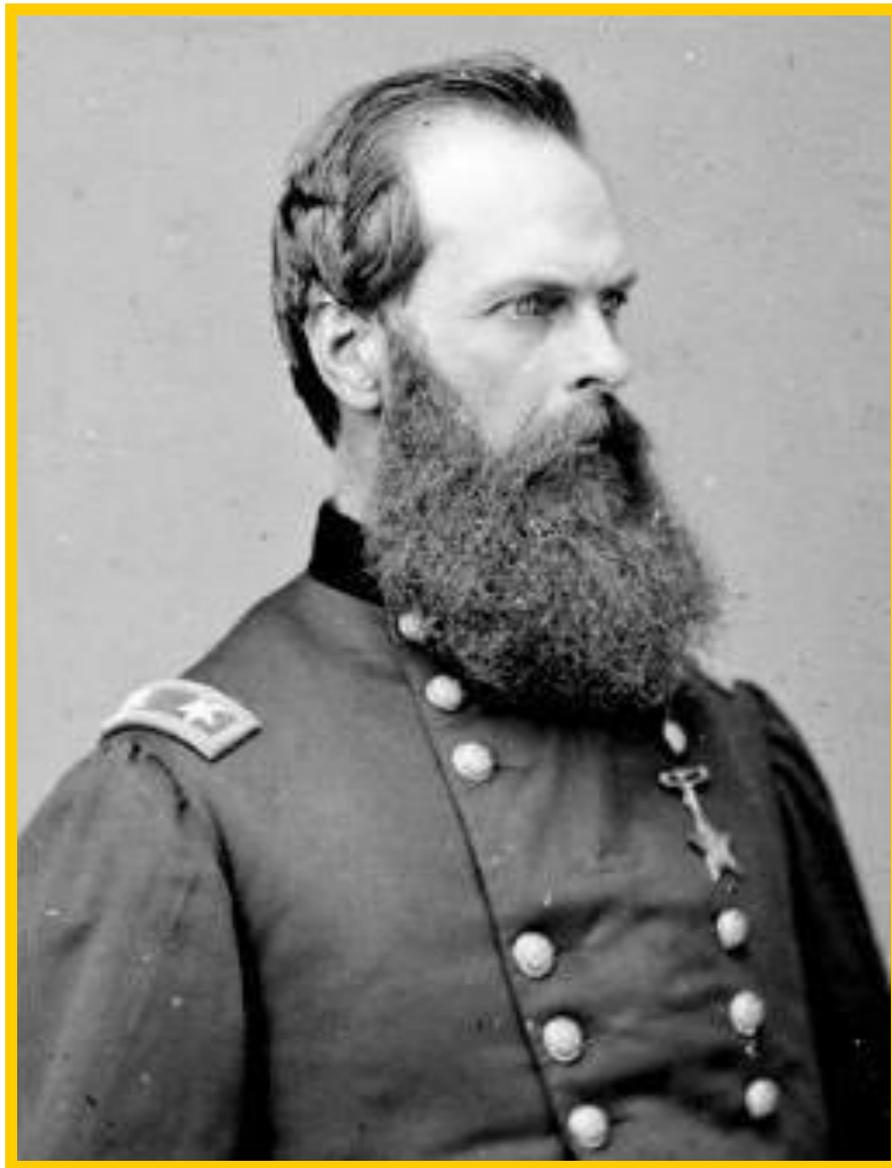


The Bugle



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Major General John White Geary

General and Governor John White Geary

John White Geary led one of those lives that if it were made into a television mini-series, no one would believe it. Like a character in a novel, Geary literally went everywhere, knew everyone, and participated in numerous historical events.

Born December 30, 1819, in Mount Pleasant, Westmoreland County, Geary was the son of Richard Geary, an ironmaster and schoolmaster, and Margaret White Geary, formerly from Maryland. Margaret had inherited several slaves but she educated them and set them free. This early association with slavery and emancipation influenced Geary's later life and political career.

Geary entered Jefferson College to study engineering and law but interrupted his studies to work as a teacher when his father died in an accident. He eventually graduated in 1841 and worked for the Allegheny Portage Railroad. He married Margaret Logan in 1843 but she died in 1853. Like many up and coming young men, he joined the militia and was active in local politics.

He went to war and fought with Scott's Army from Vera Cruz to Mexico City and was wounded leading an attack on Chapultepec Castle. Geary returned home a Colonel and nationally-known war hero. President Polk named him postmaster of San Francisco and later he was elected mayor of the city.

In 1856, President Pierce appointed Geary to the post of territorial governor of Kansas, which was going through the first stages of the Civil War. Pro and anti slavery men fought for the control of the territory and it was soon known as "Bleeding Kansas."

Geary returned to Pennsylvania and married Mary Henderson in 1858. When the Civil War came he raised the 28th Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. In 1862, he was wounded and captured in an action near Harpers Ferry. Shortly after his exchange, he was promoted to brigadier general. He led his

brigade in the unsuccessful campaign against "Stonewall" Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley and was later transferred to Pope's army and was seriously wounded at Cedar Mountain in August 1862. When he returned to the army he was given command of a division in the 12th Army Corps. The corps did not fight at Fredericksburg but it was heavily engaged at Chancellorsville and Geary was wounded again. He remained with the Army of the Potomac and led his division at Gettysburg, fighting on Culp's Hill (where a statue to his memory now stands).

After Gettysburg, the 12th Corps was sent to the western theater and redesignated the 20th Corps and Geary continued to command a division through the Atlanta Campaign, the March to the Sea and the Carolina Campaign. After the war, Geary served as military governor of Savannah and was brevetted Major General.

In 1866, Geary was elected Governor of Pennsylvania and served two three-year terms from 1867 to 1873. During his administration, he broke with the Cameron machine and supported legislation regulating railroads and industrial safety. Geary was a great supporter of the war orphans' school system and unsuccessfully fought for compulsory education for all children in Pennsylvania. With his backing, Pennsylvania held a constitutional convention in 1873 which modernized the state's governmental structure.



Three weeks after leaving the governor's office, Geary died in his New Cumberland home at age 53. He was buried in the Harrisburg Cemetery and a life-size statue marks his grave.