

Biography of  
William Livingston Holmes

First Sheriff of Clackamas County, Oregon



**William Livingston Holmes** was born on May 30, 1807 near Nashville, Tennessee to parents Elizabeth Hensley and David Holmes.

From "*The History of DeKalb County, MO*":

*"David Holmes was married in Tennessee (wife's name not available) and moved to Clay County, MO from Howard County, MO where the wife died and is buried. Then the family moved to Clinton County, south of Stewartsville and resided on a farm for many years. David and wife were the parents of 11 children: **William**, Frances, Mollie, Samuel, Sallie Ann, Lowarrie, Paul, Harriet, Simon, Rety [Riley?], and Henry. They all lived to be old and raised families except Henry, who lived with his father for many years and never married."*

On May 10, 1834 William Holmes, age 26, was united in marriage to Mary Ann Louise Campbell Williams (Louisa) in Saline County, Arkansas. Eight children were born to this union, and they included: Elizabeth Jane (1835; died age 5 mos.); Minerva J. (1836); Samuel D. (1839); Frances E. (1842); Mary L. (1845); William N. B. (1848); Ermina A. (1850); and Theodore E. (1855).

When he was 36 years of age, William Holmes, along with his wife and three living children enlisted as members of the 1843 Oregon Pioneer Wagon Train which left Independence, Missouri on May 10, 1843 and arrived in Oregon Territory on November 17, 1843. Also, in the list of 1000 estimated members of this wagon train were Riley A. Holmes and Samuel J. Hensley.

It is supposed, but not yet proven, that Riley was William's brother; Samuel J. Hensley was the younger brother to William L. Holmes' mother Elizabeth Hensley, and so, was William's uncle who continued on to California and established there a history of his own. (Also in the 1843 wagon train was Thomas J HENSLEY [Turned off at Fort Hall and went to California]; unsure of his relationship to William L. Holmes).

After the Holmes family's arrival in Oregon City in 1843, it is unknown where they initially might have lived, but in 1845 a small log cabin was built to house the family until a proper home could be erected. In the Oregon Historical Records Index, (Vol.1, pg 023) it shows that William filed his 640 acre land claim in Clackamas County on 26 Aug 1845. The home was completed in 1847 and has come to be known by neighbors and friends as [Rose Farm](#) in recognition of the many pink mission rose bushes Louisa had planted on the property.

Oregon City, the county seat of Clackamas County, was the first incorporated city west of the Rocky Mountains. One of the first sheriffs in Oregon Territory under the Provisional Government was **William Livingston Holmes**. He was elected to the position of Clackamas County Sheriff in 1845 and served in that capacity, as well as its sergeant-at-arms, until 1852. In 1843, Clackamas county stretched from the Rocky Mountain Divide to parts of Puget Sound, and north to the 54<sup>th</sup> parallel. This region included the present-day states of Idaho, Oregon and Washington, portions of Montana and Wyoming, and half of the province of British Columbia. By law, in 1844 the northern boundary of the county changed to the Columbia River. (See [Provisional and Territorial Records Guide Clackamas County](#) in *Sources* for more information.)

Four additional children were born to William and Louisa in the years after their immigration to the Oregon Territory. They are Mary Louise, William N. B., Ermina A. and Theodore Edwin.



In July of 1854 an advertisement in the Oregonian announced that William Holmes was newly returned from San Francisco and was advertising new articles for sale in his "*fireproof brick building*" and dry goods store on Main Street in

Oregon City. Mr. Holmes also dabbled in politics and education.

On April 29, 1863 William Livingston and Mary Holmes deeded five acres of land for \$5.00 to the city council of Oregon City for the use as a public cemetery. It was named [Mountain View Cemetery](#) for its view of Mt. Hood. They also deeded one acre to the Masonic Lodge for their use as a cemetery. The two cemeteries are the two oldest sections of Mountain View Cemetery, which now includes fifty-four acres of property for ground and above ground burials.

William L. Holmes is buried in the above mentioned cemetery, along with his wife and some of his children. One son, Samuel D. Holmes died in Oakland, California; another son, William N. B. Holmes died at Rose Farm, and the youngest child, Theodore E. was lost at sea.

