

John Kane  
1810 – July 1, 1848

Section 5 ID # 50030

Construction of the State Capitol was the most important building project in Nashville in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In the spring of 1845, following the signing of a contract by the State Board of Building Commissioners, plans were outlined for the laying of the cornerstone. With appropriate ceremonies, the cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1845. On September 15, 1846, the Board approved payment to William Strickland “the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars for plan of Building and travelling Expenses.” On that same day, the Board Chairmen directed that “the necessary steps to have 120 Convicts set apart by the Agent at the Penitentiary for the use of the Commissioners.” The inmates were worked at the quarry cutting stone for the building. On October 19, 1847, the motion was approved to pay James Birth “a salary of \$250 per annum, to be paid him monthly” for his work as Superintendent of construction.

James Birth figures in the burial arrangements for John Kane. On November 15, 1847, James Birth purchased a lot, in Section 5 of City Cemetery. Lot No. 13 that measured 10 feet x 40 feet. On this lot were buried James Birth’s son, daughter and mother-in-law during 1847 & 1848. And on July 1, 1848, James Birth authorized that “fees to be paid by J. Birth” for the burial of John Kane. On August 8, 1850, William Lainard, who died of Brain Fever, was identified in the Interment records, as “stone cutter from Capitol Hill.” William Lainard was also buried on James Birth’s lot at City Cemetery.

City Cemetery Interment Books list the cause of death of John Kane as Consumption. Other accounts have suggested that his death was caused by a fall from the scaffolding on the Capitol building under construction.

On the James Birth lot today, there are no tombstones still in existence for the three Birth family members or for William Lainard. There is only the impressive monument for John Kane designed by William Strickland, Architect of the State Capitol. On the top of the monument are replicas of Kane’s stone cutter tools.

Fletch Coke 2017