



# History of the Washington County Sheriff's Office



1841 to 2009





## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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*Many others gave suggestions and encouragement to complete this short history of the Washington County Sheriff's Office and we thank you all.*

**Rob Gordon, Sheriff**

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# INTRODUCTION

by Sheriff Rob Gordon

The office of Sheriff is over a thousand years old with a fascinating history. While its origins are in English history, it has gained much of its notoriety here in the United States.

A sheriff is fundamentally different from a chief of police. A chief is ordinarily appointed by a city council. A chief often has the city manager as his or her immediate supervisor. Your sheriff is elected directly by you and answers directly to you – there is no intermediary between you and your sheriff.

There are also many operational differences between a sheriff's office and a police department. The sheriff maintains a jail, provides security in courtrooms, serves civil court process (lawsuit documents), enforces court orders, issues concealed handgun licenses and maintains warrants among other functions not found in a police department.

This booklet begins with a brief look at the origins of the sheriff's office, moves to the establishment of the sheriff's office in the Northwest, and then provides a history of your Washington County Sheriff's Office.

For current news about your Sheriff's Office, you may subscribe to our free monthly e-newsletter at [www.co.washington.or.us/SheriffsNews](http://www.co.washington.or.us/SheriffsNews).

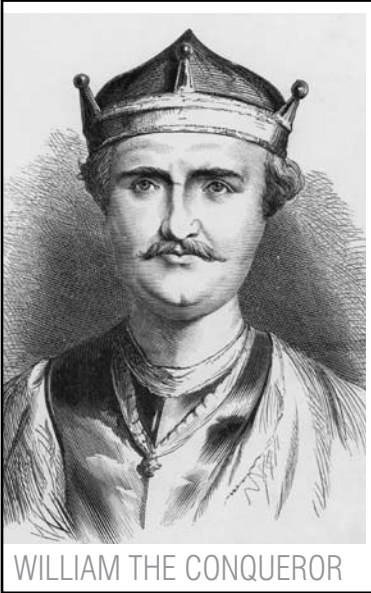
Your visits, phone calls and e-mails are always welcome. Please contact us anytime that we may be of service.



Sheriff Rob Gordon

# CHAPTER I

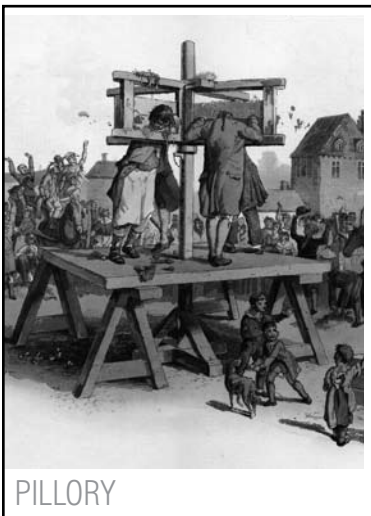
## IN THE BEGINNING



WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

We are not going back to the “Big Bang” or to “Genesis” or such, but a mention of some very early history of the office of sheriff is of interest. When the Anglos, Saxons, and Jutes invaded what is now England in about 500 A.D., they designated geographic areas called “shires” for convenience of maintaining order and rule.

Under the feudal system of government, the shires were run by an earl. Government was not all that well organized and those in authority at all levels had little appreciation for what belonged to others. The king, having concern that his earls may not render to him what was due, appointed “reeves” who represented the king and answered only to the king. The reeve of the shire made certain that the earl paid up. The “shire reeve” (eventually evolving into “sheriff”) also enforced the king’s law in the shire.



PILLORY

When the Normans invaded in 1066, **William the Conqueror** kept the same organizational setup for the same purposes. One hundred years later, in 1166, King Henry II ordered all his sheriffs to build a jail in their county. (Only 687 years later, Washington County built its first jail, but more on that later.) Okay, we now are calling them sheriffs. However, the spelling was very different and we can only make an educated guess at how it was pronounced. We are now referring to “county” due to the Norman influence and the influence of their language.

In the 1100s, jails and prisons were used differently. They did not lodge people sentenced for jail time for crimes they committed. Rather, an accused person was placed in jail to await trial for their crime. In 1275, if a person did not agree to trial, they were kept in prison, given a little bread and water, and loaded down with chains until they either agreed to be tried or they were crushed to death.

Following conviction, a person would be placed in stocks, placed in a **pillory**, be branded, be put into a dunking chair (perhaps drown), or be whipped or hanged among other unpleasant punishments.



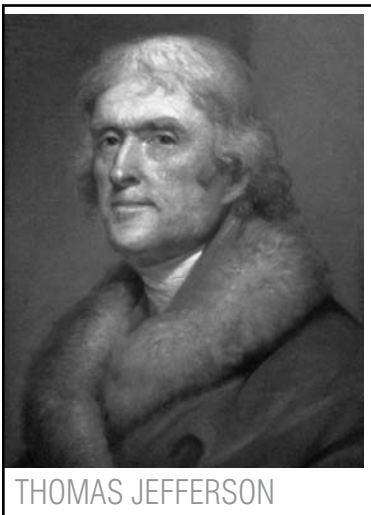
LONDON PUBLIC HANGING

Jumping ahead, from 1660 to 1750 the number of capital crimes (death penalty cases) on the books increased from 50 to 160 and by 1815 there were 288 capital crimes for which a person would be hanged. In **London** alone, in the early 1600s, there were 150 **hangings** a year. By the early 1700s, while the number of capital crimes had greatly increased, the annual hangings decreased to 20.



An actual and interesting case during this period of time which gives a bit of a view of law and justice was “The Highwayman’s Case.” In 1725, two highwaymen (a person who robbed people who were traveling) had a disagreement about the split of the proceeds of one of their robberies. One filed a Bill in Equity against (sued) the other to obtain his share. The judge’s ruling was that the plaintiff and defendant both be hanged and he admonished the attorneys.

With the settling of North America, the English colonies operated under English law including the office of sheriff. During the American Revolution – which, by the way started on April 15, 1775, and not on July 4, 1776 – Sheriff John Nixon was the first person to publicly read the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



**Thomas Jefferson**, in his work entitled “The Values of Constitution” stated that the sheriff “is the most important of all the executive officers in the county.”

## CHAPTER II

### **OREGON COUNTY AND THE OREGON TERRITORY**

There are a few theories about where the name “Oregon” came from. The most accepted idea regarding the origin of “Oregon” was that a French map engraver did a bit of sloppy work; this is the theory accepted by the National Geographic Society.

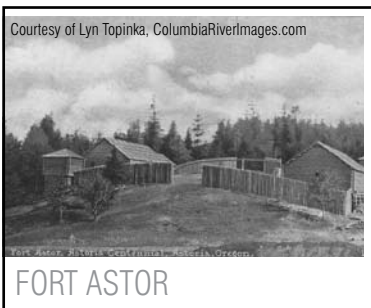
It was thought by many that there was a great river of the west that went from the middle of the continent all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The name of that river was the “Wisconsin” and was often spelled “Ouisiconsink.” The engraver, using his own unique spelling, “Oriconsink”, placed the first part of the name - “Oricon” - above the line representing the river and placed the last syllable – “sink” – below the line. People generally didn’t see the syllable below the line and began referring to the river only by the first part – “Oricon”.

In 1765, British Major Robert Rogers, in referring to exploring west of the Mississippi, uses the name “Ouragon” in a letter. Through various spellings and pronunciations over time, we see “Oregon” in President Jefferson’s written instructions to **Captain Meriwether Lewis** of June 20, 1803, wherein he suggested that the Captain may wish to follow the Oregon River on his journey.





GEORGE DROUILLARD

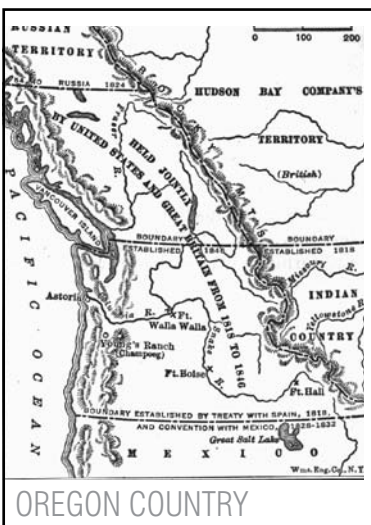


FORT ASTOR

Immediately after the Lewis and Clark Expedition, hardy mountain men began trapping for pelts in the Northwest. Furs were extremely popular in the eastern United States and throughout Europe. One of the Lewis and Clark party, Private John Colter, left the expedition on their return in 1806 to take up the fur trade business. Another of the party, **George Drouillard**, returned in 1807 also to enter the fur trade. George didn't do too well – in 1810 the Blackfeet Indians cut off his head and mutilated his body. The fur trade would be the major economic activity and foundation of the Northwest for the next 40 years. The establishment of **Fort Astor** (now Astoria) in 1811 was for the purpose of the fur trade.

In the early 1800s, what we now refer to as the Northwestern United States and Southwestern Canada was claimed by the United States, Britain, Russia and Spain. In 1818, the United States and Britain agreed to joint occupation of the area called the Oregon Country, however, they also agreed neither would govern the area. The Oregon Country was made up of all the land from the Pacific Ocean on the West, the latitude of 54° 40' on the North (Russian Alaska), the Continental Divide on the east and the 42nd latitude on the south which was the northern most claim of Spanish Mexico. In 1824, both Russia and Spain ceded their claims to the area. The joint occupation without formal government made for a tenuous existence for the few settlers living in a remote area without the benefit of any legal system.

With the population of fur bearing animals declining and the demand for furs declining, the mountain men and trappers began to settle into agriculture in the fertile valleys. In addition to those already here moving into the valleys, there was a trickle of additional settlers moving west. However, even by 1845, the population was estimated to be around 2,000 for the entire area.



OREGON COUNTRY

With a very sparse population and individual survival being number one on everybody's agenda, there were few concerns about crime, nor was the establishment of government much of a priority. It was not until 1841, when Ewing Young died with no apparent heir, that legal matters became anyone's concern. The accounts are in conflict as to whether Young died after a five-day illness or if he was murdered. In any case, what was to become of his property? Young had been one of the wealthiest men in the Oregon Country.



Soon after Young's death, a group of settlers got together at Champoeg to form a small provisional government to figure out how to probate his estate. (Some records indicate that the setting up of the provisional government was to take care of the "wolf problem" and that these meetings were referred to as "wolf meetings.") At this meeting **Jason Lee** (a Methodist missionary) was chosen as Chairman, Dr. Ira L. Babcock (a physician) was chosen as Supreme Judge with probate powers, and William Johnson was chosen as High Sheriff.

Even though Johnson was appointed as our first sheriff in 1841, there is no record of Johnson ever having done anything in his official capacity. There is, however, a record of an interview with him. In 1842, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes was commissioned by the U.S. government to come to Oregon Country and report back on the need to form a government. Regarding his interview with Johnson, Wilkes stated, "Johnson, trapper like, took what I thought the soundest view, saying that they yet lived in the bush, and let all do right, there was no necessity for lawyers or magistrates."

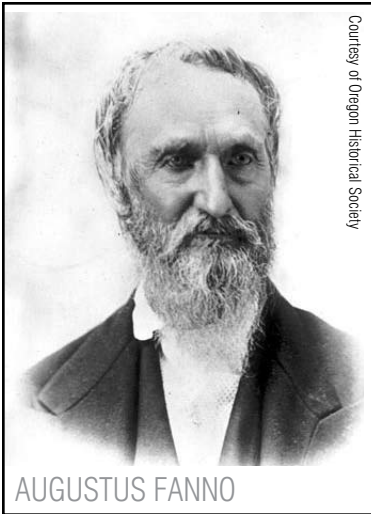
A few more wolf meetings were held over the next couple of years to discuss the need for protections from wolves and other vermin "worse than wild animals," a reference to the British. On May 2, 1843, a meeting was held in Champoeg to vote on a report of a committee which stated that a provisional government should be formed that would be independent until such time as the U.S. decided to exercise jurisdiction. The meeting was attended by 52 Canadians and 50 Americans.



After much confusion about who favored adoption of the report, **Joseph Meek** shouted, "Who's for a divide?" and drew a line in the dirt with the heel of his boot. He then said, "All for the report of the committee and an organization, follow me." Two Canadians, following a private discussion with Meek, sided with the Americans making the vote 52 to 50 in favor. Meek then hollered, "Three cheers for our side!"

Following the vote, various offices were filled by election including the first sheriff of the provisional government, Joseph Lafayette Meek. Thus began the provisional government of the Oregon Country.





**Augustus Fanno** (for whom Fanno Creek is named) came to Oregon in 1846 and moved to what is now the Beaverton area in 1849. He was both a farmer and a teacher and the first deputy sheriff. Also in 1849, on September 3, the name of Tuality County was changed to Washington County.

In 1850, Congress passed the Donation Land Claim Law. Pioneers had expected to receive a full square mile – 640 acres. The new law gave any man who settled before December 1, 1850, 320 acres. After that, a single man would receive a grant of 160 acres and, if married, an additional 160 acres; in any case they were required to settle on the land. The Willamette Valley was the area of choice with its open lands, relatively level terrain and rich soil. The new Land Claim legislation was cause for a number of new marriages and the beginning of a substantial influx in settlers making the difficult 2,000 mile journey to the Oregon Territory.

# CHAPTER III

## SHERIFFS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST

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### JOSEPH MEEK

Joseph Meek was born February 9, 1810, in Washington County, Virginia. When he was 18, he headed west to make a life for himself. He was a big guy, who was full of mischief and who loved to play practical jokes. He was also very rugged and could hold his own physically and verbally. When the beaver pelt market began giving way, he made his way to the Oregon Country. Along the way, in Idaho in 1838, he married his third wife, the daughter of Sub-Chief Kowesota of the White Bird band of the Nez Perce Indian tribes. Her Indian name is unknown, however, he called her “**Virginia**.”



At the 1843 settlers meeting at Champoeg, Meek provided a strong voice and was instrumental in having matters go the way of the Americans. At that time, four districts (later called counties) were created: Yam Hill, Twality, Champooick and Clackamas. Twality District included all lands west of an artificial line from Champoeg -- from the Yamhill River on the south to the northern most claim of the U.S., namely latitude 54 degrees, 40 minutes.

In the presidential election of 1844, it has been said that James K. Polk used the slogan “54-40 or Fight” meaning that he would claim all the Northwest to the northernmost U.S. claim or go to war with the British. In fact, it was a group of southern senators who tried to



make the slogan stick in an attempt to obtain more pro-slavery lands. After Polk was elected, he agreed to settle the dispute by compromising on the 49th parallel – the current U.S. and Canada border.

On June 3, 1845, Meek was again elected the Oregon Sheriff. In 1846, he resigned to become a member of the provisional legislature. In 1847, the **Whitman Massacre** occurred in Walla Walla. Marcus Whitman had established a mission in Walla Walla. Over time, relations with the Cayuse Indians deteriorated to the point of an Indian attack on the mission on November 29, 1847. The massacre seemed to be the tipping point along with the increasing number of settlers (now over 2,000) where it was deemed necessary for the Oregon Country to become a formal territory of the United States.

Meek was chosen to take the news of the Whitman Massacre to Washington D.C. and to lobby for territorial status. The choice of Meek for this mission was obvious - who could more quickly cross the continent than he? Meek and his delegation were successful in their lobbying efforts and the bill passed on August 13, 1848. It was signed by President James K. Polk the next day – the same day that Joseph Lane was appointed the first governor of the new **Oregon Territory** and Joseph Meek was appointed its first U.S. Marshal. Of course it didn't hurt Meek's efforts that he was a distant cousin of Sarah Polk, President Polk's wife. It even got him an invitation to stay in the White House while he was there.



On March 3, 1849, the newly appointed governor, General Joseph Lane of Indiana, stood on the balcony of William Holmes' farmhouse outside of Oregon City and proclaimed that Oregon was now a Territory of the United States. Six months later on September 3, 1849, the Territorial Legislature changed the name of the Twality District to Washington County in honor of our first president, George Washington. Some say the change in name was due to Meek's insistence – he wanted it named for his home county in Virginia.



The Whitman Massacre was personal to Meek; his 10-year-old daughter, Helen Mar Meek, had been at the Whitman's mission and died following the Massacre. Five Cayuse Indians who were identified as involved in the killings were tried in Oregon City. The trial began May 22, 1850 and the defendants were found guilty and hanged on June 3, 1850. Meek presided at the hangings.

Joseph Meek died in 1875. His **final resting place** is in the cemetery at the **Tuality Plains Presbyterian Church on Old Scotch Church Road** just east of Glencoe Road.

## OTHER EARLY SHERIFFS

With the resignation of Sheriff Meek to become a legislator and a U.S. Marshal, and the formation of the districts, the first Twality District sheriff was **Thomas H. Smith**. Smith only served for one month and resigned leaving no record of any official acts. Smith was followed by **Robert H. Poe** for a year, then by **Westly Mulky** who lasted only about three months.

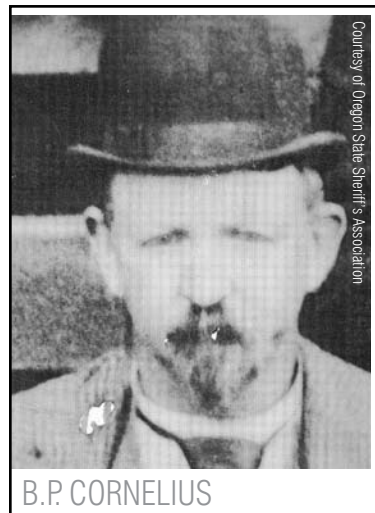


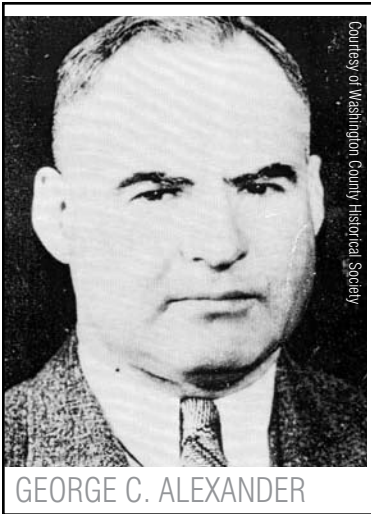
Sheriff **Richard E. Wiley** next served for five years; however, the five years were over three separate periods of time. Wiley was a farmer and his land was about three miles northeast of what is now Hillsboro. Hillsboro had previously been known as "Columbia" and Columbia later became "Hillsborough". By 1858 the name changed to "Hillsboro". Hillsboro has been the county seat since the beginning of the designation of districts and counties. Sheriff Wiley was also a newspaper man and owned and operated the first newspaper in Oregon called "The Oregon Pioneer."

During the next several years, a number of different men served as sheriff. There is a complete list at the end of this booklet. The first sheriff to die in office (1849) was Phineas Caruthers who served only a few months. Caruthers' death was from natural causes. The only other sheriff to die in office, also from natural causes, was John Wesley Connell in 1948.

## SHERIFFS WHO HELD OTHER OFFICES

**Jesse C. Moore** was elected sheriff in 1864 and 25 years later was elected to the Oregon State Legislature. **B.P. Cornelius** became a Washington County judge in 1894. **John Wesley Connell**, first elected sheriff in 1904, served a year as the Mayor of Hillsboro before again being elected sheriff.





Sheriff **George C. Alexander**, first elected in 1913, was later appointed State Prohibition Commissioner, then Deputy Superintendent of the Oregon State Police, and finally Warden of the Oregon State Penitentiary. There had been various problems at the penitentiary and the local sentiment in Washington County when Alexander was appointed warden was, "Well, George will take care of it."

### SHERIFFS WITH FAMILIAR NAMES

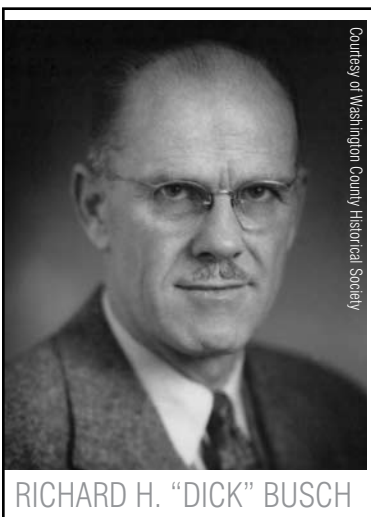
People familiar with street names and other landmarks will recognize the names of a number of sheriffs – most already mentioned:

**B.P. Cornelius** - 1884

**Phineas M. Dennis** - 1888

**J.W. Sewell** - 1900

**John Wesley Connell** - 1904



### NOTABLE 20TH CENTURY SHERIFFS

In addition to **John Wesley Connell's** history, he served Washington County as sheriff longer than any other man. Connell served a total of 24 years as the Washington County Sheriff. His terms of office were from 1904 to 1908 and then again from 1929 to 1948, when he died in office. It was during Connell's time in office that the first uniforms came into use. They were 100% wool Marine surplus uniforms. The deputies did not like these uniforms because when they got wet in the rain they became heavy and really stunk!

**Richard H. "Dick" Busch** grew up in the southwest area of the county. His parents died when he was a child. Following the death of his parents, a neighbor from Denmark, Matt Pihl, who had settled in the Dilley area in May of 1907, would bring over his goat cart to give Dick and the kids rides to entertain them. Matt Pihl's son would later become District Attorney then Circuit Court Judge Hollie Pihl.

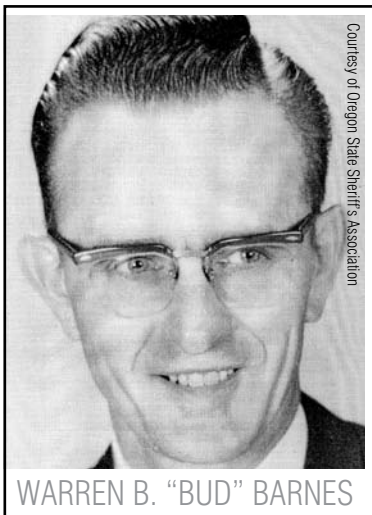
Dick began his career as a deputy under Sheriff Connell. When Dick became a deputy on September 1, 1932, he was one of two deputies working for Connell. At this time, the Sheriff's Office had become quite modern; you could reach them at their Hillsboro phone number: 2341 – that's all, no prefix, no area code, just the four numbers.

Busch was appointed as sheriff upon the death of Connell in 1948. He also served an extended term; of his 32 years with the office, 16 of those years were as sheriff.

According to a story told by his wife, Gladys, shortly after his appointment as sheriff a couple of men in dark suits showed up at their home "just like in the movies." The men informed Sheriff Busch that they were taking over the county. Sheriff Busch was not a big man or physically imposing in any way, but he flew into such a rage that the men left and were never seen again.

In another instance, gambling interests came into the area and opened an illegal gambling establishment. Sheriff Busch handled this matter simply by having deputies take down the license numbers of all the vehicles that visited the establishment. Then the deputies visited them at home. Soon the establishment had no customers and they closed.

In 1953, Sheriff Busch became the first sheriff west of the Mississippi to be elected President of the National Sheriff's Association. When he retired in 1964, the Sheriff's Office had grown to more than 20 deputies.



**Warren B. "Bud" Barnes** graduated from Forest Grove High School and joined the Sheriff's Office as a deputy in 1951 with a salary of \$175 per month. Deputy Barnes worked his way through the ranks and was first elected sheriff in 1965. He was the last of the sheriffs to remain in office for an extended period of time. Sheriff Connell had served for 24 years, followed by Sheriff Busch for 16 years, and finally Sheriff Barnes served for 18 years, retiring in 1983.

The deputies' union, which had disbanded in the 1950s, reorganized during Sheriff Barnes' term of office due to an extended period without wage increases. The deputies' union became the "Washington County Police Officers Association" due to an error by the person who made their rubber stamp. The stamp maker had placed the word "Police" where the instructions had stated "Peace".

The union did a pretty good job of getting the wages raised for deputies. Wages were raised from \$500 per month in 1972 to \$701 per month in 1973 to a range of \$800 to \$1,187 per month in 1977.

In 1976, the Oregon State Sheriff's Association named Sheriff Barnes "Sheriff of the Year".

# CHAPTER IV

## HIGH CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS

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“High crimes and misdemeanors” is a quote from Article II, Section 4 of the United States Constitution. We are not talking about impeachment. This chapter is dedicated to a few interesting and novel criminal cases that occurred in Washington County. Before formal government came to the area, the few settlers that were here just took care of the occasional thief themselves – recidivism was indeed extremely low.

### 1853

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The first Washington County Jail was completed and ready for inmates on December 6, 1853. One of the first inmates was George Sasil who was lodged on December 28, 1853, for selling spirituous liquor without a license.

### 1854

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A bit more serious on this one. William Burriss had been drinking for a few days and was roaring drunk. He split open the head of one of his four kids and locked his wife and the other kids in their cabin and burned it down.

### 1864

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John Benson was arrested and convicted for cursing and abusive language in a saloon. Things were a bit different back then.

### 1866

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Patrick Hanson was arrested and convicted of purse snatching. Part of his sentence included a \$2.00 fee to the sheriff for lodging him into the jail, \$1.50 for his keep, and \$1.00 each for the jurors.

### 1890

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Johnny Bain, perhaps the most infamous criminal in the history of Washington County, absolutely terrorized everybody within miles of the Dixie Mountain area. He was a killer, robber, and a rapist. Citizens were in such fear of him that no one would even report his crimes.

When Bain first came west at age 18, he settled in Portland. He had a real prejudice against Chinese people, but seemed to get along with the one that worked in the butcher shop with him – until the day he split the man’s head open with a cleaver. He was sent to the penitentiary (in Portland at the time) but due to his youth he was paroled.

Bain was married and had two children and again things seemed to be going quite well. However, one day the kids annoyed him so he strangled them. He was sent to the penitentiary again. No parole this time – he escaped instead. Next, he settled into a cabin in the deep woods of the Dixie Mountain area.

One citizen survived an attack by Bain on his home, wife and himself. This guy was 6’6” and he made a report to the sheriff, requesting the sheriff put him in jail to protect him from Bain’s revenge for reporting him. The sheriff deputized a few men and they went to Bain’s cabin.

Bain came walking up to his cabin which the deputies had surrounded and told the sheriff, "Get out of here fast or you never will get out." Immediately upon Bain's threat, a gunfight ensued. Bain fled into the woods.

Sheriff Dennis approached the cabin to search it and found the door had been locked from the outside. Breaking the outside lock, they tried the door and found it was also locked from the inside. Once inside, they found no one in the cabin, not even in the attic, and there was no other means of escape. A deputy wanted to shoot his gun up the chimney but the sheriff said there had been enough shooting that day.

Two weeks later, a man found Bain's body near a trail. Under the body, was Bain's shotgun – loaded and cocked.

A few years later, a logger told a story about going deer hunting near the logging camp he was working. He ran into another hunter who told him he could be his guide – that he was real familiar with the area. During the hunting trip, he stayed in the man's cabin and had taken a nap only to wake up to gun fire. He tried to open the cabin door but it was locked from the outside. Soon he heard somebody trying to get into the door and fearing for his life he locked it on the inside and looked for a place to hide. The only way he could hide was by climbing into the fireplace and up the chimney.

## **1892**

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Lars Larsen – no relation to the nationally syndicated talk show host – was arrested on June 10, 1892, for "Lewd Cohabitation and Adultery." Upon conviction, he was fined \$250 and was discharged from jail on October 5, 1892. For other interesting charges and information that was deemed important, check the booking log for 1892 in the lobby of the Sheriff's Office.

## **1894**

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Gus Watchlin was suspected of the murder of John Ledrick. Watchlin had only recently been released from jail and had been seen with two of the victim's horses. Sheriff Ford traced him to a hotel in Portland and found one of the horses and a coat that belonged to Ledrick. Sheriff Bradford inherited the case and began sending out flyers. Three years later, Watchlin was captured. Finding a coat and a horse was pretty good evidence at the time – forensics was pretty basic back then.

## **1908**

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Two boys, ages 10 and 13, stole a horse and buggy from the Salem area to go to Portland. They were caught by Sheriff Hancock in Hillsboro and were returned to Salem. Horse stealing was epidemic in 1908. The lucky thieves were caught by the sheriff – many were hanged without the benefit of arrest.

## **1909**

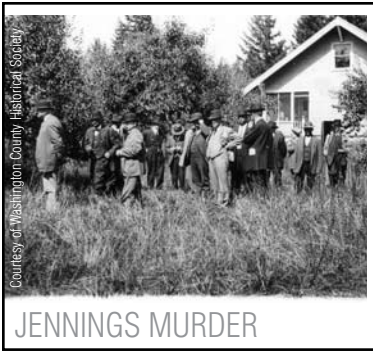
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A pretty straight forward case: John D. Roselair killed his wife for taking the cream off of the milk that he planned to use for his mush. John was hanged.

## **1914**

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Another simple one: Rose Merlo shot and killed her husband because he was mad at her and chased her into the bedroom. Rose only got a manslaughter conviction.



## 1916

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Then there was the **Helen Jennings murder**. It was said that Helen was an ambitious young woman who was a real knockout and really loved older men – often. Nobody was surprised when she left rural Washington County for the bright lights of the big city of Portland. Nor were they surprised when she returned with a wealthy husband, nor when she ended up available again with a nice big farm.

In fact, nobody was surprise when she turned up dead in her home. The only suspect was the taxi driver, Fred Ristman, who had driven her home and was the last known person to see her alive. Fred was grilled at some length, but held his ground.

Forensics, having come a long way since 1894, came up with a laundry mark on a bloody silk shirt found at the scene. It was first thought that the shirt belonged to Fred. The laundry was located and the murderer, Bennett Thompson, was finally identified, arrested and convicted of Helen's murder.

## 1947

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Poor old Ralph Parritt, a hard working salesman. Just got tuckered out and had to sleep. So, he pulled over and went to sleep in his car. Ralph was found with four .22 caliber bullet holes in his head behind his left ear.

In a day or so, it seemed suspicious that a 16-year-old foster kid with no means of support could be spending so much money at the malt shop. He was buying just about anything the soda jerk could concoct for him and his friends – as long as it did not come to more than about the \$30 for which Ralph died.

## 1965

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The year is approximate and the name of the perpetrator is lost, however, when Hollie Pihl was District Attorney, a male prisoner escaped from the penitentiary. The escapee was drinking in a tavern in Progress. While he was 21 years old, he looked much younger. A service station attendant, who was also drinking in the tavern, questioned his age. The escapee walked over to him and shoved a rattail comb up his nose.

Deputy Heiser arrested the escapee. At the jail, the escapee managed to get a bathroom fixture loose, wrapped it in a towel and beat Deputy Heiser severely causing serious and permanent brain damage. The escapee was finally caught in Montana.



# CHAPTER V

## THE JAIL

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### THE FIRST WASHINGTON COUNTY JAIL

The jail that is usually recognized as the first Washington County Jail was built in 1853 and there is reason to consider it as such. The county was not named “Washington” until 1849, and it was the first jail commissioned to be built by Washington County government.

There is also a reference to the Oregon Provisional Government designating up to \$1,500 for a jail to be built in 1844, but there is no further record of action on that item. In addition, a Washington County Jail was mentioned in an article that appeared in the “Oregon Weekly Times” newspaper on September 25, 1851 - two years before the “first” jail. In that article, the editor, John Orvis Waterman, who was traveling through Hillsboro with Colonel May, of Todd & Co’s. Express, stated:

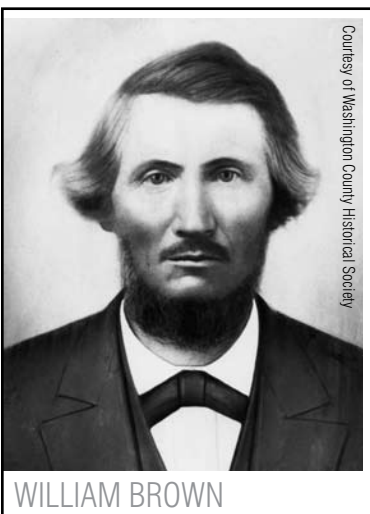
*“Here is the **county jail**, and we should judge from its appearance that it was not well calculated to strike much terror to evil doers. There is but one prisoner who lodges within its log walls, and he it is said, has the key to his prison door entrusted to his own keeping, and walks out to inhale the pure air of heaven, whenever it suits his convenience.”*

By 1852, Hillsboro had become quite a town. It had about a dozen houses, a courthouse, and a schoolhouse. It was apparent that it was time to build a real jail to replace the rough log cabin, so county officials asked people to submit sealed bids to build a jail. The jail was to be built of one-foot-square hewn logs fastened with iron rods and according to other general specifications for size. **William Brown** got the contract for a fee of \$1,175.

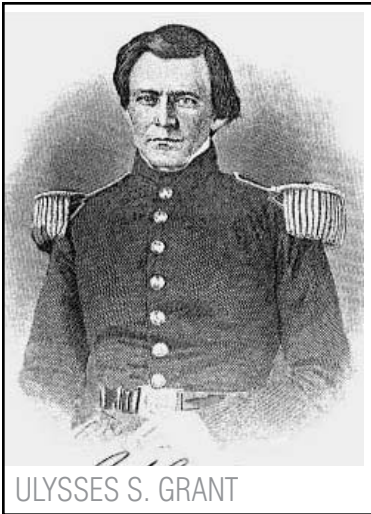
Brown completed the jail on December 5, 1853; however, county officials were not happy with it. It was about 9’6” by 16’ and was only one room instead of being the larger building with a central hall as called for in the contract. Brown was only paid \$900 of the amount specified in the contract. They must not have been too unhappy with Brown because he was also hired to build the first gallows (and the accompanying coffin) for a fee of \$50.



FIRST COUNTY JAIL



WILLIAM BROWN



The old log jail was the first facility built in Oregon to hold criminals. Even the first Oregon penitentiary was not built until 1857, some four years later. The penitentiary was a single story brick building at the south end of Front Street in Portland.

Ezra Stewart was the first jailer. By 1858, the keeping of prisoners and insane persons, along with the upkeep of the jail, made up 38% of the county budget. By the next year, the jailer's salary was \$188 per year and the Sheriff's \$390.

This first jail was located between Baseline and Washington streets, and between Third and Fourth avenues in Hillsboro. It has been moved about and spent quite some time at the Washington County Fairgrounds where it had been deteriorating. The jail has been completely restored and can now be seen in the Washington County Museum at the Portland Community College Rock Creek Campus.

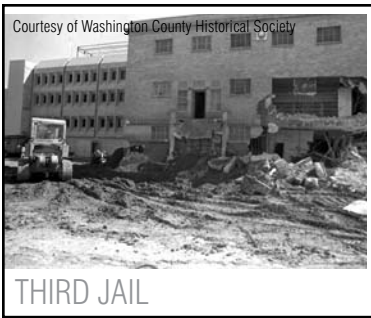
There is no truth to the story that **Ulysses S. Grant** spent a night, or any time, in the old jail. Grant had been posted at Fort Vancouver as the Regimental Quartermaster and the Army owed a supplier here a debt. Grant did have his horse confiscated for the Army's debt when he arrived in Portland on a ferry from Fort Vancouver as collateral for the debt. However, all this was in 1852 and Grant was posted to San Francisco in 1853 before the jail was completed.



### THE SECOND JAIL

In 1870, this first jail was sold to Riley Cave for \$75 in gold coin. He and his family used it for their home until the construction of their new home was completed. The next jail was built by a small company – not by Brown again – and was located on the southeast corner of First Avenue and Main Street in Hillsboro. This jail was a frame building built adjacent to the back of the courthouse, on the First Avenue side.

There is not much information available concerning the second jail. If you have verifiable information concerning this jail please contact us. We have a photo – just barely. You can **see just a portion of it behind the old courthouse** which had been built in 1873.



### THE THIRD JAIL

The next jail was located on the site of the current Justice Services Building located on First Avenue, between Main and Lincoln streets in Hillsboro. There was a walkway that ran east-west from the west side of the current courthouse to the jail. Between the courthouse and the jail was the Washington County Sheriff's Office. This jail was a brick building of three stories plus a basement.

When this jail was to be torn down to make room for the Justice Center, the selected contractor thought he had a creative plan to make money using a method other bidders had not considered. He would dig a huge hole under one end of the building and tip the building into it thereby destroying the building and eliminating the need to slowly batter the building to pieces.

However, the contractor should have looked at the original plans to see just how much rebar was put into the foundation of the building, including the basement floor. **The building would not tip.**



### THE FOURTH JAIL

Construction of the first "modern" jail was completed in 1970 on the north side of the current courthouse. This was not quite 120 years from the date that the first county jail was built. It had a street entrance on Lincoln Street and also access directly into the courthouse.

When this fourth jail opened, it had a capacity of 144 beds. Later, additional lodging was added to the first floor. When it ceased to be used as a jail in 1998, its capacity was 191 beds. This facility is now used for holding inmates who are going to or coming from courtrooms and for certain training purposes.



### THE FIFTH JAIL

The current jail, adjoining the Washington County Law Enforcement Center, opened in 1998. It is located two blocks from the courthouse and is bordered by Washington, Baseline, Adams and Dennis Streets. This facility includes the Sheriff's Office, the County Jail, and a courtroom.

This jail has a 572-bed capacity configured among 9 separate living areas called "pods". One pod is designated for female inmates. There is also a medical unit, classrooms, kitchen and exercise area. Due to the rapidly growing population of Washington County it is again necessary to expand jail capacity.

Information about the sheriff's jail and its operations can be found at the jail link in the Washington County Sheriff's Office website at [www.co.washington.or.us/Sheriff](http://www.co.washington.or.us/Sheriff) .

# CHAPTER VI

## **PRESENT & FUTURE**

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The continuing increase in the population of Washington County, which is now well over half a million people, the increase in technology (including among certain criminals), the continuous cancer of drugs, the issues of fraud and identity theft, and the use of the internet by predators and others to further their criminal activities, will continue to challenge your Sheriff's Office. We will meet these challenges with imagination, innovation and efficiency.

Your Sheriff's Office is the largest in the State of Oregon. It is the only one that is nationally accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. [www.calea.org](http://www.calea.org). To many law enforcement agencies in and outside of Oregon, your Sheriff's Office is also considered a regional training agency because when we provide training for our personnel, members of other agencies also attend to benefit from our expertise. This is at no added expense to the taxpayers of Washington County.

There are many citizens who participate in Sheriff's Office activities – we have a list of over 1,000 volunteers. Twice each year, we offer a Citizen Academy at no cost to participants where the citizen-students learn about the activities of the Sheriff's Office. Participants even learn how to take fingerprints, cast a mold of a shoe print, and hear from patrol deputies, detectives and others.

If you have not visited the Sheriff's Office web site at: [www.co.washington.or.us/sheriff](http://www.co.washington.or.us/sheriff) please do so. You'll be surprised at the amount of information available to you. If you have not subscribed to our free monthly e-newsletter called Sheriff's Office News, you can do so by going to [www.co.washington.or.us/SheriffsNews](http://www.co.washington.or.us/SheriffsNews).



LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

# SHERIFFS

## CHRONOLOGICAL ROSTER

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William Johnson	1841	G. N. Hale	1880
Joseph Meek	1843	B. P. Cornelius	1884
Thomas H. Smith	August 1845	Phineas M. Dennis	1888
Robert H. Poe	September 1845	H. P. Ford	1892
Westly Mulkey	1846	W. D. Bradford	1896
Richard E. Wiley	1847	J. W. Sewell	1900
William H. Bennett	1848	John W. Connell	1904
Phineas Caruthers	July 1849	George G. Hancock	1908
William H. Bennett	October 1849	J. E. Reeves	1913
Richard E. Wiley	1854	J. C. Applegate	1917
William Reeves	1856	George C. Alexander	1918
Hiream Wilber	1858	J. E. Reeves	1925
Ellis Dixon	1860	John W. Connell	1929
Richard E. Wiley	1862	Richard H. (Dick) Busch	1948
Jesse C. Moore	1864	Warren B. Barnes	1965
William Reeves	1870	William R. Probstfield	1983
Charles Tozier	1872	Jim Spinden	1992
H. B. Morgan	1876	Rob Gordon	2002
J. B. Matthews	1879		



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