



St. Peter's Episcopal Church (1854-1921) in Shakapee City, Minnesota Territory was the location of the marriage of Thomas A, Holmes and Helen Taisey on August 24, 1854. *The Episcopal Church in Minnesota — A istorical View in Stereo: The Early Years* by Arthur Louis Finnell (2015) has a picture of the inside of the church, on right, from the 1880s. The church was also used for the fourth marriage of Holmes and Harriet Richards Woodbury, five months after Helen's divorce.



Helen M. Taisey was born in Michigan in 1839. Her parents were Mathias Taisey, born May 29, 1812, in Vermont, and Sophronia Heath Taisey, born March 8, 1829, also in Vermont.

Mathias and Sophronia had four children, including Albert, Helen, Elizabeth, and Milton. In 1849, they moved to Stillwater, Minnesota Territory.

Mathias used to keep the Lake House, a boarding house, in Stillwater, but moved to Shakapee City and had a claim about three miles from downtown Shakapee City, according to the *Diary of Daniel M. Storer*. By mid-February, Mathias and Sophronia were having problems and eventually divorced.

Her father traded his claim to John Boswell Allen and his wife, Jane Dillard Allen's house in town, according to Storer's diary. Later, Mathias sold the house to Spier Spencer for $1300. Mathias ended up in Greenwood, at the fork of the Crow River, about twenty miles north of Shakopee in a forest of timber in 1856. He had a public house there and later traded in groceries. A year later, he married again, and according to Daniel Storer's diary, appeared to be doing well. "He has a small appearing woman" said Daniel M. Storer, pp. 71, 83.

Mathias ended up in the Civil War, where he joined the Second Battery Light Artillery on January 4, 1862. Private Taisey was discharged for disability on October 29, 1863.

Helen met Thomas A. Holmes while in Shakopee and was probably excited about marrying a millionaire.

Thomas married Helen on August 24, 1854, at the Episcopal Church in Shakopee, according to Daniel M. Storer in *The Diary of Daniel M. Storer from 1849 to 1905: A Pioneer Builder and Merchant-His Personal History of Shakopee, Minnesota from August 1853 to January 1905*. This was the third marriage of Thomas Andrew Holmes.

Helen was 35 years younger than Thomas. He was fifty years old, and she was 15 years old.

After three years, Thomas, age 53, asked for the marriage contract between him and Helen to be dissolved.

According to legal papers, Helen refused to cohabitate with Thomas, which she was duty bound to do, according to the *State Archives-Scott County District Court, Civil and Criminal Case Files, 1854-1932. Box 1, Minnesota Historical Society. Territory of Minnesota District Court, Scott County: Thomas A. Holmes against Helen M. Holmes*.

Helen was given to extravagant habits and practices, including large and unnecessary debts at various stores and mercantile houses in Shakopee. The incompatibility between the two people, which continually created dissensions, disputes, bickering, and strife, caused the devolvement of the marriage, according to the case.

Helen had "a furious and ungovernable temper wholly unsuitable to domestic peace or enjoyment, that she frequently

used abusive and vituperative language and would frequently with profane oaths and other improper language for a lady."

Then again, having a 35-year difference in age probably did not help!

The marriage was dissolved on March 24, 1858.

Helen Taisey Holmes left the Shakopee area. Her father, Mathias, died on April 24, 1881, in Missouri. Sophronia died on November 23, 1891.

Helen died in 1889 in Minnesota.

As for Thomas Andrew Holmes? Within five months, Thomas married again, again at the Episcopal Church. The fourth wife was Harriet Richards Woodbury, who was just 24 years younger than Thomas Holmes!



Shakopee ca 1858 Edwin Whitefield. Minnesota Historical Society.

Bibliography

The Diary of Daniel M. Storer from 1849 to 1905: A Pioneer Builder and Merchant-His Personal History of Shakopee, Minnesota from August 1853 to January 1905. Shakopee Heritage Society, 2003.

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SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY
2109 Boulder Pointe, Shakopee, MN 55379
952-693-3865
shakopeeheritage.org

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Haley M. Taisey Holmes

ca. 1839-1889
Third Wife of Thomas A. Holmes

Compiled and written by David R. Schleper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2022