

The author of this article lives and works on unceded territory of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

Homesteaders: George and Elizabeth Smith

Jan de Leeuw

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Life

As explained earlier the military donation claim of Henry Walsh in 1866 was immediately transferred to George Smith. The claim was recorded in June 1870, but in the same year George and his wife Elizabeth sold all their property in Multnomah County. Snyder (1989, p.232) has no personal information about George and his wife Elizabeth Smith, only the dates from the deeds. I will try to come up with more, but for now it will be tentative.

Clearly George and Elizabeth Smith did not stay very long in the Piedmont real estate limelight, basically only for a few months in 1870. I have not been able so far to find any definite information about them in the local papers or in the census and the usual ancestry sources. One problem I also mention in the chapter on Liverpool Liz is that there are just too damn many Smiths, and even too many George and Elizabeth Smith pairs. It is difficult to tell them apart without information about birth, death, or place of residence.

For a moment I thought that maybe this Elizabeth Smith was actually the same person as Liverpool Liz, who was of course also an Elizabeth Smith (among other things). But I am pretty sure Liverpool Liz was born around 1860, and it is unlikely she would have bought the 80 acres from Evander Howe when she was 10 years old. At that time she was probably still playing with her sailor dolls on the other side of the Atlantic.

I do have one hypothesis, however. It is somewhat wild and unsupported, but I'll continue to test it. The idea is that the homesteaders in our area were all farmers and neighbors on Vancouver Road, on or just south of the Columbia Slough, in the Willamette Precinct. Lewis Love, William Love, Evander Howe, John Hotts, John Rankin, and David Ulery all lived in that area. Only John Fenstermacher did not, but he sold the homestead he acquired in the Willamette precinct immediately to John Hotts. When William Love died in 1878 and an administrator had to be appointed for the estate, the appraisers were David Ulery and John Hotts. When John Rankin's wife died in 1860 and a guardian had to be appointed in 1871 for the heirs who were still minors, the appraisers of the estate were William Love, David Ulery, and John Hotts. Seems a pretty close knit group of neighbors to me. Or, to give it a slightly different emphasis, nobody else lived anywhere near.

The 1870 federal census for the Willamette precinct shows David Ulery and John Hotts as census neighbors, meaning that their homes were visited by the census person directly after each other. Another census neighbor was G. A. Smith, a 26 year old farmer, owner of land valued at \$ 4,000. That is George Aaron Smith. His wife Elizabeth was 21, and his children Caroline (5), Rosetta (3), and Charles (1) lived at home.

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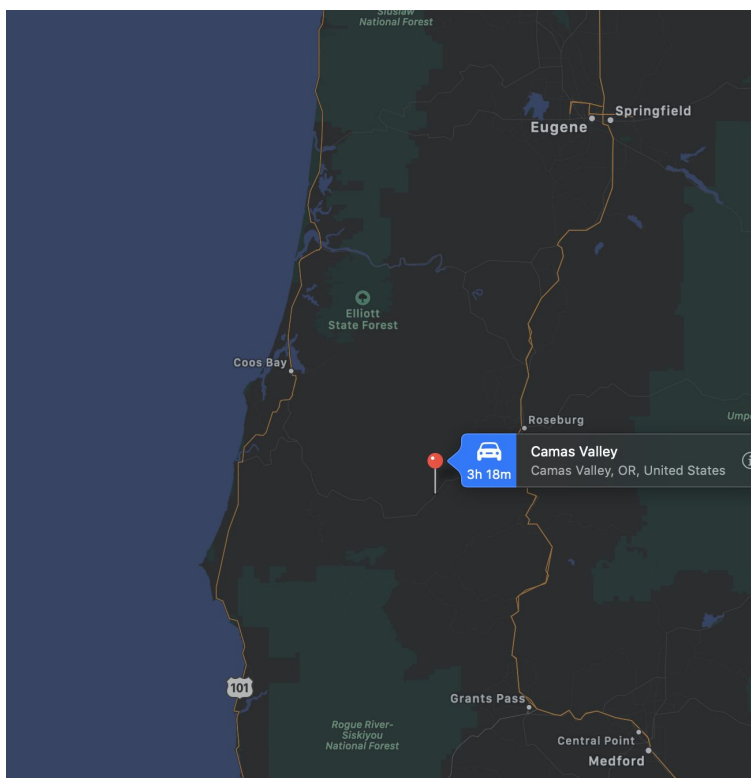
Some further research shows that Elizabeth's maiden name was Rankin, and that she was the oldest daughter of John Rankin, a neighbor to the east of Vancouver Road. She was born March 28, 1849, and she married George Smith in 1863, when she was 14. In the 1880 federal census we do no longer see the Smith's in Willamette precinct, but Hotts and Ulery are still there.

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In fact, by 1880 George and Elizabeth had moved to Chinokville, Pacific County, Washington, across the river.

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Everybody now is ten years older, and they have been joined by offspring Louise (8), George (5), Ellen (3), and John (1). In the 1900 and 1920 census the Smith family had moved to Camas Valley in Douglas County, Oregon.



To get a somewhat clearer picture of the numerous offspring I made a little table with ages in the various census records. In 1860 Elizabeth still lives with her parents, in 1870 and 1880 the family lives in Chinokville, and in 1900 and 1920 in Camas Valley. George Smith died in 1915, Elizabeth on October 14, 1925. They were both buried in the Murray Cemetery in Camas Valley.

	1860	1870	1880	1900	1920
George A.		36	46	65	
Elizabeth	11	21	31	51	70
Caroline E.		5	14		
Rosetta M.		3	12		
Charles W.		1	11	31	50
Louise			8		
George			5		
Ellen			3		
John			1		
David				18	
Frank B.				15	32
Roseanna				13	

My hypothesis is that this George Aaron Smith and this Elizabeth Rankin Smith were the ones who acquired Henry Walsh's bounty claim and Evander Howe's homestead, and subsequently sold it to Bloch and Dennison. They did have enough money to buy the land, because Elizabeth sold her share of her mother's inheritance to her father for \$ 2,000. In the deeds, linked below, note that George does not use his middle name, so that the grantors are named as George Smith and Elizabeth Smith, his wife. The deeds are recorded 10/18/1866 and 10/7/1867, which is the same year George Smith obtained the donation land claim land from Henry Walsh.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=19zKctuiu8d2cL95mnI4g5m6PmideYJEL>

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1RZpk8x_zAPfMMV4oIhiKeQKZh6CTRV3A

As I said, the evidence that this George A. Smith and Elizabeth Rankin are actually the ones the obtained the DLC is circumstantial, but they did live in the area and they did come into some inherited money at the time.

References

Eugene E. Snyder (1989): *We Claimed this Land. Portland's Pioneer Settlers*. Binfort & Mort Publishing, Portland, Oregon

Portland Bureau of Planning (1993). *Adopted Piedmont Neighborhood Plan*.
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B94Urj3OjM7Bc0pMMDZpOWY0NEk>