

Kenan, Owen Rand ^[1]

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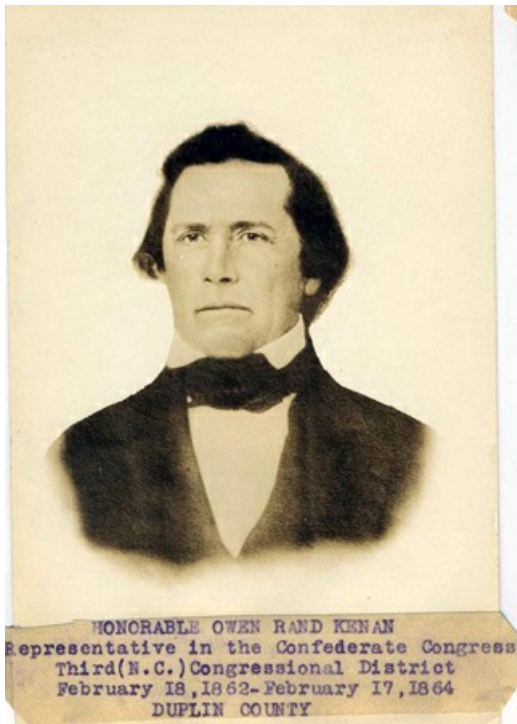
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4 Mar. 1804–3 Mar. 1887



"Liberty Hall", the ancestral home of the Kenan family in Kenansville. Originally built by Owen's grandfather, James Kenan.

^[2]Owen Rand Kenan, planter ^[3], legislator, and Confederate ^[4] congressman, was born in Kenansville on land that his Scot-Irish grandfather, Thomas Kenan, had acquired about 1735. His parents were Thomas ^[5] and Mary Rand Kenan. He studied medicine briefly, then decided to read law. Kenan first practiced in Kenansville, but when the rest of the family moved to Alabama in 1833 he took over the Duplin County ^[6] property as the oldest son. Soon cotton and tobacco planting became his chief interest. He rebuilt Liberty Hall, which had been destroyed by fire, and in 1836 he married Sarah Rebecca Graham, a local lady of Scottish descent. They had one daughter, Annie Dickson, and three sons: Thomas Stephen ^[7], James Graham, and William Rand. All the sons later served as officers in the Forty-third North Carolina Regiment, Confederate Army.



From the North Carolina Museum of History. ^[8]Kenan was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons as a Democrat ^[9] in 1834, 1835, and 1836, serving successively on the committees of Privileges and Elections, Education, and Propositions and Grievances. For the next few years, he abstained from active politics and Liberty Hall became one of the main centers of Duplin County social affairs. After Lincoln's election to the presidency in 1860, Kenan became a strong Secessionist ^[10]. In the fall of 1861 he campaigned for a seat in the Confederate House of Representatives on the promise to cooperate fully with the Confederacy. He won easily over two more conservative opponents.

In Richmond, where he served on the Committee on Accounts, Kenan was one of North Carolina's few strong supporters

of vigorous wartime legislation. It was only in his opposition to the tax in kind on agricultural production and to arbitrary curbs on inflation, both of which he felt would overburden his productive agricultural district, that Kenan placed local over national considerations. At the end of his two-year term Kenan stated that in North Carolina there was not enough discontent with the Confederacy to merit concern, but he did not seek reelection. After the Civil War ^[11], he devoted himself entirely to his law practice and to planting.

Kenan's contemporaries described him as quiet, though affable and hospitable. He died at home and was buried in the Graham family cemetery near Kenansville.

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"Liberty Hall." N.C. Highway Historical Marker F-47, N.C. Office of Archives & History. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=F-47> ^[15] (accessed February 18, 2013).

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"Photograph, Accession #: [H.1914.347.14](#) ^[8]," 1900-1930. North Carolina Museum of History (accessed February 18, 2013).

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Authors:

Years, W. Buck ^[20]

Origin - location:

Duplin County ^[21]

From:

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