



c.1900

Courtesy Oregon State Library

George H. Williams (1823-1910)

Williams was born in New York and passed the bar in 1844. He was appointed by President Pierce as Chief Justice of the Oregon Territory in 1853. At the 1857 Constitutional Convention Williams urged that slavery be made illegal as a condition of Oregon attaining statehood. He was a Democrat until 1864 and then became a Republican. Williams advocated unsuccessfully that a woman's property should not be subject to her spouse's debts. He was elected U.S. Senator (1865-1871), and authored legislation that would dispatch the army into the South during the Reconstruction period. He was the 32nd Attorney General of the United States (1871-1875), and prosecuted and helped curtail Ku Klux Klan activities.¹

After his resignation from the office of Attorney General in 1875, Williams counted ballots in Florida for the 1876 Rutherford Hayes election. He moved to Portland and resumed his law practice and eventually became Mayor of Portland for two terms (1902-1905). Williams died in Portland in 1910 and was buried in the River View Cemetery.

Letters to Bush from 1854 to 1859

There is an 1854 letter introducing Bush to Senators Tines and Dodge. Williams writes about a letter printed in the *Oregon Statesman* about slavery issues in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. He comments that the *Oregon Statesman* would be of more influence to Marion and Linn Counties if Bush stayed in Salem rather than move the newspaper to Portland. Delazon Smith was enthusiastic about prospect of becoming a senator. Williams informs Bush about land claims and politics in Portland and wishes to have Bush buy out a loan so Williams can have ready cash.

¹ Dumas Malone, ed. (1936). "Williams George Henry". *Dictionary of American Biography*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. pp. 262–263.