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California, of course, was chief among the spoils of the Mexican War, but its territorial government structure was still largely Mexican. In recognition of his services, President Polk appointed John Geary postmaster of San Francisco and mail agent for the entire Pacific coast. John wrapped up affairs in Mount Pleasant and sailed with his wife and son [Geary had married Margaret Ann Logan in February 1843] for the west coast. Replaced after President Taylor took office, Geary was elected First Alcalde (a position which combined sheriff, judge, recorder, notary, and coroner). Soon followed election to Judge of First Instance, giving Geary judicial control of San Francisco civil and criminal cases as well as port regulation. On May 1, 1850 Geary was elected the first Mayor of San Francisco. More importantly, he was appointed to the Territorial Commission designing a Constitution for the state of California (thus his competence later in rewriting Pennsylvania's constitution). Geary's hand in that undertaking is memorable. He insisted, and got, a Free State clause in the document. Thus John was instrumental in California's admission to the union.

Unhappily, Mrs. Geary was ill, and the Geary's returned to Westmoreland County where Margaret died. Grieving, and looking after two sons, John contented himself with farming. Offered the governorship of Utah by President Pierce, John declined. But "Bleeding Kansas" was daily in the news, conditions there being close to civil war between Free Soilers from the North and slave-state adherents from Missouri and the South. The Missouri Compromise had failed. Clay, Webster, Calhoun were dead. Armed with pistols, rifles and knives, Missourians had rushed over the border, intending to vote for slavery. Free Soil people raised a local militia. Outlawry, murder, assassination, arson, robbery – and fear – prevailed. In one year, 200 citizens were killed and damages amounted to 2 million dollars. Slave owners organized a state government but the Free Soilers, meeting in Topeka, petitioned Congress to admit Kansas as a Free State. Congress stalled. Violence grew.

Thus the state was an armed camp when John Geary became governor of Kansas in September 1856. Geary took firm, assertive control, and gradually restored peace and order. Court sessions were held. Armed forces on both sides were forced to go home. Citizens again felt safe. But Geary's "non-partisan" sentiment worried southerners. Slavery partisans in Kansas and in Washington feared him and demanded Geary's removal. When Buchanan, a Democrat, took

office in March 1857, Geary resigned, returning to Westmoreland County, hoping for retirement after the bitter struggles in Kansas. Such was not to be. Within an hour of hearing of Fort Sumter, Geary was organizing enlistments. Lincoln commissioned him a colonel, granting him authority to raise a regiment. Geary soon commanded a regiment of 16 companies, plus a battery of six guns, artillery which gained fame as Knapp's Battery. Immediately, they marched to Harper's Ferry to guard approaches to D.C. In October, Geary's force of 1000 men plus the gun battery repulsed 5000 Southern troops in the battle of Bolivar; Geary was wounded in the right knee. In later April, John became brigadier-general, assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps. He was wounded again at Cedar Mountain in the foot, and, badly, in the right arm. Amputation was considered, but Geary, sent home, recovered. Back at the front, General Geary was again wounded at Chancellorsville.

Just before Gettysburg, Geary assumed command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. His men were the first to occupy Round Top. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, Geary's troops charged the Confederates who had occupied Kulp's hill, driving them off and thus protecting supplies and munitions nearby on the Baltimore Pike. But the south regrouped and shelled Geary's position for seven hours, repeatedly attacking his defenses with bayonet charges. Geary's division held. The next day, 1200 confederates lay dead.

After Gettysburg, General Geary's men fought at Wauhatchie, Lookout Mountain, and Mission Ridge. At Wauhatchie, Geary's eighteen year-old son, a member of the gun battery, was shot dead in the presence of his father. Wretched with grief, Geary went on heroically, joining the advance against Savannah, and engaging in campaigns in the Carolinas at Sandsboro, Red Bank, and Black River. The 28<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment was with him until the close of the war. On January 12, 1865, John White Geary was commissioned Major-General, the document praising his "fitness to command and his promptness to execute."

So, from school teacher to railroad engineer to invader of Mexico to California public servant to Kansas Governor to Civil War Major-General. John White Geary was peculiarly prepared for his work as Governor of Pennsylvania.

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Sources for any of the "Local Heroes" series are available from the editor.