

Recollections of Olden Times in Owensboro
By Col. James M. Holmes (1825-1925)

By Jerry Long

History of Daviess County, Kentucky, Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, 1883, pp735-737:

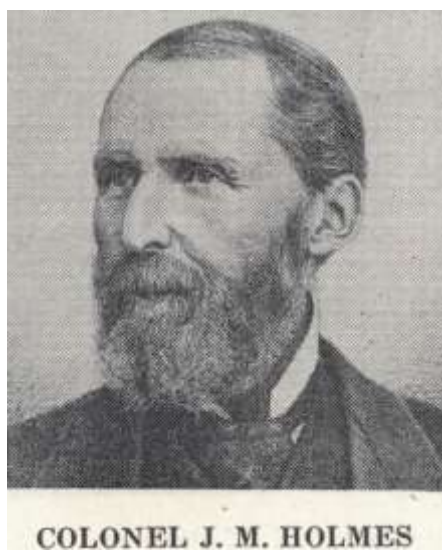


Colonel JAMES M. HOLMES was born in Owensboro, Ky., Nov. 10, 1825. His parents, James L. and Ann (Griffith) Holmes, were natives of Virginia and Maryland, respectively, his father born Feb. 28, 1785, and his mother, Aug. 2, 1788. They were married in Shelby County, Ky., April 23, 1806, and came to Owensboro in 1823. They had a family of eight children, three now living, James M. being the youngest and only one now living in Kentucky. While living in Shelby County, James L. Holmes was in the mercantile business, but after coming to Owensboro he opened a cabinet-maker's shop where he employed several hands. On account of sickness he moved into the country and remained till 1831, when he returned to Owensboro, resuming his former business. In the war of 1812 he was a Captain in the volunteer service, serving under Isaac Shelby, Governor of Kentucky. At the breaking out of the war between Texas and Mexico, he recruited a company in Owensboro and went to New Orleans where he found a body of men recruited for the Texas army but abandoned by their Colonel. These troops joined his command, and entered the Texas army, Mr. Holmes being appointed Major in command of the regiment. Soon after, Colonel Grooms being sent to Washington to negotiate a loan, Mr. Holmes was elected Colonel. He served till Dec. 15, 1836, when he died of camp fever, at Camp Johnson, Texas. James M. now has a Texas paper bearing date Jan. 3, 1837, with resolutions of regret at his death. His wife died Feb. 13, 1868, in the eightieth year of her age. James M. was but eleven years old at his father's death, but his father having spent all his means in fitting out the troops for Texas, he was

obliged to go to work when twelve years of age and never again attended school. He first worked two years in the dry goods store of T.G. & W.T. Cole. He then worked two years on the farm with his grandfather, Caleb Griffith, spending his leisure time in study. Upon leaving his grandfather's, he entered a drug store as an apprentice, remaining there three years. In 1845 he went to Texas for the purpose of getting something for the services rendered Texas by his father. In 1846, during the war between the United States and Mexico, he joined McCullough's spy company. At the expiration of his term of service he was employed as clerk in the commission house of E.W. Taylor, of Houston, Texas, and remained there till February, 1848, when he returned to Owensboro and went to work in a drug store. In the fall of 1849 he went on a farm. Oct. 4, 1861, he entered the service of the United States in the Third Kentucky Cavalry, commanded by J.T. Jackson, and four days later was sent out on detail duty. On making his report to his Colonel he was given a Captain's commission. In January, 1862, he was commissioned Major, and the following July, Lieutenant-Colonel. At this time, on account of hard work, he was afflicted with paralysis of the eyes, which unfitted him for duty. He returned home and by judicious treatment, after several months, his eyes so far recovered as to enable him to re-enter the army, and at the time of General Bragg's entrance into Kentucky he rejoined his regiment and remained in active service, doing detailed duty, till July, 1863. His eyesight causing him trouble and unfitting him for field duty, he resigned his position and returned home, where he remained till February, 1864. By the recommendation of some officers under who he had served he received the commission as Captain and Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel in the regular army. He re-entered the army and was sent to Connecticut to muster out the volunteer troops from that State. In January, 1866, he resigned his commission and returned home and has since been engaged in farming. He has a farm of 470 acres in Murray Precinct, well improved. He has been a member of the Baptist church since 1852, and is now a Deacon of the Oak Grove church. He was married in 1851 to Elizabeth, daughter of William Evans. They have four children, three sons and one daughter.



A History of the Daviess-McLean Baptist Association in Kentucky, 1844-1943, by Wendell H. Rone; Messenger Job Printing Co., Inc., Owensboro, KY, 1844, pp. 461-462.



Colonel JAMES M. HOLMES - The subject of this sketch was born in Owensboro, Kentucky, on November 10, 1825. His parents, James L. and Ann Griffith Holmes, were natives of Virginia and Maryland, respectively, and were born in 1785 and 1788 respectively. They married in Shelby County, Kentucky in the year 1806 and came to Owensboro, Kentucky, in the year 1823. Our subject was the youngest of eight children. His father served in a volunteer company as a Captain, during the War of 1812, under Isaac Shelby, Governor of Kentucky. He also served in the Texas-Mexican War and died in December, 1836, of camp fever.

Mr. Holmes was but eleven years of age at the time of his father's death, but his father having spent all of his means in outfitting the troops for Texas, he was obliged to go to work when twelve years of age and never again attended school. After working two years as a dry-goods clerk and two years on his grandfather's farm he entered a drug store as an apprentice, remaining there three years. He went to Texas in 1845 for the purpose of getting something for the services rendered Texas by his father. In 1846 during the war between the United States and Mexico, he joined McCullough's Spy Company. At the expiration of his term of service he worked in Texas for a time and then returned to Owensboro in 1848 and again went to work in a drug store. In the fall of 1849 he went on a farm. On October 1, 1861, he entered the service of the United States in the Third Kentucky Cavalry, commanded by J. T. Jackson, and four days later was sent out on detail duty. He was commissioned a Captain and readily rose in rank until he became a Lieutenant Colonel. Failing eyesight caused him to return home and upon recovering to some extent he reentered the army, and at the time of General Bragg's entrance into Kentucky he rejoined his regiment and remained in active service until July, 1863. His eyesight again caused him trouble and he returned home. He later re-entered the service and went to Connecticut to muster out troops. In January, 1866, he returned home and engaged in farming near Utica in Daviess County, until about the year 1895, when he moved to Owensboro and spent the remaining days of his long life.

Colonel Holmes professed faith in Christ in the year 1852 and was baptized into the fellowship of the Bethabara Baptist Church by Rev. J. P. Ellis. He served the Bethabara Church as clerk in 1858-1861 and again in 1871. He later moved his membership to the Oak Grove Church (Utica), here he served as clerk in the years 1878-1887. He was ordained a deacon at this Church sometime near 1880 and remained as such until he moved to Owensboro about 1895 when he again moved his membership, this time to the First Baptist Church, where he was recognized as a deacon. At the time of his death he was the senior deacon of the First Church. From 1866 until about the year 1910 he attended the sessions of the Association as a messenger from the Churches to which he belonged in that period.

He was married to Miss Elizabeth Evans, daughter of William Evans, in the year 1851. Four children were born to this union-three sons and one daughter. Mrs. Holmes died in the year 1915 shortly after their sixty-third wedding anniversary. Mr. Holmes was in his one-hundredth year when he died on August 10, 1925. He was one of the last three Mexican War veterans in the United States to die. His body was laid to rest in the Elmwood Cemetery in Owensboro, Kentucky.

When Mr. Holmes was born only seven houses existed in the city of Owensboro and two of them were owned by his kin. At the time of his death the small village had grown into a city of about 20,000 people. He lived through eighty-one years of the history of the Daviess County and Daviess-McLean Association.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 March 1916 p10:



When James M. Holmes, 204 West Eighth street, now in his ninety-first year, was a barefooted boy six or seven years of age, there were 229 people living in the village of Yellowbanks, which evolved into the Owensboro of today. Mr. Holmes, who was born here when a few scattered cabins marked the site of Yellowbanks, draws a picture of the primitive place from the memories he has kept with him through over four score of years.

"I was born in Owensboro, then Yellowbanks, on November 10, 1825," said Mr. Holmes. "Owensboro and Daviess county has been my home from birth. . "I was, the youngest child by four years, and being too small for the other children to play with - my mother was my constant companion. She was always willing to answer any questions I might ask especially those she thought were of value to me. Then when the family gathered I was asked to repeat to them what I had learned. Having nothing to think of but what my mother taught me, made those impressions the deeper.

"To this early training do I attribute the vivid recollections of my childhood days in Owensboro.

"Sometime between the years 1830 end 1832 (I can't fix the exact date) I remember that my father said to mother, "The population of Yellow-banks is 229." Now, "population," to a little fellow, was a big word. I asked mother its meaning. She answered, 'It means the number of people in town, white, black, big and little. To make you understand more fully the population of this family is your father, myself, your brothers and sister and the negroes in the cabin. The little negro baby counts as much in the word 'population' as the biggest man or woman- in town."

First Stove Chimney

"It would be interesting if the citizens of Owensboro could awake some morning to find the city as Yellowbanks was then. They would see every one-story buildings, with stick and daub chimneys. Bricks for chimneys were very expensive. They had to be brought down the river from Louisville and other up-river cities. The first brick yards were established in Owensboro in the early thirties. One was owned by Joe and Beny Weaver and Long, and was located between Fifth and Seventh and St. Ann and Allen streets. Another was owned by Lambert and was on Walnut street, near the ravine.

"In 1836 William Evins came to this county, locating near Habit. In 1837 he built a house on his farm and made the chimney of stone. The first stone chimney seen in Daviess county.

The "Saw Pit"

These one-story buildings in Yellowbanks with the stick and daub chimneys were covered with clapboards and held down by weight poles.

All lumber for buildings was sawed by hand. Yellowbanks had one "saw-pit" known to every one in town as well as the people know where the courthouse is today. It was near the foot of Locust street where it crossed the ravine.

All the lumber used in Owensboro in my early days was sawed at that point by Hiram Sands and James Hyat. Hence lumber was very high because it was sawed by hand.

There is one question I want to ask, and I would be glad of an answer: What became of John Smith and his elephants?"



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 12 March 1916, p.4:

The People's Forum

As a sequel to the story told by Col. J. M. Holmes in last Sunday's Inquirer in regard to the early history of Owensboro, then called Yellow Banks, the following communication from Col. Holmes will be of interest:

"My mother never allowed me to talk in the presence of others than herself, unless called upon, hence I was very quiet.

"Another big word for the little fellow was 'prominent.' When a party to whom my mother was talking had left her – I asked the meaning of the word. She said, 'I want to impress its meaning on your mind – hence I'll not answer immediately. Do you remember while going down in town with me, of seeing a log house with an open hallway and stairs running up in the hallway? You asked me what the little house on top of that building was for. I told you that was where they hung a bell when that was a tavern. Then you asked what all the bricks were lying about there for. I told you that was where Capt. Moseley's tavern had burned. Now I will tell you the meaning of the word "prominent." Anyone who is much talked about is prominent. Capt. was prominent because he brought a flatboat load of lumber and brick to Owensboro and built the tavern where you saw the ruins. And his family was prominent because there were 19 children. There were 13 girls and four boys."

"The daughters married prominent men of Owensboro – namely – Phillip Thompson, William R. Griffith, Dr. John Roberts, Mathew Kirkpatrick [should be Anthony Kirkpatrick], James Daniels, James Hannah, John S. McFarland – I am not positive about the others.

"Capt. Moseley and his wife were a happy, jovial couple.

The making of bricks in Owensboro by the firms spoken of in the last letter, made brick buildings cheaper than wooden ones. Quite a number were built at that time, namely Mr. Phil Thompson, a store and warehouse immediately on the river bank when it extended out fully 60 yards farther than it does now. James Rodgers built a brick store corner Frederica and Water streets and a dwelling corner Frederica and Main. Kirkpatrick built a brick store house at the northwest corner Fourth and Frederica. Alec Moreland built one on northeast corner. The courthouse and schoolhouse were built about this time. Dr. John Roberts built the old brick house now standing just west of the First Baptist church. It originally fronted Main street. He owned half of that square. That is the only one of these buildings now standing as first built.

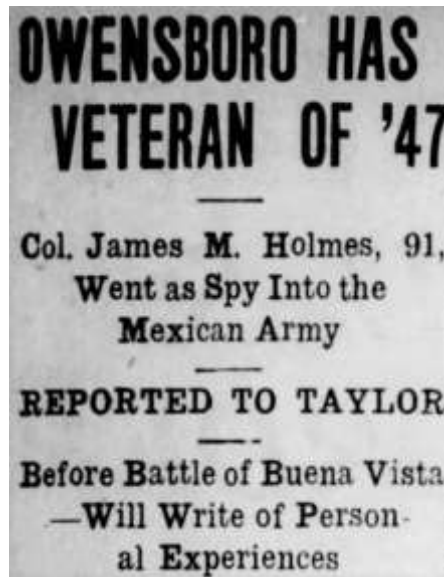
"There was no church building in the town at that time, in fact there was no church organization. All the preaching was done in the courthouse. All were itinerant preachers. The Baptists in town attended their services at the Rock Springs church now at Yelvington. The Cumberland Presbyterians would assemble at Rev. Samuel Calhoun's southwest of the town. The Methodists at Mr. Beckley's on the Leitchfield road, six miles southeast of Owensboro. The Catholics at George Mason's, five miles above town, and Mr. Coomes, three miles below town. Rev. Durbin would make these stops on his regular trips from Bardstown to Uniontown.

"I have been asked were the boards on houses nailed down when weight poles were used. No, the boards were usually 4 ½ feet long. The last logs put upon the end of the building projected about two feet on either side. Notches were cut in them to hold the first pole at the eaves. On the first layer of boards, pieces of timber called knees were fastened. The next pole was laid and lodged against these continuing that way to the top.

"COL J. M. HOLMES."



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 27 June 1916 p2:



Colonel James M. Holmes, 204 West Eighth street, who is now in his 91st year, is the only Owensboroan who can now tell of personal experiences during the first Mexican war. And when the colonel says that there was no declaration of war that preceded this war, he means that the Americans who suffered outrages "just went down there and cleaned them out."

Colonel Holmes has recently returned to his home from the hospital, where he underwent treatment for stomach trouble during the past seven weeks.

Colonel Holmes joined the "spy" company of Ben McCulloch in Texas, having gone to Capt. McCulloch as a volunteer. He served as a private through the Mexican war, and was in the battle of Buena Vista in 1847. He went forward with McCulloch as a spy, even into the Mexican army, and went back and reported to General Taylor the enemy's strength of 21,000 men. Taylor was encamped on an open plain and had but 7,000 men with him. Knowing that the superior force of the Mexicans could outflank him, he fell back to Buena Vista to a point between the mountains,

so that he could hold the same position as that of St. Anna. In the struggle that ensued, the Americans beat off the enemy.

Col. Holmes says that the present Mexican situation resembles the one of 1846. He is of the opinion that no declaration of war is needed, but a general clean-up of Mexicans should ensue before much time is lost.

Despite his age Colonel Holmes possesses rare intellectual ability and has contributed articles to the Inquirer in the form of personal memories of early Owensboro, when this city was known as Yellow Banks. He will also furnish an article dealing with his personal experiences during the first Mexican war.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 February 1917 p1B:



It is well to give a little history leading up to that war, when one begins a discussion of the war between the United States and Mexico.

Texas, a vast territory was inhabited by numbers of Indians who made frequent attacks upon San Antonio, the only permanent settlement in Texas, killing the citizens and driving off horses and cattle. They frequently crossed the Rio Grande river committing like depredations. Mexico offered great inducements to the citizens of the United States to settle in Texas; giving to them vast tracts of land and allowing them to be governed by their own laws.

These inducements had the effect of a speedy migration. From this country Moses Cummings, the great grandfather of J. T. Griffith and many others, accepted the offer. Soon the northern part of Texas was occupied by Americans. This however, did not give the protection from the Indians that Mexico expected.

Then Mexico began to make laws and fix taxes on Texas without allowing her a representative in that country's congress. At this Texas rebelled. Mexico turned troops into Texas to enforce her laws. Volunteer companies were quickly raised. In the United States to help Texas to gain her independence.

Owensboro Co. Raised

The part my father took and my own stay in Texas have made me familiar with the history here mentioned, and as to the war between Mexico and the United States few are now living who remember this more distinctly than I.

James K. Polk, (Democrat) and Henry Clay (Whig), were candidates for president at that time. Clay opposed the immediate annexation of Texas because this would result in war with Mexico. Polk favored immediate annexation. His position being the most popular, he became president.

The dispute over the boundary line between Texas and Mexico resulted in war. Texas claimed as boundary the Rio Grande river. Mexico the Nueces. The vast territory between these two rivers was settled by neither Mexicans nor Texans, but was occupied by Indians.

President Polk, immediately upon the vote of Texas favoring annexation ordered troops, under General Zachary Taylor, to the Rio Grande. Taylor, after receiving additional troops and supplies at Point Isabel, started up the river. Mexican troops met him only a short distance from Point Isabel and there the battle of Palo Alto was fought, Taylor winning. Continuing up the river he was met by an increased force where, at Resaca de la Pampa, another battle was fought, Taylor again being victorious.

He continued up the river until he reached Matamoros. Across the river another fight occurred. It was there the gallant Major Ringold and his horse were killed, a ball passing through Ringold's thigh and breaking the horse's back. Ringold was a great favorite with General Taylor. Taylor halted here.

Battles Fought

These battles were fought without a declaration of war. As soon as news of them reached Washington, war was declared and volunteers called for and hurried to Taylor's assistance.

As soon as they reached him in sufficient force he crossed the river and had skirmish fights until Monterey was reached. At this place there was a hot fight, lasting about four days. Taylor again victorious. Here he remained for some time. While here a part of the flower of his army was taken from him and sent to General Scott.

After he was deprived of these troops he took up his march to Matamoros. On reaching there he discovered there was far better camping ground beyond Buena Vista.

Now begins my personal experience. I belonged to Maj. Ben McCulloch's spy company. When I applied to him to join his company he looked at me and said, "Young man, where are you from?" I answered, from Kentucky." "Well, I knew you were not a southerner. Do you think you can stand the Mexican climate?" I told him there was a greater difference between Kentucky and Texas than between Texas and Mexico and I had been in Texas three years. He said "I am not a military man, and I know but four orders, form, charge, fight and retreat, and I know damn little of retreat. Now are you willing to _ your life under such a man?"

Two days before the battle of Buena Vista we went forward and discovered the Mexican army and kept ourselves in hiding until night. McCulloch had been associated with the Mexicans from boyhood and could speak their language as fluently as a Mexican.

Disguised in Mexican uniform and leaving a part of the command in charge of the horses, McCulloch and a few of us crawled, under a dense fog which rested about feet from the ground, up to the Mexican picket. The officers, coming round to inspect the picket lines were halted and made to give the pass word, which we received. With this information McCulloch was able to pass

the pickets into the main army. Disguised as he was and able to speak their language he was soon able to procure the fact that the Mexicans numbered about 21,000.

Taylor Falls Back

Taylor's army was composed of about 7,000 and occupied a broad plain. Here he knew he could not occupy line sufficient as he fell back to a position in the mountains where he could occupy as much space as the Mexicans, because of the mountains on either side being so precipitous they could not ascend. Unfortunately, when fire was opened the center of Taylor's army gave way. It was then that McCulloch, with only 58 men, threw his company into skirmish line about 50 yards apart. Thus covering a space occupied by the three regiments that had given way. His knowledge of Mexican firing caused him to know there was more danger at 900 than 20 yards from their firing line.

McCulloch's men were armed with double-barrel shotguns loaded with buck shot, a pair of holster revolvers and a pair of belt revolvers, giving each of us 22 rounds. With the advantage of ten or twelve buck shot to the gun it was more than that. We were not ordered to fire until the Mexican lancers were within 30 yards of us. Then the order came to fire right and left oblique. By the time our fires were exhausted I wondered if McCulloch had entirely forgotten; the order, "retreat!"

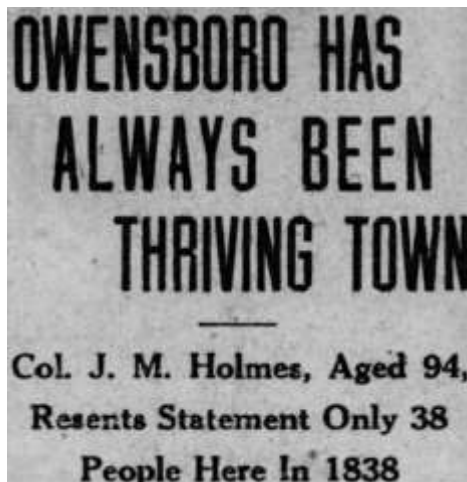
To my great relief I saw Col. Humphrey Marshall with the First Ky. Cavalry tearing, up, at charge march on our right. Though always a fine looking man, to me he was then the grandest looking man I had ever seen. On our left. I saw Jeff Davis with the First Mississippi rifles, and while a smaller man than Marshall he was grand looking to us.

We gave way to them and that was all we did in the battle. Night closed the fight. Everything was in readiness the following morning to begin anew when it was discovered that the 7,000 had defeated the 21,000.

During the Civil war I was a Yankee soldier while Marshall was a general in the Confederate army and Jeff Davis was president of the Southern Confederacy, but I have always held them in highest esteem.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 23 February 1919 p1B:



Some weeks ago from gleanings of the days gone by the Messenger stated in 1838 there were some thirty inhabitants in Owensboro which Col. J. M. Holmes, now 94 years old, wishes to correct and tells of Owensboro in the days when "coming to town" meant visiting the general stores from Main street on Frederica to the river and when Owensboro proper extended from Fourth st. to the river from Triplett to Walnut.

From his first recollection Col. Holmes remembers that houses were at a premium and many of them occupied by two families. As he' remembers it there were fifty houses In Owensboro and three hotels. Th History of Daviess county regarding Owensboro in 1833 makes the statement: "In 1833 the population of Owensboro was scarcely 200 all told, and not a single church edifice or organization. The increase in population was small until 1850." This same history contains a page from. the day book of David Morton, a merchant, of date 1818 which has reference "Martin's Nat," who was a colored servant. Col. Holmes makes mention of negroes working on farm belonging to the Thompson estate, Phil Triplett, Isaac Kennedy and David Morton, also P. F, Smith owned quite a number of negroes in his tobacco factory.

"Some weeks ago the Messenger published an article stating the population of Owensboro in 1838 was thirty. Quite a number of people have asked me to tell what I know about the matter.

"I only know that at that date the population was far greater than thirty. Owensboro at that time began on the east at Triplett street, running West to Walnut and from the river to the south side of Fourth street. On the river fronting north there were nine residences and one hotel with J. R. Allen, proprietor, where the River hotel now stands.

"On Second street fronting south there were eleven residences, one tobacco factory, one hotel, with Dr. Williams proprietor, corner Second and Frederica where now is a saloon, one residence on St. Elizabeth street, where the county jail now stands.

"In Frederica street between First and Second, on the west, beginning at the river were Tom Kincheloe, David Morton. Isaac Kenneday, merchants; Fulton and Anderson, tailors; S. M. King, merchant; Alex Moorland, shoe maker; : Alfred Grissom, tailor; Hughes and Isler, Jo Davis and Mercer Moorman, merchants.

"On the east side beginning at the river were Rodgers and Blair, merchants; a warehouse, the post office, with Stephen Rodgers. post-master; Dr. W. H. Howard's office and sleeping room; Mauzey shop and family, Pointer and Cassidy, Tom W. Watkins, Sr. merchants; Dr. John Roberts drug store with Tom Carter, clerk; cabinet shop, Adam Simpson, owner.

"Between Second and Third streets beginning on the east side were two residences, the public school with George Scarborough, the teacher; five residences, public square, a cabinet shop, Elijah Comstock, owner, then one residence. On the west Side were two residences, and the office of Drs. Roberts and Ogden. A hotel, with John Wallace proprietor was where the Planters House now stands.

"The jail, W. T. Sharp. Jailer, was on the south east corner of Allen and Third. Next to this were three residences. Between 3rd and 4th on the east side of Allen was one residence while on the west side were three.

"Between Third and Fourth in Frederica St., on the east side were one blacksmith shop and one cabinet shop. On the west side was a blacksmith, wagon and plowmaker's shop, James Bowld, proprietor. I mention Bowlds because of the fact that he employed many hands. Wagons and plows were not shipped here at that time.

"Bowlds blacksmithing and wagon and plow making was worth more to Owensboro and Daviess county at that time than any factory of today In Owensboro.

"Other industries, were: Weaver & Long, Wilhoyte & George, brick masons Mason & Bro. and Brown & Co. plasterers. The two last industries employed more or less hands. .

"In addition to those I have named there Were more than one hundred negroes in town. The Thompson estate, Phil Triplett, Isaac Kenneday and David Morton were the largest owners. Thompson and Morton worked farms west of town, Triplett and Kenneday south of .town. There was not a house on any of these farms. All negroes reported home at night.

"P.- F. Smith owned quite a number of negroes. They were employed in his tobacco factory. Besides those mentioned many of the citizens owned, two or more.

Houses in town, from my first recollection, were at a premium. Many of. them occupied by two families. The first vacant ones that I can remember were in 1849 when Kenneday & Brother stores were vacant for a short time.

"If any one doubts any statement I have made, come to me and I will satisfy him of the facts stated."



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 14 August 1921 p1B:

**Captain Holmes Has Seen
Owensboro Grow Into City**



**AGED VETERAN OF
TWO WARS TALKS
OF OLDEN TIMES**
—
**Active Adherent of Prohibi-
tion Ever Since Fight
With Mexico; Will Vote
In November.**



James M. Holmes at age 29

Col. James M. Holmes, the oldest and one of the best known men of Owensboro, was born in Owensboro. November 10, 1825. his home being located where the Owensboro Grain company's grain elevator now stands.

He has seen Owensboro grow from the little town of Yellowbanks, of around 200 or more inhabitants, to the present thriving city of 21,060 people, and tells many interesting stories of this city as he has seen it develop from a hamlet with, its few one story buildings with stick and daub chimneys. Bricks for chimneys in the early days were very expensive. They had to be brought down from Louisville until in the early 30's when Joe and Benny Weaver and Long established a

brickyard between Fifth and Seventh streets and St. Ann and Allen streets. Another was owned by Lambert on Walnut street near the ravine. The first stone chimney in the county was built by William Evins, on his new house near Habit, in 1837.

Col. Holmes' parents were James L. Holmes and Ann Griffith Holmes, natives of Virginia and Maryland, respectively. They were married in Shelby county, Ky., April 23, 1806, and came to Owensboro in 1823. When quite young Col. Holmes embarked in the drug business with his brother, the firm name being George N. Holmes & Bro. At 19 years of age he went to Texas, and in 1846, during the war between the United States and Mexico joined McCullough's spy army. He remained in the army until the date of his service expired and then was employed as clerk in the commission house of E. W. Taylor, of Houston, Tex., but returned to Owensboro and the drug business in 1848, and in 1849 began farming.

In 1851, Mr. Holmes was married to Miss Elizabeth Evins, a daughter of William Evins and Susan Hall Evins, of Habit. On October 4, 1861, he entered the service of the United States in the Third Kentucky cavalry, as a private. He was sent on detail duty to Bowling Green by Col. J. T. Jackson, and on making his report was commissioned captain. In January, 1862, he was commissioned a major, and the following July, lieutenant-colonel. At the conclusion of the Civil war he returned home, having received four minor wounds. He engaged in farming until 1892.

Will Vote in November.

Having seen the distressing effects of drink, after his return from the army. Col. Holmes took a very active interest in prohibition and was the first to vote the prohibition ticket in Daviess county, which he thinks was in 1866. He ran for office on the prohibition ticket several times and one occasion was made an elector for the district on this ticket. Col. Holmes expects to vote in the November election, and says, "I will vote in November election if I am alive and I expect to pick the best man for the place regardless of his politics, he be Democrat or Republican."

Col. Holmes recalls a very interesting Owensboro of his boyhood days - the days of the log or brick houses and all of the stores in Owensboro were within one-half square of the river. All of them carried in stock dry goods, groceries, hardware and liquors. Whisky sold for twenty-five cents a gallon. Frederica was the first street to have a name. It was named for Miss Frederica Mason, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Mason, prominent people of Owensboro. Miss Frederica had just returned, a graduate from a school abroad, and T. W. Watkins, father of the late P. T. Watkins, who had just come from Baltimore, gave the prominent street of the town her name. This was the only street named until the 50's or 60's.

Owensboro in Early Days.

During his early life in Owensboro there were no churches, and all preaching was done in the courthouse by itinerant preachers. The Baptists attended services at Rock Springs church, near Yelvington; the Cumberland Presbyterians at Rev. Samuel Calhoun's, southwest of the town; the Methodist fit Mr. Beckley's place, on the Leitch field road; the Catholics at George Mason's, five miles above town and Mr. Coomes, three miles below town. Rev. Father Durbin would make stops on his regular trips from Bardstown to Uniontown.

In the early 30's. Mr. Holmes states, Owensboro began on the east at Triplett street, running west to Walnut, and from the river to the south side of Fourth street. On the river fronting north were nine residences and one hotel, with J. R. Allen, proprietor. Stores on Frederica street, between First and Second on the west, beginning at the river, were owned by Tom Kincheloe, David Morton. Isaac Kennady, general merchants; Fulton and Anderson, tailors; S. M. King, merchant;

Alex Moreland, shoemaker; Alfred Grissom, tailor; Hughes and Isler, Joe Davis and Mercer Moorman, merchants. On the east side, beginning at the river were Rodgers and Blair, merchants; a warehouse, the postoffice, with Stephen Rodgers, postmaster; Dr. W. H. Howard's office; Mauzey shop, Pointer and Cassidy, Tom W. Watkins, Sr., merchants; Dr. John Roberts, drug store, Adam Simpson's cabinet shop, George Scarborough's public school stood between Second and Third streets on the east side. A hotel with John Wallace proprietor, stood where the Planters house now is.

Col. Holmes now makes his home with his daughter Mrs. Hugh Herr, in St. Ann street. He was 29 years of age when the younger of the above pictures was taken by George Matthews, then located at 12 East Main street. The recent picture shows him as he looks today, in his 96th year, having been made the past week.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 18 January 1925 p1B:

**TWO VETERANS OF MEXICAN WAR.
T. B. BALLARD AND COL. J. M. HOLMES,
ENJOYING LIFE NEAR THE 100 MARK**

**Former Lives At St. Joseph,
This County, and Latter
In Owensboro; Mr. Bal-
lard Has 24 Great-Grand-
children.**

TWO veterans of the Mexican war, Thomas Belgrave Ballard and Col. James M. Holmes, both near the century mark, both live in Daviess county, and both are enjoying good health.

Thomas Belgrave Ballard is 97 years of age, and one of the oldest of the Mexican war veterans in the state. He was born April 13, 1828, near New Haven, Marion county, Ky. His parents died when he was quite young. Thus he never had the advantage of an education except for three months in a free district school. When 18 years old he volunteered and joined the Mexican army, where he saw service for 18 months.

After receiving honorable discharge, Mr. Ballard retired to his home in Marion county, where at the age of 20 he was married to Miss Bethinia Greenwell, two years his junior. To this union was born eleven children, six of whom are living, J. E., of Evansville; R. T., of Rome; T. E., of Owensboro; Mrs. A. T. Williams, of Owensboro, J. H. and J. B., of St. Joseph. With the last named two sons Mr. Ballard has made his home since the death of his wife five years ago.

24 Great Grand-Children

Mr. Ballard moved from Marlon county in 1866 to a farm near West Louisville, where he spent practically all his life, having moved to St. Joseph about 10 years ago. Mr. Ballard attributes his advanced age to an active life and regular habits. He is a staunch believer in the old proverb: "Early to bed and early to rise, will make a man healthy, wealthy and wise." He is still hale and hearty and bids fair to reach the century mark.

Col. Holmes Is Oldest

Col. James. M. Holmes, the oldest and one of the best known men of Owensboro, and oldest of the Mexican war veterans in the state, was born in Owensboro, Nov. 10, 1825. He recently passed his 98th birthday with his friends about him, and is one of the happiest, brightest, and most interesting of men. He is lauded by Owensboro's historian who gives past happenings in Owensboro first handed. He is greeted nearly every day with "Colonel, do you remember ___?"

Col. Holmes makes his home with his daughter, Mrs. Eleanor Holmes Herr, at the Davis apartments. He has seen Owensboro grow from the little town of Yellowbanks, of 200 or more people, to the present thriving city of 21,060 population. He tells many interesting stories of Owensboro's past, and its building up into a real city.

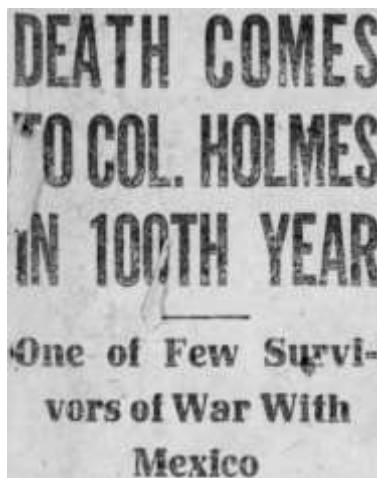
Served in Two Wars

When 13 years of age Colonel Holmes went to Texas and in 1846, during the war with Mexico, joined McCullough's spy army. He remained in the army until the date of his service expired and then was employed as clerk in the commission house of E. W. Taylor, of Houston, Tex., but returned to Owensboro and the drug business in 1848. In 1849 he began farming. His first real business venture was in the drug business with his brother, the firm name being George N. Holmes & Bro.

Colonel Holmes was also in the war between the states. In 1851 he was married to Miss Elizabeth Evins, a daughter of William Evins and Susan Hall Evins, of Habit. On October 4, 1861, he entered the service of the United States in the Third Kentucky cavalry as a private. He was sent on detail duty to Bowling Green by Col. J. T. Jackson, and on making his report was commissioned a captain. In January, 1862, he was commissioned a major, and the following July, lieutenant colonel. At the conclusion of the war he returned home, having received four minor wounds. He engaged in farming until 1892.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 19 July 1925 p1B:



Denied the privilege by but a few mouths of celebrating his one hundredth birthday, Col. James M. Holmes, soldier, churchman, poet and highly honored citizen, died at 2:45 o'clock Saturday afternoon at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Eleanor Herr, 531 Frederica street. .Death

resulted from a general collapse which began several weeks ago, but it was not until within the past week that his condition became alarming and his death had been momentarily expected since Friday when he lapsed into unconsciousness, rallying only at short intervals when he would recognize members of his family and friends who were in constant attendance at his bedside.

He is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Herr; two sons, James L. Holmes, of Owensboro and George W. Holmes, of Denver, Colo.; five grandchildren, James L. Holmes. Miss Josie Holmes, and Mrs. Marion Herr Smith of Owensboro and Douglas B. Holmes and George Holmes, of Denver, Colo.

Col. Holmes was born in Owensboro, November 10, 1825, in a modest house which stood near the banks of the Ohio river on Lewis street near where is now located the freight sheds of the Louisville and Nashville railroad, and with the exception of a short residence in Texas and the years he spent in the army, serving in the Mexican and Civil wars, he had live in Daviess county and had watched the growth of Owensboro from a small settlement to be the metropolis of the Green River section, and had an important part in the development of the religious, social and economic life of the community.

He was the son of James L. and Ann Griffith Holmes, who were natives of Virginia and Maryland respectively. They were married in Shelby county, Ky., April 23, 1806 and came to Owensboro in 1823. James L. Holmes served in the war of 1812 and at the breaking out of the war between Texas and Mexico recruited a company of Kentuckians and served until December 15, 1836, when he died of fever at Camp Johnson, Texas.

Served in Mexican War

James M. Holmes was but 11 years old at his father's death and his parents' money having all been expended in fitting out troops for Texas-Mexico campaign, the boy was forced to go to work for his own livelihood and never again attended school, entering a drug as an apprentice and spending his leisure time in study. In 1845 he went to Texas for the purpose of getting something for services(rendered Texas by his father and before this mission was completed war was declared by the United States on Mexico and he enlisted in McCulloch's spy company, Texas Rangers, serving throughout the campaign against the Mexicans. and at the expiration of his term of service returned to Owensboro, and he was engaged in the drug business until the outbreak of the Civil war. October 4, 1861 he entered the service of the union being assigned to the Third Kentucky Cavalry, commanded by, J. T. Jackson and four days later was assigned to detail duty at Bowling Green. On making his report to his colonel he was given a captain's commission. In January, 1862, he was commissioned major and the following July, lieutenant colonel. At the time, on account of the hard work, he was afflicted with paralysis of the eyes which unfitted him for duty, but after several months rest he was able to return to the army and was on active duty until July 1863, when his eyesight again failed and he was forced to resign his commission and return to his home where he remained until February 1864 when on recommendation of officers under who he had served he received the commission as Brevet-lieutenant colonel in the regular army, and was sent to Connecticut to muster out the volunteer troops from that state. In 1866 he resigned from the army and came back to Daviess county and engaged in farming until a few years ago when, he retired and came to Owensboro to reside with his daughter. He was one of the 24 surviving veterans of the Mexican war listed by the War department. Dec. 1. 1924.

Pioneer Prohibitionist

In-addition to distinction won in military service. Col. Holmes was widely known for his advocal of prohibition, being a pioneer in the temperance movement in Kentucky, his fight against legalized liquor traffic beginning in 1866 and continuing until liquor was forever outlawed by the passage of the eighteenth amendment to the constitution of the United States. Col. Holmes organized the first temperance society in Western Kentucky and was several times a candidate for elector on the national prohibition ticket. He had been a member of the Baptist church since 1852. and was ordained a deacon more than 50 years ago.

Funeral services will be held at 4 o'clock this afternoon at the First Baptist church; conducted by the Rev. I. N. Strother, of Memphis, Tenn., assisted by the Rev. D. Lauck Currens, pastor of Central Presbyterian church. Burial will be at Elmwood cemetery with the following pallbearers: Dr. D. M. Griffith, H. T. Griffith. John Lyne, Cicero Sutton, Dr. Robert Brodie, and E. B. Anderson. Deacons of the First Baptist church will be the honorary pallbearers.



Articles in Owensboro Newspapers

- Owensboro Weekly Messenger – 20 August 1879 p3: Col. J. M. Holmes building a new home on his farm two miles from Lewis Station
- Owensboro Tri-Weekly Messenger – 3 September 1885 p4: Col. J. M. Holmes, of Utica, will be new sheriff of Daviess County)
- Owensboro Tri-Weekly Messenger – 27 October 1885 p4: “Acres of People. An Unprecedented Multitude Attend the Soldiers Reunion”, James M. Holmes, soldier in Mexican War, private, McCullough's Texas Spies, attended reunion in Owensboro
- Owensboro Messenger – 2 October 1886 p3: J. M. Holmes sheriff of Daviess County tendered his resignation, will take effect on 4 October 1886
- Owensboro Messenger – 5 October 1886 p3: Col. J. M. Holmes appointed elisor by the Daviess County circuit court, to perform some of the duties of sheriff
- Owensboro Messenger – 8 March 1888 p4: Col. J. M. Holmes granted a pension of \$8 per month for his service in the Mexican War
- Owensboro Messenger – 18 March 1891 p4: Willett Holmes, 85, of Washington County, TX, visiting his brother, Col. J. M. Holmes, of Utica; Willett went to Texas in 1826 and took part in the war for Texas independence and served in the Texas Congress
- Owensboro Messenger – 29 July 1894 p4: a brother of Col. J. M. Holmes, of Owensboro, served in the Confederate army during the Civil War, he became a prisoner of war, escaped, and four months after returning home died from the ordeal
- Owensboro Inquirer – 10 December 1895 p1: Dr. Will Holmes, of Utica, is ill at the home of his father, Col. J. M. Holmes, on Anthony Street in Owensboro
- Owensboro Daily Tribune - 25 May 1896 p1: Col. J. M. Holmes resides at 204 Anthony, a six room house, in Owensboro
- Owensboro Inquirer – 28 March 1898 p1: Col. J. M. Holmes, who has served in two wars, offers to serve if there is a war with Spain
- Owensboro Messenger – 9 October 1900 p2: Col. J. M. Holmes has accepted the Prohibition party's nomination for Congress; see also Owensboro Inquirer – 12 October 1900 p5

- Owensboro Inquirer – 21 April 1901 p3: Col. & Mrs. J. M. Holmes were married on 13 February 1851
- Owensboro Messenger – 14 December 1902 p11: "Battle of Sutherland's Hill", Col. James M. Holmes of Owensboro a Union soldier in Civil War, entered the service as a private, four days later was made a captain, two months later a major, & subsequently was promoted to lieutenant colonel, commanded the Union forces at the Battle of Sutherland's Hill after the death of Col. Netter; he also participated in the Battle of Perryville
- Owensboro Messenger, 3 September 1905 p15: letter to the editor by J. M. Holmes about the cost of conducting the criminal court
- Owensboro Inquirer – 13 October 1905 p7: Col. J. M. Holmes has accepted the Prohibition party's nomination for mayor of Owensboro
- Owensboro Inquirer - 30 October 1905 p8: letter by J. M. Holmes on his nomination for Owensboro mayor)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 5 November 1905 p16: "To the Citizens of Owensboro", a letter by J. M. Holmes
- Owensboro Messenger – 20 June 1909 p2A: “Where Oldest Houses in Owensboro are Located”, the oldest home now standing in Owensboro is on the south side of Main Street, about half way between St. Elizabeth & Locust, it was built by Willett Holmes, brother of Col. J. M. Holmes, during the 1830's Willett Holmes moved to Texas
- Owensboro Messenger – 13 February 1910 p10A: “An Aged Couple – Col. And Mrs. Holmes Married Fifty-Nine Years”, Col. James M. Holmes married Miss Elizabeth Evins on 13 February 1851 in Daviess County
- Owensboro Inquirer – 5 March 1916 p10: “Easy Job For Census Taker – Only 229 in Yellow Banks When J. M. Holmes Was a Boy”
- Owensboro Inquirer – 12 March 1916 p4: “The People’s Forum”, letter by Col. J. M. Holmes
- Owensboro Inquirer – 27 June 1916 p2: “Owensboro Has Veteran of '47 – Col. James M. Holmes, 91, Went as Spy Into the Mexican Army”
- Owensboro Inquirer – 4 February 1917 p1B: “Infant America In Mexican War”, written for the Inquirer by Col. J. M. Holmes
- Owensboro Messenger – 23 February 1919 p1B: “Owensboro Has Been Thriving Town – Col. J. M. Holmes, Aged 94, Resents Statement Only 38 People Here in 1838”
- Owensboro Messenger – 14 August 1921 p1B: “Captain Holmes Has Seen Owensboro Grow Into City”
- Owensboro Messenger – 18 January 1925 p1B: “Two Veterans of the Mexican War, T. B. Ballard and Colonel J. M. Holmes, Enjoying Life Near the 100 Mark”
- Owensboro Inquirer – 19 July 1925 p4: “Col. J. M. Holmes” and p1B: “Death Come To Col. Holmes In 100th Year”
- Owensboro Messenger – 19 July 1925 p1B: “Col. J. M. Holmes Dies Saturday Of Infirmities”
- Messenger-Inquirer – 5 October 1965 p9C: "James Holmes' 91 Years Spanned City's Youth: 1916 Recollections of One Who Grew Up With Owensboro from 1830, Reprinted"





Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY



Genealogy of the Holmes Family

James Holmes born 15/18 September 1745 in Prince William County, VA; died 7 June 1833 in Shelby County, KY; married Margaret Lewis, 18 September 1764 Fauquier County, VA. Margaret was born 9 May 1743 and died 25 March 1832 in Shelby County, KY. Margaret was the daughter of James Lewis.

James Holmes and Margaret Lewis had issue:

- Edmund born 12 October 1765 in Fauquier County, VA.
- Sibby born 13 January 1768 in Fauquier County, VA; married George Singer
- Alice born 1 May 1769 in Fauquier County, VA; married Brawner Dowdall
- Margaret born 24 February 1773 in Fauquier County, VA; married Moses George
- Jesse Holmes born 17 December 1775 in Fauquier County, Va. married Ann Drusillia (Nancy) Tyler (see lineage below.) Jesse Holmes married Ann Drusilla (Nancy) Tyler 17 November 1803 in Shelby County, KY. Nancy Tyler was born 4 April 1780 in Boone's Station, KY, she died 8 July 1875 in Kansas City, MO; she was the daughter of Robert and Margaret Tyler
- Elizabeth Holmes born 2 September 1779 in Fauquier County VA; married John Atwood
- Sarah Holmes born 1 July 1782 in Fauquier County, VA; married Elisha Lindsey & James Dunn
- James Lewis Holmes born 23 February 1785 in Fauquier County, VA; married Nancy Ann Griffith 24 April 1806 in Shelby County, KY. Nancy Ann, daughter of Caleb Griffith (1759-1843) & Mary Richardson (1767-1835), was born 2 August 1788 Maryland and died

13 February 1868 Daviess County, KY. James Lewis Holmes served as a Captain of Volunteers in the War of 1812 became a Major on 27 August 1836, died 15 December 1836 of camp fever at Camp Johnson, Texas.

James Lewis Holmes and Nancy Ann Griffith had issue:

- Willett Holmes born 14 May 1807 Shelby County, KY; married Amelia R. Cummings, 29 October 1829 Daviess County, KY and Mary J. Newman, 14 January 1854 Washington County, TX; died 7 April 1893 in Texas, buried Old Independence Cemetery, Independence, Washington County, TX
- Emily Holmes born 7 August 1808 Shelby County, KY; married William Franklin, 3 March 1825 Daviess County, KY; she died 23 June 1843 KY
- Mary ('Polly') Richardson Holmes born 14 April 1810 Shelby County, KY; married Dr. William W. Harris, 3 March 1825 Daviess County, KY and Anthony Butler; she died in 1853
- Delmere / Delamer Holmes born February 1812 Shelby County, KY
- Sabina Holmes born 9 October 1814 Shelby County, KY; married Elijah Comstock (1808-1875), 3 May 1832 Daviess County, KY; she died in 1843
- William Holmes born 8 October 1816 Shelby County, KY; married Emily Oldham, 1842
- Remus Holmes born 2 April 1818 Shelby County, KY; married Mary Hancock, 1844
- Dr. George N. Holmes born 28 September 1821 KY; married Mary F. Noel, 7 June 1844 Hancock County, KY and Sally Layton Jones, February, 1851; he died 21 January 1877 Macon, Bibb County, GA
- James M. Holmes born 10 November 1825 in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. He married Elizabeth Evins, 13 February 1851 in Daviess County, KY. Elizabeth, daughter of William Simpson Evins and Susannah Marshall Hall, was born 21 July 1831 Henry County, KY and died 9 January 1914 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. James M. Holmes died 18 July 1925 at 100 years old, one of the last three Mexican War Veterans in the US to die. He and his wife were buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY. James M. Holmes (1825-1925) was a first cousin twice removed to President Harry S. Truman. James M. Holmes' father, James Lewis Holmes (1785-1836), and Harry S. Truman's great-grandfather, Jesse Holmes (1775-), were brothers.

James M. Holmes and Elizabeth Evins had four children:

- Dr. William Evins Holmes born 31 August 1856 Daviess County, KY; married Sarah Walden, 18 October 1888 Utica, Daviess County, KY; he died 4 March 1912 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY
- George W. Holmes (3 April 1859 Daviess County, KY; married Bettie P. Bickers, 24 November 1886 Daviess County, KY; he died 17 September 1933 Denver, Denver County, CO, buried Fairmount Cemetery, Denver, Denver County, CO
- James Lewis Holmes born 4 March 1861 Daviess County, KY; died 16 May 1946 Daviess County Poor Farm, Daviess County, KY, buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY; he was single

- Ruth Eleanor Holmes born 4 January 1873 Daviess County, KY; married Hugh Sterling Herr, 8 December 1897 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY; she died 11 January 1935 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY

Jesse Holmes and Nancy Tyler had issue:

- Margaret Holmes born 15 August 1804 Shelby County, KY; married Henry Miles
- Elizabeth Holmes born 24 February 1806 Shelby County, KY; married John Bird
- Sarah Holmes born 23 December 1807; married Jason Chamberlain
- Robert James Holmes born 15 January 1810; married Mary Ann Bradshaw
- Catherine Holmes born 1 January 1812; married Dr. James Clayton
- Silas Holmes born 1 March 1814; married Nancy Bayley
- Jesse Holmes, Jr. born 9 April 1816; married Elizabeth Jane Coates
- Martha Ann (Patsy) Holmes born 14 October 1818; married Lewis Ford
- Mary Jane Holmes born 15 March 1821 in Shelby County, KY; died 15 February 1879 Jackson County, MO; married Anderson Shipp Truman 13 August 1846 Shelby County, KY. Anderson Shipp Truman was born 27 February 1816 Shelby County, KY and died 3 July 1887 Jackson County, MO
- Emily Holmes born 10 October 1823; married John Ricks

Mary Jane Holmes and Anderson Shipp Truman had issue:

- William Thomas Truman born 24 April 1847; married Henrietta Strang & Susan Hurst; he died 6 April 1930
- Margaret Ellen Truman born 6 May 1849; married Joseph Tilford Noland; she died 1 October 1928
- John Anderson Truman born 5 December 1851 Jackson County, MO; died 2 November 1914 Kansas City, Jackson County, MO; married Martha Ellen Young (1852-1947), 28 December 1881 Grandview, Jackson County, MO
- Emily Ricks Truman born 28 July 1855; married Rochester C. Colgan; she died 11 February 1929
- Mary Martha Truman born 7 January 1861 & died 10 April 1900

John Anderson Truman and Martha Ellen Young had issue:

- Infant son born & died 28 October 1882 Lamar, Barton County, MO
- (President) Harry S. Truman born 8 May 1884 Lamar, Barton County, MO; married Elizabeth Virginia Wallace 28 June 1919 Independence, MO; he died 26 December 1972 Kansas City, Jackson County, MO
- John Vivian Truman born 25 April 1886 Cass County, MO; married Louella Campbell, 27 October 1911; he died 8 July 1965 Grandview, Jackson County, MO
- Mary Jane Truman born 12 August 1889 Jackson County, MO; single; died 3 November 1978 MO

