

# Edward Johnston Keenan

Born 3 April 1834 at Youngstown, Pennsylvania, and died 1 June 1877 at Greensburg, Pennsylvania. He was educated in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and reading law with Henry C. Marchand. His father's will gave him \$300.00 which was to be paid to him by his brother Alexander Keenan. His father also chose William S. Head and Henry Marchand, to serve as Edward's guardians.

About the year 1851, when he was 16 years old, Edward "accompanied his brother, Thomas Johnston Keenan, then European law agent, on a trip to Europe, and spent some eight months in the British Isles."

*The Greensburg Democrat* began publication on 18 November 1853 with E. J. Keenan and John Klingensmith, Jr., as owners and editors. "The paper had been established to represent and give expression to that wing of the Democracy which advocated the renomination of William Bigler to the governorship, and which indorsed [sic] his administration." E. J. Keenan became the sole owner and editor when John Klingensmith died in 1854. At the beginning of 1857, his brother William W. Keenan became the local editor and manager. His brother, James Keenan bought the paper from Edward in June 1858.

From 1857 to 1860, Edward J. Keenan served as the Recorder of Deeds and Register of Wills for Westmoreland County.

Edward J. Keenan joined Company H, Fortieth Pennsylvania Volunteers, as a 1st Lieut. under the command of Capt. Daniel Kistler, Jr. (died 28 Sept. 1862) and Capt. Lewis A. Johnson. He resigned 30 December 1862. His military records indicate that he served from 21 June 1861 until 16 December 1862. His wife received pension benefits based upon his military service.

He was admitted to the Westmoreland County Bar in the November Term of 1863 and practiced law in Greensburg. "His engaging personal qualities drew to him a considerable clientage, and he became an adroit trial lawyer, one equally skilled in maneuvering his adversary upon dangerous ground and resourceful in extricating himself for positions of peril in the trial. Among the many arrows in his quiver was a strong sense of humor which he could summon with equal readiness in the passages at arms in the trial and in his argument to the jury. His strategy in a lawsuit was inscrutable to his adversary, for he consistently followed the maxim, 'admit nothing, and demand proof.'

He also engaged in oil operations making considerable money, which was lost to creditors in the "panic." He served as chairman of the Democratic County Committee on various occasions and was deputy chairman for the western part of Pennsylvania for the Democratic State Committee under William Wallace.

"Mr. Keenan wore his generosity and kindness of heart upon his sleeve. The boys of the town, now grizzled citizens, knew 'Uncle Ned' as they affectionately called him, as a

perpetual and unfailing reservoir which they were privileged to tap on all proper occasions to supply their boyish wants. On Christmas there was a regular and concerted hegira from their homes to the home of 'Uncle Ned,' upon the outskirts of town for the Christmas treat, usually in money, which they knew awaited them. He never ceased, with all his burdens and labors, to be a boy himself, with a boy's exuberance of spirit, aspirations, appetite, sense of want, and all that creates a kinship with youth."

The 1860 census records recorded the value of his real estate as being \$5,000 and the value of his personal property as being \$5,000. Ten years later the worth of his holdings increased to \$15,000 of real estate and \$40,000 of personal property. In 1860, Ester Henry, their servant, Robert West, printer's apprentice, and Maggie Kuhns, Eliza's sister, lived with the family. In 1870, Anna Painter, their house keeper, and John Painter, Anna's son, lived with the family.

He was a member of the Urania Chapter, No. 192, H. R. A., of the Masonic Lodge, and served as the High Priest of the chapter in 1869.

He married Eliza Kuhns on 21 July 1857 at the residence of H. Byers Kuhns. The Rev. W.H. Paddock and Rev. Potter conducted the wedding. She was the daughter of Joseph H. Kuhns of Hempfield Township, Pennsylvania. Joseph H. Kuhns was admitted to the Westmoreland County Bar in the August Term of 1823. Eliza K. Keenan died on 22 January 1914 at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

The 1870 census records list 4 children in the family of Edward J. Keenan and Eliza Kuhns. However, the information contained in the *History of the County of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania* states that at the time of his death in June 1871, he left a widow and three children. Since their sons Joseph and James are mentioned in the 1876 codicil of the will of Isabella Keenan (their grandmother) and son James E. Keenan and daughter Elizabeth C. Keenan are mentioned in the 1914 pension file records, it assumed that Isabella died in 1870 or 1871.