

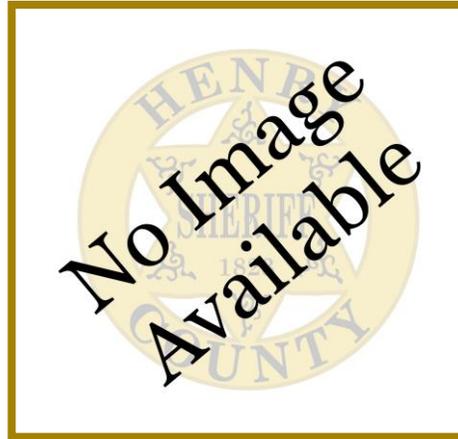


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WILLIS GOODWIN

12TH SHERIFF



Willis Goodwin served as Sheriff on four separate occasions 1854 – 56, 1858 - 60, 1868 – 71 and 1879 – 85.

Willis Goodwin was born May 4, 1822 and married Charlotte Frances Turnipseed Little in 1865. She may have been from the Bear Creek, Hampton area. He married second to Mary Ann Harkness Rodgers.

Willis Goodwin originally lived on Keys Ferry Road (Hwy 81 East) at what is now the intersection of Race Track Rd and Hwy 81. It was in Land Lot 169 in District Seven. Goodwin's first wife and a daughter were buried on this property supposedly where Steeplechase Subdivision is located at the present time. A portion of this property remained in the Rodgers family up until just a few years ago.

Willis Goodwin was appointed Sheriff in 1854 for the first time. He served four terms as Sheriff of Henry County but not consecutively and was the Deputy to several Sheriffs. He served 36 years in the service of the Office of Sheriff as either the Sheriff or as a Deputy.

In 1880 Goodwin and his family moved to Hampton. His first wife was ill at the time. She later died in 1884. Sheriff Goodwin was married three times and outlived two of his wives. He had seven children. He was also the brother-in-law to Sheriff Daniel H. Ponder the 14th Sheriff of Henry County.

On November 17, 1881 at 8:00 a fire broke out at the jail. It was reported that "Heroic efforts were made to enter the iron ceiled and floored dungeons" with axes and sledge hammers. Four inmates were trapped in the heavily involved fire but all were rescued by Sheriff Goodwin and other citizens. Two of the inmates had serious injuries.

Sheriff Goodwin died at the age of 85 on January 25, 1907 after a short illness. He died at the home of his daughter Mrs. Minnie Goodwin Sowell in Hampton. He was highly respected and very well known throughout Henry County even well after his retirement and is buried in the McDonough Memorial Cemetery.

If you have photographs or additional information about past Sheriffs' of Henry County that you would like to share for this display, please contact Major Jack Oakman at 770-288-7034.