



Office of

COLUMBIA COUNTY SHERIFF

History

The history of the American sheriff began in 1635, after the settlements in Virginia were well enough established to allow for the replacement of the military regime by a civil government. In 1649, in Jamestown, Virginia, the sheriff was empowered as the King of England's representative to keep peace.

Thomas Jefferson once called the office of Sheriff the most important elected office in the county. No matter who actually sits in the office at any given time, this is a constitutional office with a wide variety of duties and authorities and a tremendous potential for defending the liberties of the people as an elected official with broad powers — including the power to arrest, commit to prison, serve as the ministerial officer of the courts, and to carry out its directives, including relieving people of property upon court order and their personal liberties upon probable cause. It is important for an office that carries such power and authority to be answerable directly to the people.

As an elected official, the sheriff has always had tremendous authority and responsibility for protecting the rights of all. The first sheriff in Oregon was Joseph Meek, whose jurisdiction was in the area of Washington County in 1843. In 1854, the northern portion of Washington County was trimmed off to become Columbia County and Benjamin Stevens was elected as the first Columbia County Sheriff.

Our current Sheriff is Jeff Dickerson, who is the thirty-first Columbia County Sheriff. Before Sheriff Dickerson took office in 2009, Phil Derby served as sheriff from 1997-2008. A brief history for each sheriff is listed below.

Jeff Dickerson
2009 - Present

Sheriff Dickerson began his law enforcement career with the Department of Oregon State Police in 1988. He served as a patrol officer, detective, and public information officer before being elected sheriff in 2008 and re-elected in 2012.



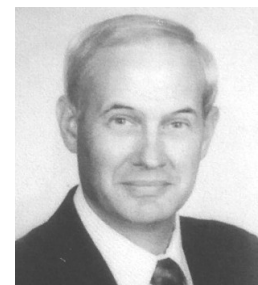
Phil Derby
1997-2008

Sheriff Derby served three terms as Sheriff. He had served previously as a deputy sheriff and as chief of the Rainier Police Department.



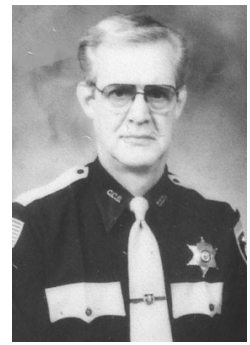
Pat Detloff
1996

Sheriff Detloff seven months as sheriff after Sheriff Hulitt (below) resigned from office, filling up the term left over from Sheriff Oester's retirement when Sheriff Hulitt resigned. Sheriff Detloff also served as the Clackamas County Sheriff from 2000 to 2004.



George Hulit
1995-1996

Sheriff Hulit had served in the sheriff's office in Sheriff Oester's undersheriff. When Sheriff Oester retired early to save deputy jobs that were destined for layoff, he nominated Sheriff Hulit to take his place. Sheriff Hulit resigned early in his first term.



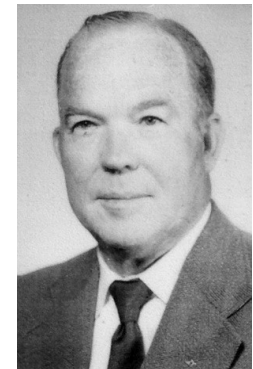
Bruce Oester
1983-1994

Sheriff Oester was a deputy under Sheriff Tennet, who asked Oester to serve as a captain and run the criminal and civil divisions. Sheriff Oester was elected Sheriff in 1982. He served almost three terms, but retired in 1994 to save deputies from the budgetary ax.



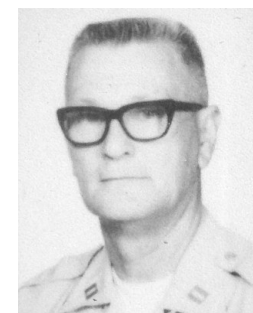
Richard "Tom" Tennent
1974-1983

Sheriff Tennent (1915-1995) retired from the Portland Police Bureau in 1972 as the commander of the homicide and robbery detail. In 1974, he was appointed sheriff and was elected to serve in 1976. Sheriff Tennent served Columbia County for 10 years.



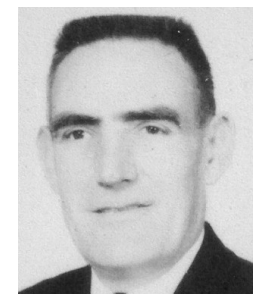
Fred Roediger
1974

Sheriff Roediger (1918-2011) had been the chief deputy with the Sheriff's Office when Sheriff Wilburn resigned from Office in 1974. He served as sheriff temporarily until Sheriff Tennent was appointed sheriff in May 1974. After Sheriff Tennent took office, he returned to the rank of chief deputy, where he retired in 1978



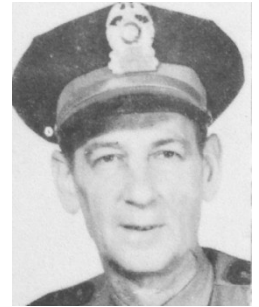
Roy S. Wilburn
1963 – April, 1974

Sheriff Wilburn (1917-2002) served with the Oregon Liquor Control Commission for one year before becoming an Oregon State Police Officer in 1946. He served with the Department of State Police for 15 years. He was elected Sheriff in Columbia County and served 12 years, resigning from office in 1974.



Spencer Younce
1959-1963

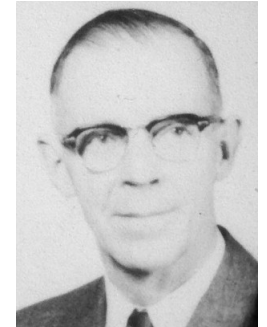
Sheriff Younce (1918-1994) served with the Oregon State Police and the St. Helens Police Department and as a Deputy for the Sheriff's Office before serving as sheriff from 1959-1963.



Sheriff Evans (1903-1986) was appointed sheriff in 1958

John Evans
1958-1959

after Sheriff Forsythe died in office. Sheriff Evans began his law enforcement career with the St. Helens Police Department



John P. Forsythe
1953-1958

Sheriff Forsythe had at one time been the chief of police for the City of St. Helens in 1947. Sheriff Forsythe served for over seven years, and died in office in 1958. It is believed that Sheriff Forsythe had previously served under the former Oregon State Traffic Commission Police before that agency was blended into the new Department of Oregon State Police in 1931.



Millard R. Calhoun
1937-1953

Sheriff Calhoun had served as a United States Marine in World War I. He served as a deputy sheriff for the Sheriff's Office from 1929 to 1937 before being elected Sheriff in 1936. He served as Columbia County Sheriff longer than any sheriff before or after him.



Oscar G. Weed
1929-1937

Sheriff Weed was born in Vernonia in 1881 and served for many years as the county's justice of the peace. He was also a teacher and dairy farmer who was elected Sheriff in 1928 and served until 1937.



John H. "Duke"
Wellington
1921-1929

Sheriff Wellington was born in England in 1871. He served in the British Navy and later the U.S. Navy during the Spanish-American War. He was also a U.S. Merchant Marine. He was elected sheriff in 1920, and he served two terms.



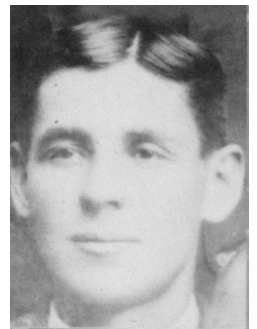
Henry E. LaBare
July 1919-1921

Sheriff LaBare had been a Columbia County deputy sheriff under Sheriff Stanwood. He took over for Sheriff Stanwood when the latter left office in 1919. Sheriff LaBare served two years, then was elected County Clerk, serving from 1921-1925.

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Edward Stanwood
1915-July 1919

Stanwood was nominated by the Republican Party to run for sheriff. He was elected sheriff and served five years from 1915 to 1919.



C. H. Johns
May 1914--1915

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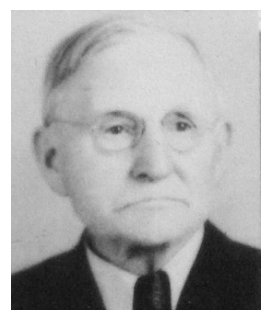
Albert Thompson
1912—May 1914

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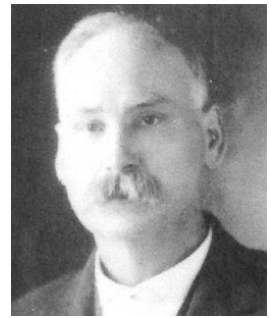
Martin White
1904-1911

Sheriff White was born in Wisconsin in 1855. He also served as county judge and was county Assessor in 1894.



R. S. Hatten
1900-1904

Sheriff Hatten came from Clatskanie and served four years. The only hanging to ever occur happened during the sheriff's first term in 1902



James N. Rice
1896-1900

Sheriff Rice was born in Indiana in 1865. He was a graduate of Portland Business College and worked as a lumberman and logger. He served one term as Sheriff from 1896-1900..

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William Conyers
1894-1896

This was Sheriff Conyers' second time as Sheriff. after serving previously from 1878 to 1882

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Thomas Watts
1884-1894

Sheriff Watts had served as deputy sheriff prior. to his election to office.

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N. C. Dale
1882-1884

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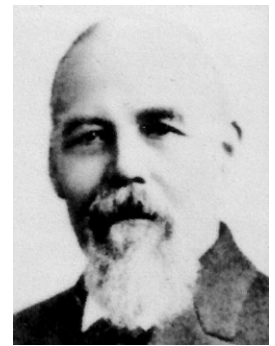
William Conyers
1878-1882

This was Sheriff Conyers' first time as Sheriff. He later served as sheriff from 1894 to 1896. He began as a real estate entrepreneur and insurance provider. He also had served as a county clerk.

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James Dart
1872-1878

Sheriff Dart was born in England in 1841. He was naturalized as a U.S. Citizen the same year he took office as sheriff.



W.T. Williams
1870-1872

Sheriff Dart was born in New York in 1836. He moved to California before coming to Oregon in 1867. He Settled in Columbia County and became the County's sixth sheriff in 1870.

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Jackson Preacher
1866-1870

No information.

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John R. Meyers
1864-1866

No information.

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Samuel A Miles
1862-1864

Served as deputy sheriff prior to becoming sheriff.

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James Gilbreath
1859-1862

Sheriff Gilbreath lived in the Rainier area and had served as the county's school superintendent, as well.

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Benjamin Stevens
1854-1859

Sheriff Stevens became the county's first sheriff when Columbia County was formed out of a portion of Washington County in 1854. Whether or not he was elected for his first term, sheriffs in Oregon at the founding of our state served only two years at a time. Sheriff Stevens was elected to at least two terms.

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