Aaron Emmons Wait

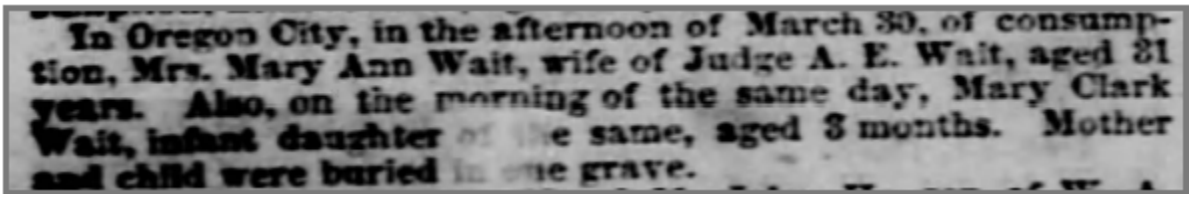
Pioneer of 1847

compiled by Stephenie Flora
oregonpioneers.com

Aaron Emmons Wait
b. 26 Dec 1813 Franklin County, Massachusetts
d. 12 Dec 1898 Canby, Clackamas County, Oregon
buried Baker Prairie Cemetery, Canby, Clackamas County, Oregon
s/o Aaron Wait and Sarah Morton

m1. 24 May 1853 Clackamas County, Oregon
Mary Ann Sprenger
b. 17 Mar 1828 Berks County, Pennsylvania
d.30 Mar 1859 Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon
buried Baker Prairie Cemetery, Canby, Clackamas County, Oregon
d/o Nicholas Sprenger and Maria Bird

m2. 31 May 1860 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
Catherine Maria Quivey
b. 05 Sep 1826 Ohio
d. 06 Jul 1888 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
buried Baker Prairie Cemetery, Canby, Clackamas County, Oregon



In Oregon City, in the afternoon of March 30, of consumption, Mrs. Mary Ann Wait, wife of Judge A. E. Wait, aged 31 years. Also, on the morning of the same day, Mary Clark Wait, infant daughter of the same, aged 3 months. Mother and child were buried in one grave.

[Weekly Oregon Statesman, Salem, Oregon, Tuesday, April 12, 1859, p. 3]

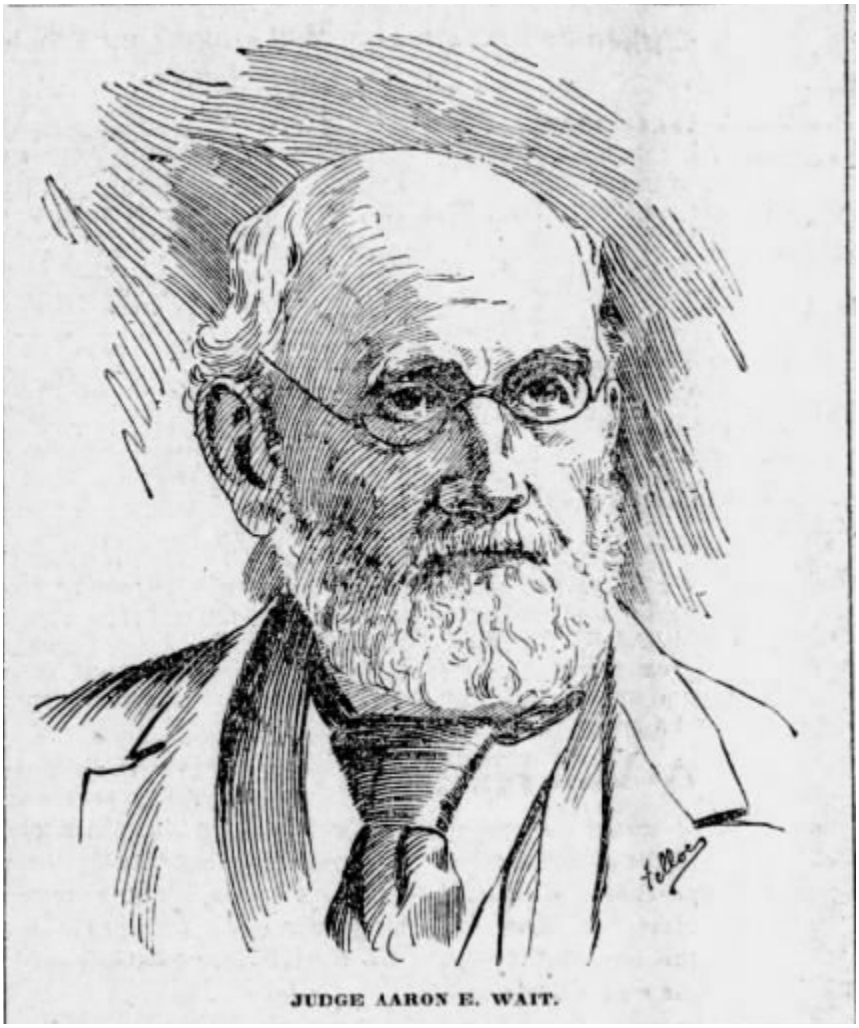
JUDGE A. E. WAIT DEAD

PIONEER OF OREGON AND SUPREME COURT JUDGE.

Drew the Deed That Sold Portland for $5000 Worth of Leather—Died at Canby.

Judge Aaron E. Wait died at his home at Canby, at 3 A. M., Monday. His general health had been excellent until within the past week, when he suffered an attack of pneumonia, and, owing to his advanced age, 85 years, was unable to counteract its effects. The funeral will take place at Canby at 11:30 A. M. Wednesday.

Judge Wait settled in Oregon City in 1847, and was editor of the Oregon Spectator in 1848 and 1849. He removed to



JUDGE AARON E. WAIT.

Portland in 1862, and to his farm at Canby in 1875. In 1883 he returned to Portland and remained until October, 1897, when he went back to the farm at Canby.

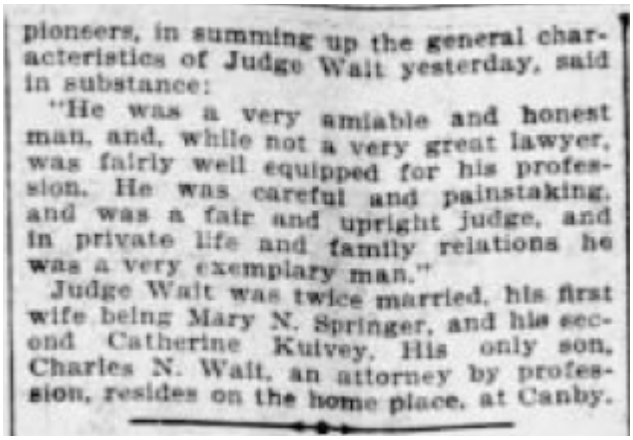
Judge Wait drew the deed in 1848 which conveyed from Frank W. Pettygrove to Daniel H. Lownsdale the half-section of land on which is now built the central part of Portland. The consideration was $5000, to be paid in leather. Mr. Lownsdale was then proprietor of a tannery on Tanner creek.

In 1852 Mr. Wait represented Clackamas county in the territorial legislature as a member of the house, and in 1857-1858 served as a member of the council for Clackamas and Wasco counties.

Aaron E. Wait was born in Whately, Mass., December 26, 1813. He went to Michigan, where he was admitted to the bar in 1841. He was admitted to the bar in Oregon at the December term of the supreme court, in 1851. In 1858 he was elected to the supreme court of Oregon, and by virtue of his office was circuit judge of the fourth judicial district, comprising the counties of Washington, Clackamas, Multnomah, Clatsop and Columbia. He was chief justice from 1859 to 1862, when he resigned, April 9, to accept a nomination for congress by the anti-administration party. All of Judge Waite's opinions rendered while on the supreme bench are found in the First Oregon Reports, his first opinion being in the case of Jackson vs. Sharpe, in which Judge George H. Williams represented the plaintiff, and David Logan the defendant.

In the Cayuse war of 1848 Mr. Wait filled a very important position. General Joel Palmer was commissary-general of the volunteer army that went east of the Cascade mountains to fight the Indians, on account of the Whitman massacre, and he appointed Mr. Wait assistant commissary-general, and he took the field and rendered good service. Mr. Wait's instructions were "to take charge of the commissary department of the troops in the field, who must be supplied with provisions at all hazards. If a supply cannot be had with such funds as are at the disposal of the department, a resort must be had to levying contributions upon citizens. In doing this you will be patriotic in not reducing the amount of breadstuffs below the wants of families. You should have at least 40 days' rations in advance."

Judge George H. Williams and other



pioneers, in summing up the general characteristics of Judge Wait yesterday, said in substance:

"He was a very amiable and honest man, and, while not a very great lawyer, was fairly well equipped for his profession. He was careful and painstaking, and was a fair and upright judge, and in private life and family relations he was a very exemplary man."

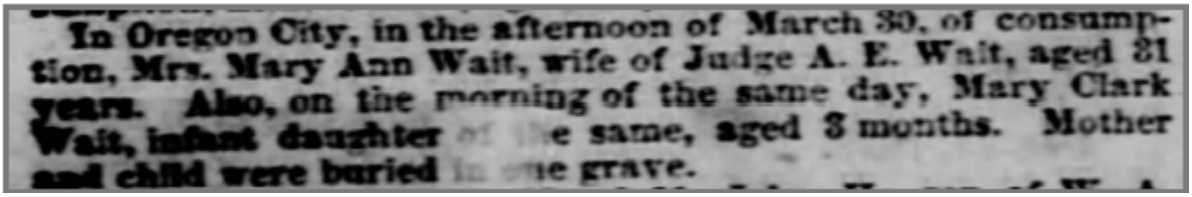
Judge Wait was twice married, his first wife being Mary N. Springer, and his second Catherine Kuivey. His only son, Charles N. Wait, an attorney by profession, resides on the home place, at Canby.

[The Morning Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, Tuesday, December 13, 1898, p .8]

Children of Aaron Wait and Mary Ann Sprenger:
1. Columbia Lancaster Wait
b. 26 Mar 1854 Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon
d. 09 Feb 1858 Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon

2. Charles Nicholas Wait
b. 01 Feb 1856 Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon
d. 15 Dec 1939 Santa Barbara County, California
m. Lorena Jane Marks 15 Jan 1879 Clackamas County, Oregon

3. Mary Clare Wait
b. 08 Jan 1859 Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon
d. 30 Mar 1859 Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon



In Oregon City, in the afternoon of March 30, of consumption, Mrs. Mary Ann Wait, wife of Judge A. E. Wait, aged 31 years. Also, on the morning of the same day, Mary Clark Wait, infant daughter of the same, aged 3 months. Mother and child were buried in one grave.

[Weekly Oregon Statesman, Salem, Oregon, Tuesday, April 12, 1859, p. 3]

Children of Aaron Wait and Catherine Maria Quivey:
1. Kate Corinne Wait
b. 13 Mar 1863 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
d. 02 Jul 1863

2. Anna Evaline Wait
b. 01 Jun 1864 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
d.

3. Mary Louise Wait
b. 19 Apr 1867 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
d. 12 Mar 1868 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

JUDGE AARON E. WAIT. Judge Wait, who needs no introduction to the people of Oregon, was born in Whately, Massachusetts, on Sunday, December 26, 1813. His father was a soldier in the war of that period and died in the service. His family name on his mother's side was Morton, of Scotch descent. His ancestry on his

father's side were English. At fourteen years of age Aaron went to the adjoining town of Hatfield and learned the "broom trade." By money earned at that trade, and afterwards by teaching, he was enabled to increase his education. He taught country winter schools, and was an assistant teacher at 'Erasmus Hall,' Flatbush, Long Island, six months, but never really liked teaching.

In 1837 he went to Michigan and located at Centerville, the county-seat of St. Joseph county, ·where he read law with Judge Columbia Lancaster, now of Vancouver, Washington Territory. Judge Wait has taken an interest in political matters since a boy and has always been a Democrat. In the presidential campaign of 1844, he edited a Democratic paper in Michigan, and afterwards, until he left that state, held the office of military secretary of his Excellency, John L. Barry, Governor of that state. Judge Wait was asked to accept important and honorable office in Michigan under Governor Woodbridge, and also under President Fillmore in Oregon, but declined.

In the spring of 1847, Judge Wait, in company with Judge Lancaster, wife and one child, and Mr. Adam Van Dusen and wife, left Centerville with ox-teams enroute for Oregon, and arrived at Oregon City about the middle of September of that year. Watchful care was exercised; and no serious accidents nor difficulty occurred on the journey. Otherwise than being tiresome, the journey was not an unpleasant one. Judge Wait in crossing the plains, as before and since, because of near-sightedness, wore spectacles. The Indians, pointing to the spectacles, wanted to know what they were for. He told them that they were to enable him to see 'away off.' From that they thought he could see anything anywhere.

Soon after arriving in Oregon, Judge Wait entered into an agreement with Governor Abernethy to edit the Oregon Statesman for the year. The only exchanges of the Spectator at that time were a paper published at Honolulu and two seven-by-nine papers published in California, one at San Francisco and the other at Monterey, which were received when vessels arrived. At that time some of the people in Oregon received letters and papers from the "States" once a year by immigrants.

When the Cayuse war broke out, Judge Wait was appointed first assistant commissary-general under General Joel Palmer. While engaged in that capacity he had a little experience with a man well-known on the Tualatin Plains, which is worth repeating. He was endeavoring to get provisions for the use of the troops in the field; and someone said, "Go to 'God-Almighty' Smith. He is able to give but won't; but you try him." Judge Wait arrived at Mr. Smith's late in the day and made his errand known. Mr. Smith said, "You must stay with me all night; and we will talk it over." The result was that he agreed to furnish an equipment for one of the soldiers in the field and rendered other aid. He also went with the Judge to a settler's ranch near the foothills and assisted in procuring a drove of hogs for the department.

In the summer of 1848 Judge Wait drew the deed conveying the Portland townsite of over six hundred acres from Francis W. Pettygrove to Daniel H. Lownsdale, the consideration being five thousand dollars in leather.

In the spring of 1849, the Judge went to California on a little seventeen-ton schooner built by his friend Lot Whitcomb. At Sacramento he met Judge Peter H. Burnett, who urged him to remain in California. He remained, however, only until the fall rains drove him out of the mountains. On his return to Oregon, he was elected commissioner to audit the claims of the Cayuse war. The most of them he audited and has the satisfaction of knowing that every claim allowed by him was paid precisely as allowed.

Judge Wait was the first chief justice of the supreme court of Oregon. He was also a member of both houses of the legislature and was elected at one time mayor of the city of Portland, to fill the unexpired term of Mayor Holmes. This last position however, he declined on account of ill health. He has also held other offices and positions; but he says that he never held an office for which he sought a nomination, but that he has always preferred to practice his profession. His doctrine in his younger days was that no man had a right to ask office nor re-fuse it. While on the bench during the war, he reluctantly accepted a congressional nomination from the

Democratic party, and was defeated, as he expected to be. He was one of the Democratic candidates for presidential elector in the McClellan campaign and made the canvass in Eastern Oregon. At the preceding June election, every county in Eastern Oregon had gone Republican; but in November everyone went Democratic.

Judge Wait was engaged in nearly every important land case growing out of the Donation law; and his practice was generally as large as he could well attend to. Early in the seventies his voice failed him for public speaking; and he retired from his profession, since which time he has attended to but two important land cases in the departments at Salem and Washington. These were attended to at the request of his friend, Judge 0. C. Pratt of California. After retiring from his profession he spent part of two years with his wife and daughter in Southern California for their health and then went upon his farm in Clackamas county. In the fall of 1886, he went to Portland to make his home, and there has lived ever since.

When he left the East his friends tried to deter him from his undertaking, by saying that he would be homesick; but he thought that almost an impeachment of his manhood. He told them that perhaps he might be back in five years. As a matter of fact he did not again see the East till the summer of 1884, when he went as a member of the Democratic national convention. He has suffered the deep afflictions of the loss of two wives and four children. He now has but two children living. These are Charles N. Wait of Portland, and Annie Everline Hanford of Seattle.

Among the many interesting reminiscences of Judge Wait's life, he tells of a conversation with Doctor McLaughlin which has never appeared in print. It was in his office in Oregon City. No one happening to be present but themselves, the Judge remarked playfully, ' Doctor, they say that when you were governor of the Hudson's Bay Company at Vancouver, those who approached you were expected to do so with their heads uncovered. How is that? '‘ The Doctor was taken all aback; and reddening somewhat, exclaimed, "The-French! the French ! A very polite people, a very polite people!" The Judge said, "Of course, Doctor, but-"; when the Doctor again exclaimed, more vehemently than ever, "The French! Very polite, very polite." Soon recovering himself, however, the good Doctor gave reasons which required neither blush nor palliation. Among other things he said, "I was at the head of the Hudson's Bay Company in this country. When I came there were many Indians here. The success of the company, depended on the manner in which the Indians were treated and controlled. The lives of all the servants and employes, and the property of the company, were in my keeping. I knew enough of Indian character to know that, if those around me respected and deferred to me, the Indians would do the same." The Judge also remembers with great interest his connection with Bishop Scott in passing the bill to incorporate the Bishop Scott Grammar School at Portland. Honorable Amory Holbrook drew up the bill and fixed the capital stock at fiye hundred thousand dollars. The bill was entrusted to Judge Wait to present to the senate. It passed that body with no trouble but met violent opposition in the house. The astonished and mortified Bishop, who had not dreamed of opposition to his purely benevolent scheme, after listening in silence a few minutes to the aspersions on his noble purposes and character, rose and left the room, muttering to himself, ‘' Well, well, some people are wise and some otherwise." Judge Wait has always said that the good Bishop's indignation was "righteous indignation." The bill was subsequently passed.

with its capital stock reduced.

The many interesting, thrilling and characteristic anecdotes of this first and one of the most honored of Oregon's judges would fill a volume; and great is the privilege of those who may hear them from his own lips.” [History of the Pacific Northwest – Oregon and Washington, Volume 2, p. 617-18]