General Kane exercised care to see that the President should be protected from annoyance, and through Corporal Barnes and Landrigan, of the Bucktail regiment, all persons unless invited, were excluded from a large part of the estate surrounding the residence. Accordingly, the President was able to enjoy unmolested horseback rides through the country. At the close of one of those delightful trips, the President was heard to say, “I have never enjoyed myself more since I was a boy than I have this day.”

The vicinity of Kane was famous at that time, as it has continued since, for the excellence of its trout fishing. It was the expected thing, therefore, that another fishing trip for the President should be planned. He was delighted to again have an opportunity to try his skill. In this, as was characteristic of the man, he was modest, and said, “I am a poor fisherman, but I should at least like to catch one trout!”

The fishing party consisted of President Grant, Senator Cameron, General Kane, Master Jesse Grant, Doctor Freeman, a prominent surgeon of the Civil War, Captain A. A. Clay, and ex officer of Pennsylvania volunteers, Mr. E. Burlingame, a cousin of the Chinese

ambassador, F. S. Michaels and a newspaper correspondent.

The private car of Senator Cameron was used to convey the fishermen from the Kane resident to Wilcox, where Colonel Wilcox has carriages and wagons in waiting. The President with his host, General Kane, General Allen, then a candidate for the State Senate from Warren County, Colonel Wilcox and Jesse Grant, occupied an open spring wagon drawn by two fine horses. The remainder of the party, also in open spring wagons, followed the lead of the President. The correspondent and Captain Clay were mounted up the a light wagon, carrying supplies and drawn by two mules.

The first stop was at the home of Captain Clay, about eight miles from the station. Here the party enjoyed light refreshments consisting of cake and wine served by Mrs. Clay and a committee of ladies.

A mile farther another stop was made, this time at the farm of Mr. Burlingame. Here the wagons were left and the horses were unharnessed and saddled. From this farm the fishermen started across the country, headed for the nearest trout stream. They had not proceeded far when a pleasing incident took place. They were crossing a farm and, approaching the house, noticed lady watching their approach from the doorway. With fine courtesy she advanced to meet the party of horsemen and quickly let down the bars so that the party could pass through into the yard. The lady, Mrs. Heislam spoke with a German accent and at first was a little incredulous when told that the quiet man at the head of the party was none other than president grant. Finally convinced, she went promptly forward seized the president by the hand and said quote God bless you, president grant! God bless you president grant!"

The president spoke a few words with the old lady, saying that on the way back from the trout stream, the party might return the same way and pass her home. Crossing an open field the men found themselves in a dense forest following a bridal path down a rather steep hill where soon on the Bank of the Clarion river. The party divided, Senator Cameron, General Allen, and Doctor Freeman fishing on the clarion and the president with the remaining fishermen, going up straight creek which empties into the clarion at that point.

They began fishing and Jesse grant made the first catch; In fact he had four good sized trout to his credit before his father landed a single fish he said quote I had plenty of bites, but no fish quotation marks soon afterwards, however he caught a big trout and when soon deeply interested in the sport; He fished from midstream, standing knee deep in water.

For hours and hours president grant and his party continued to fish, and in that time 12 dozen fish was the local for the party. Of these the president caught two dozen after a lunch in the woods, the party started homeward, and were soon again at the farm of Mrs. Heislam. While they had been fishing she was very busy preparing for their return. She had built an arch of hemlock boughs over the gate and suspended a beautiful wreath of flowers from the center. On either side of the lane leading to the house the fences were covered with green boughs.

This effort of an absolute cursed woman living in a sparsely settled forest region to show respect and loyalty to the nation's chief magistrate was sincerely appreciated by every man in the party. The president was visibly impressed. It may be doubted if ever before in his distinguished career, though accustomed to all the pomp and show of wealth and all the plaudits of thousands he was so

deeply touched by the as by this simple, honest tribute of respect paid to him by Mrs. Vito. The president dismounted at once and to the great delight of the good old lady, entered her house and spent a few moments in her conversation. And asked for a cup of water. Reaching Mr. Burlingame farm the horses were again horse harnessed and journeyed back to the station was begun president grant and general Kane made the return trip on horseback. About halfway to the station president grant, with general Kane stopped to see a man who had been a brave soldier in the civil war period the men dismounted and entered the humble home of the farmer and spent some time walking and talking with Mr. Heislam. As the party was leaving Heislam was heard to say quote these copperheads around here laugh threaten and hiss at me I am satisfied now. The president is not too proud to come into our poor man's house home."

Reaching Wilcox, they found the town to be decorated with flags and a small cannon began firing its salute. The president and party spent some time in visiting a large tannery of Schultz brothers and plan to visit a large sawmill but lateness of the hour prevented. The party took dinner with Colonel Wilcox, and left on the return trip to Kane at 8:15 PM. On the return to Kane another demonstration was given; This time by the citizens of Kane, had huge bonfires burnt in the forest in front of General Kane's home, and a cannon and fife and drum corps gave evidence of the warmth of the reception.

The president shook hands with a great number of the people assembled and was finally prevailed upon to speak briefly as follows: "I have been with you several days in these wild woods. I have enjoyed a pleasant visit here and thank you for your kindness." General Cameron, General Allen and General Kane also briefly spoke.