

Erastus N. Thomas

Pioneer of 1853

compiled by Stephenie Flora
oregonpioneers.com

Erastus N. Thomas

b. 07 May 1828 Clinton County, Ohio

d. 08 Sep 1915 Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon

buried Jefferson Cemetery, Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon
s/o Elisha Thomas and Sarah Nordyke

m. 02 Apr 1852 Page County, Iowa

Mary Jane Farrens

b. 29 Jan 1827 Randolph County, Indiana

d. 28 Feb 1915 Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon

buried Jefferson Cemetery, Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon
d/o Samuel Farrens and Cynthia McCauley

1860: Roseburg PO, Cawley Valley, Douglas County, Oregon, no date; Erastus Thomas, 32, farmer, \$1280 \$2500, OH; Jane, 32, IN; Joseph, 6, OR; Anna, 4, OR; Sarah, 2, OR

1870: Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon, August 22, 1870; E. N. Thomas, 40, merchant, \$500 \$6000, OH; Mary J., 40, keeps house, IN; Jos A., 14, at school, OR; Florence, 12, OR; Emma, 5, OR; Isaac Leonard, 38, laborer, IN

1880: Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon, June 19, 1880; E.N. Thomas, 51, grist mill, OH OH IN; Jane, 51, wife, keeps house, IN TN VA; Forence, 21, dau, at home, OR OH IN; Emma, 14, at school, OR OH IN

1900: Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon, June 1, 1900; E.N. Thomas, head, May 1829, 71, m-48yrs, OH SC TN, fruit grower; M.J., wife, Jan 1829, 71, m-48yrs, 5-3, IN TN TN; Laura, g-dau, Apr 1878, 22, s, OR OR OR, school teacher; Rosco, g-son, Apr 1880, 20, s, OR OR OR, day laborer; Clyde J., g-son, Jun 1884, 15, s, OR OR OR, day laborer

1910: Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon, April 19, 1910; Erastus N. Thomas, 81, m1-58yrs, OH SC TN, own income; Mary J., wife, 81, m1-58yrs, 6-3, IN VA TN; Carrie R. Creecy, servant, 45, s, OR IL OH, housekeeper-private family

"THOMAS, E. N.--Born in Ohio in 1829; went to Iowa in 1848, and five years later to Oregon. Settled in Douglas County and resided there until 1862. Participated in the Rogue River Indian war of 1855-56, being a member of Captain Rinearson's company. Located in Jefferson,

Marion County, in 1862, and still resides there. Has been in the mercantile business for twenty years. Is now in partnership with his son, J. A. Thomas. Married in 1852 to Miss Mary J. Farrens. They have three children Joseph A., Florence, and Emma." [History of the Willamette Valley by Herbert Lang p. 822]

"ERASTUS N. THOMAS, one of the prosperous and oldest agriculturists of Marion county, is the owner of the valuable farm of two hundred acres near Jefferson, upon which he makes his home. His birth occurred in Clinton county, Ohio, on May 7, 1838, (sic-1828) his parents being Elisha and Sarah (Nordyke) Thomas, the former a native of South Carolina, although his ancestors came from Wales, and the latter a native of Tennessee, the state which has also been the home of her forebears. Elisha Thomas, who was born in 1795, was a millwright by trade and he also conducted a store at one time in Ohio, where he lived until 1848, the year in which he removed to Iowa, where he resided until his death, which occurred during the Civil war. Mrs. Thomas lived until she reached the age of ninety -three years. To this union six children were born, namely: M. W., who passed away at the age of thirty years; Joseph, who died in his youth; Eliza, who resided in Iowa married a Mr. Quimby and is now deceased; Sylvester S., who died at the age of seventy years; E. N., the subject of this sketch; and Elizabeth, deceased.

Erastus N. Thomas acquired his education in Ohio and the advantages which he received in that line were far more than those of which the average youth could avail himself. In 1848 he started out to earn his own livelihood and the success he has achieved is the best criterion of his ability. He began working in Iowa by assisting in the building of a sawmill and in 1849 he taught school for a short time but found it an uncongenial task. Four years later he came to Oregon, making the trip across the plains with ox teams, a journey which was one fraught with many dangers and one which called for much courage, as the party was very small, there being but two families to make up the train. When they arrived in Douglas county Mr. Thomas took up a donation claim of three hundred and twenty acres, where he resided for nine years before coming to Marion county and purchasing land. However, his agricultural pursuits were interrupted in 1855, when he served in the Rogue River war under Captain Rhinearson. This was one of the bloody wars of the northwest but Mr. Thomas was especially fortunate as he was not even wounded, although many were killed in fighting and many massacred, stealthily. After his return from the Idaho mines where he had gone in 1863, he engaged in conducting a general mercantile store, at first in partnership with E. H. Waterman for three years. In 1867 he bought out his partner and then for twelve years conducted his business alone after which he sold it. In 1880 he again started in business, but six years later or in 1886 he disposed of this enterprise and has since devoted his entire attention to fruit growing in which line he had started in 1879, when he set out the first prune trees in this district, and of the two hundred acres which he owns today forty acres are set out in prune trees. Mr. Thomas has carried on his fruit growing in an able and scientific manner and his efficient methods have served as an example to many of the younger horticulturists who are ever ready to accept the advice and ways of this experienced and successful grower.

In 1852 occurred the marriage of Mr. Thomas to Jane Farrens, the only surviving member of the family of nine children born to her parents. She was born in 1828 in Indiana where her parents were among the early settlers. To Mr. and Mrs. Thomas six children have been born, three of whom are now living, namely: Joseph A., who is a merchant in the southeastern part of California; Florence, who is the wife of J. B. Cornell, president of the Josephine County Bank, of

Grants Pass, Oregon: and Emma, whose husband. Dr. J. C. Smith, of Grants Pass, Oregon, has served a member of the state legislature for two terms.

In politics Mr. Thomas is an active and enthusiastic republican and although he has never sought office as a reward for party fealty, he has never allowed his interest in the live issues of his party to wane. In their community Mr. and Mrs. Thomas are highly respected and much honored citizens, receiving such regard and veneration due their advanced age, after leading a life at all times upright and irreproachable." [Centennial History of Oregon by Joseph Gaston Vol 2 p. 355-9]

"A Loved Pioneer Gone--A wave of sorrow swept over our city when news was received that Mrs. E. N. Thomas had died Sunday at Grants Pass, where she had been visiting her two daughters and son for several months, at the age of 88 years and 1 month. Mrs. Thomas was known and loved by every resident of Jefferson. She was married to E. N. Thomas in Clarinda county, Iowa in 1852, coming to Oregon in 1853 and locating in Douglas county, where they remained until 1863, when they came to Jefferson, which has been their home since. Six children were born to them, one dying in infancy and a daughter and son dying in this city in 1865. The husband, son and two daughters, J.A. Thomas, Mrs. Florence Cornell and Mrs. Emma Smith, of Grants Pass, 5 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren, beside many other relatives, survive her. The remains were brought to this city Monday evening, accompanied by the husband, Hon. J.C. Smith and wife, J. A. Thomas and wife, T.B. Cornell and wife and A.H. Gunnell and wife. Funeral services were held at the M.E. church Tuesday afternoon, that edifice being filled with friends of the deceased, many being from a distance. Rev. Geo. F. Round, of Newberg, delivered the discourse. There were many damp eyes as the congregation filed silently past the casket for a last look at the well-known figure lying so quietly therein. The remains were laid in the city cemetery on the hill o'er shadowing the home where she had lived for 52 years. She lived a long and useful life, and entered her last sleep with a knowledge that many were better because she had lived." [Jefferson Review, March 5, 1915 p. 2:1]

"Hon. E. N. Thomas Dead--Erastus N. Thomas, one of the best known and most highly respected of Oregon pioneers, died at the home of his grandson, R. C. Thomas, in this city at 12:20 a.m. yesterday. E. N. Thomas was born in Clinton county, O., May 7, 1828. He was married to Jane Farrens in 1852 and in 1853 they made the long trip to Oregon, settling in Douglas county, where they resided 9 years, then coming to Jefferson, which has since been his home. He was a veteran of the Indian war of 1855. For many years he was engaged in the mercantile business in Jefferson, but for the past 30 years has been a successful fruit grower. He is survived by three children, J.A. Thomas, Florence Cornell and Emma Smith, all of Grants Pass, 6 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. He was one of the most generous hearted men ever known, and innumerable are the unfortunate who have been assisted by him. His integrity was unquestionable and his word was sufficient security for any sum. While he had lived far beyond the allotted age, his death caused a cloud of sorrow to settle over our city, for he was the friend of all. Funeral services will be held at the M.E. church at 2 o'clock p.m. today (Friday) and interment will be in the city cemetery beside the wife who preceded him but a few months on the inevitable journey. The memory of this well-loved pioneer couple will longer in the minds of the innumerable friends. Business house of this city will all close during the time of the service and will pay the last possible tribute, love and esteem." [Jefferson Review, September 10, 1915, 2:1]

Children of Erastus Thomas and Mary Farrens:

1. Joseph A. Thomas

b. 1854 Douglas County, Oregon

d. 1919 Marion County, Oregon

buried Jefferson Cemetery, Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon

m.

Margaret A. Cospier

b. 1854

d. 1888

buried Jefferson Cemetery, Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon

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1870: Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon, August 22, 1870; E. N. Thomas, 40, merchant, \$500 \$6000, OH; Mary J., 40, keeps house, IN; Jos A., 14, at school, OR; Florence, 12, OR; Emma, 5, OR; Isaac Leonard, 38, laborer, IN

2. Annie Laurie Thomas

b. 1856 Douglas County, Oregon

d. 13 Jun 1864

buried Jefferson Cemetery, Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon

1860: Roseburg PO, Cawley Valley, Douglas County, Oregon, no date; Erastus Thomas, 32, farmer, \$1280 \$2500, OH; Jane, 32, IN; Joseph, 6, OR; Anna, 4, OR; Sarah, 2, OR

"At Jefferson, December 29, of scarlet fever Erastus P., aged about 2 years and 6 months; and on January 13, Annie Laurie, aged about 8 years-children of E.N. and Jane Thomas"

3. Sarah Florence Thomas

b. 1858 Douglas County, Oregon

d. 18 Apr 1947 Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon

Grants Pass Masonic Pioneer Cemetery, Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon

m.

Thomas Bella Cornell

b. 1858

d. 04 Jan 1924 Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon

Grants Pass Masonic Pioneer Cemetery, Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon

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4. Erastus P. Thomas

b. 1861 Douglas County, Oregon

d. 29 Dec 1863 Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon

buried Jefferson Cemetery, Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon

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5. Infant Thomas

b. c 1863 Oregon

d. c 1863 Oregon

6. Eliza Emma Thomas

b. 1866 Marion County, Oregon

d. 03 Nov 1918 Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon

IOOF Cemetery, Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon

m.

Joseph C. Smith

b. 1859

d. 1934 Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon

IOOF Cemetery, Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon