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Armstrong State College
History 300

Thomas Hale Kreeger

by
Jeffrey Lee Stone

July 31, 1980

The information found on Thomas Hale Kreeger¹ suggests that he lead an obscure, average life even though he had inherited land and money. He appeared in only one census, one city directory, and except for when his death was noted only once in the newspapers. His parents and grandparents (mother's side) were different, active in business and the community.

Thomas Kreeger's grandparents were Moses and Mary Cleland of Ireland². Moses was a merchant and owned property in Savannah. Moses and James Cleland bought the lot on Congress Street from William Greenwood on September 5, 1792³. This lot was later inherit by Thomas, for his use, through the will of Mary Cleland⁴.

Thomas's grandparents were also related to his wife Louisa. In Mary Cleland's will Sarah Herb, Louisa's sister, is named as a niece making Louisa Thomas's second cousin⁵.

Louisa Kreeger's father also had wealth. George Herb, Louisa's father, owned Liberty Island in Chatham County which is present day Dutch Island⁶. Part of the island was left to Louisa when her father died but the will did not allow the husband to controll or sell the property; however the children of the husband could have the land.⁷

Fredrick and Jane Kreeger were the parents of Thomas

H. Kreeger. Fredrick was probably from Pennsylvania and moved to there from Savannah. Fredrick was a doctor, owned property in Savannah, and was probably well known since there was not a lot of doctors around.

Thomas was born in 1814 but where is a problem. His parents moved to Philadelphia during or before 1815 and its not known whether Thomas was born here or Philadelphia.⁸ Thomas returned to Savannah before 1838. On January 19, 1838 The Daily Georgia reported that Thomas H. Kreeger had been elected to the committee on accounts of the German Friendly Society.⁹ The next year he married Louisa Carpenter Herb on December 18, 1839.¹⁰ Thomas was twenty-five and Louisa eighteen.

The only time that Thomas shows up on a census is in 1850. By 1850 Thomas and Louisa had five children, John M. age 9; Fedrick 7; Thomas 4; George H. 2; and James M. 3mths. The census also shows Thomas's estate worth \$15,000 and he held no occupation.¹¹

Thomas's grandmother, Mary Cleland, died July 24, 1845 of consumption¹² and through the will received the Congress Street property but he did nothing with the property until 1853 or 4. On November 15, 1855 an incumbrance for \$18,916 was placed against the house by J. & E. Scudder Masons for work and materials.¹³ Even though the house stayed in the hands of Thomas's family it doesn't look like he lived there because the 1858 City Directory list, "Thomas H. Kreiger residing at Liberty St, near Lincoln".¹⁴

Thomas entered his will on June 26, 1860 naming John M.

Kreeger his oldest son as trustee for his estate.¹⁵

On September 19, 1861 Thomas Hale Kreeger died of congestive chills.¹⁶ There wasn't an obituary in the newspaper except to note that he died. He was buried in Laurel Grove Cemetery in lot 102.¹⁷ He had nine children living at the time of his death the last four being Moses C., Willard P., Jane, and Robert G. Kreeger.

Of the nine children only John and George had an noticeably active role in social and public life. In 1859 John was working as a clerk at John William's.¹⁸ Assuming his role as trustee, John, received Louisa's part of Liberty Island in 1866¹⁹ and handled the land transactions of the family.

The 1871 City Directory doesn't list John but George H. is working as a collector for Jas. B. West Co., James M. is a clerk with Dr. J. A. Mayer, and Moses works for J. B. Robinson & Co.²⁰

In 1874 Estill's Savannah Directory George is a bookkeeper with More & Mercer and James a clerk.²¹

The 1883 City Directory lists Louisa in it. She lives at northside 2d east White Bluff and living also is James, George, John, Moses, and Robert.²² The 1893 is the same except that Moses has become a bookkeeper and Robert is listed with a son but not a wife.²³

John M. Kreeger became involved in the sewer question in 1877. During the second half of the 19th century city improvement was a major question around the nation. On July 10, 1877 in a letter to editor John suggested listening to the scientists

before "tinkering" with the old sewer system.²⁴ Then on February 17, 1891 the Savannah Morning News reported a meeting of the Citizen Sanitary Association of which John Kreeger was a member and of a report that was read stating that there had been no epidemics the preceeding year. The Association was given credit for stimulating the authorities to enforce ordinances concerning sewers.²⁵

John M. Kreeger died of heart disease at 65 on January 8, 1892. He was a member of the Savannah Chess Club and though blind could carry on three games of chess at once.²⁶

As for George, he was a member of the Sons of Temperance, Stonewall Divison, No. 5.²⁷ In 1876 George became an officer in the Knights of Pythias Lodge.²⁸ He served as a jury foreman in 1881²⁹ and then served as a juror in the November term of the U. S. Circuit Court in 1886.³⁰

A Thomas Kreeger of Savannah married Ophelia Collis in Montgomery County, Texas according to the Savannah Morning News, May 30, 1882.³¹ He is probably the same Thomas Kreeger born to Thomas Hale Kreeger. Again in 1895 Thomas Kreeger appears in the paper as having secured the right to sell The History of the Confederate Side of the Late War. The paper also noted that Thomas was nearly blind because of the war.³²

Louisa C. Kreeger died December 2, 1898 at age 78, a native of Savannah. She was buried in lot 102 with Thomas Hale Kreeger.³³

¹Another variation of Kreeger is Kreiger but the former seemed to be more common, therefore it will be used.

²Health Department, Vital Records. A record of the death certificate. Moses Cleland 8-18-1832.

³Superior Court Records. Docket 1Q, page 179

⁴Probate Court Records. Microfilm. Wills C2-831. Mary Cleland. Page 853.

⁵Ibid. P. 853.

⁶Superior Court Records. Docket 2Z, P. 41. Another source would be George Herb's will which I didn't need to check but would further information.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Superior Court Records. Docket 2H, P. 246.

⁹The Daily Georgian. 1-19-1838, Vol. XX, No. 16. P. 2, Col. 2.

¹⁰Probate Court Records. Marriages. #2185

¹¹1850 Census. Microfilm. Ga. Historical Society.

¹²Health Department. Vital Records. Mary Cleland. 6-24-1845.

¹³Superior Court Records. Docket 30, P. 417.

¹⁴1858 City Directory. Galloway. Microfiche.

¹⁵Probate Court Records. Thomas Hale Kreeger.

¹⁶Health Department Records. Vital Records. Thomas H. Kreeger 9-19-1861.

¹⁷Index Laurel Grove Cemetery.

¹⁸1859 City Directory. Cooper & Co..

¹⁹Superior Court Records. Docket 3X, P. 444.

²⁰1871 City Directory. Haddock.

²¹1874 City Directory. Estill.

²²1883 City Directory. Weatherbe.

²³1893 City Directory. Sholes.

- ²⁴Savannah Morning News. Nov. 28, 1882. P. 4, Col. 3.
- ²⁵Ibid. Feb. 17, 1891. P. 8, Col. 4,5.
- ²⁶Ibid. Jan. 8, 1892. P.8, Col. 2.
- ²⁷Ibid. June.7, 1870. P.3, Col. 3.
- ²⁸Ibid. Jan. 1, 1876. P.3, Col. 2.
- ²⁹Ibid. March 28, 1881. P.3, Col. 6.
- ³⁰Ibid. Nov. 4, 1886. P.8, Col. 2.
- ³¹Ibid. May 30, 1882. P.4, Col. 6.
- ³²Ibid. July 3, 1895. P.3, Col. 1.
- ³³Index Laurel Grove Cemetery.

Afterword

This is by no means the final word on Thomas Hale Kreeger. Other sources need to be checked including Mary Cleland's Bible, which I discovered was given to the Independent Presbyterian Church while typing this paper.. Another case would be the will of Fredrick Kreeger which is not in Savannah and is probably in Philadelphia. These and other sources may give some hint as to Thomas's life.

A note on the text. The bibliography is set up in groups such as newspapers and for specific pages, dates, etc., the footnoots should be consulted. In the footnotes the city directories are followed by the publisher.

Location of information other than governmental ones are the Savannah Public Library and the Georgia Historical Society.

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