

= Thomas R. Cornelius =

Thomas Ramsey Cornelius (November 16 , 1827 ? June 24 , 1899) was a prominent American politician and soldier in the early history of Oregon . Born in Missouri , he moved to the Oregon Country with his family as a young man where he fought in the Cayuse War and Yakima Indian War against the Native Americans . He settled in Washington County near what later became Cornelius , named in his honor .

A Whig and later a Republican , he served in the Oregon Territorial Legislature , and following statehood , he served in the Oregon State Senate . In the Senate he served one term as the president of that chamber . He also built the Cornelius Pass Road that bears his name . He was the father of Benjamin P. Cornelius , who was also prominent in state politics .

= = Early life = =

Cornelius was born in Missouri , on November 16 , 1827 , to Elizabeth and Benjamin Cornelius . In 1845 , Thomas and his family traveled over the Oregon Trail to the Oregon Country and set up a farm on the Tualatin Plains , north of what would become the community of Cornelius . After the Whitman Massacre in late 1847 , Thomas volunteered for the militia of the Oregon Provisional Government in 1848 . The militia prosecuted the Cayuse War in an attempt to punish those responsible for the killings at the Whitman Mission .

After gold was discovered in California , Cornelius journeyed there for a brief time , returning to the Oregon Territory in 1849 . The next year he married Florentine Wilkes , and they had six children together before she died in 1864 , including son Benjamin . The family would settle on 640 acres (2 @. @ 6 km2) of their Donation Land Claim near Cornelius . In 1855 , a second war against the Native Americans started east of the Cascade Mountains against the Yakima tribe . Cornelius volunteered again for the militia . For three months he led a company with the rank of captain before being elected as colonel after James W. Nesmith resigned his commission . Cornelius continued as colonel until the end of the war in 1856 .

= = Political career = =

In 1856 , Cornelius was elected to upper chamber of the Oregon Territorial Legislature , called the Council . Serving as a Whig , he represented Washington , Columbia , and Multnomah counties in District 8 . He won re @-@ election to the Council in 1857 and again in 1858 to the final session of the territorial legislature . In 1859 , he continued holding office in the newly formed Oregon State Senate after Oregon entered the Union on February 14 , 1859 as the 33rd state .

In the Oregon Senate , Cornelius continued as a Republican representing Washington County and several other counties through the 1874 legislature . His service was interrupted by the American Civil War during 1862 session , when he was authorized by President Abraham Lincoln to raise a regiment of cavalry for federal service . He was chosen as colonel of the troops and they deployed to a military post at Walla Walla , Washington , where he assumed command . He resigned during the summer of 1862 and returned home .

During the 1866 legislature Cornelius was selected as President of the Oregon Senate . In 1886 , he won the Republican nomination for Governor of Oregon , but lost the general election to Sylvester Pennoyer .

= = Later life and family = =

After his first wife died in 1864 , Cornelius remarried in 1866 to Missouri A. Smith . In 1872 , he moved to Cornelius , which would be renamed after him , and opened a store . In addition to the store , Cornelius owned a total of 1 @, @ 500 acres (6 @. @ 1 km2) , including covering three farms , a warehouse , and a sawmill . He built the Cornelius Pass Road that linked the Tualatin Valley to the Columbia River . Cornelius died on June 24 , 1899 , at the age of 71 . He was buried at

the Cornelius Methodist Church Cemetery .