

GRANVILLE STUART

(1834 – 1918)

“Montana, in honoring his memory, honors herself. He thought as a sage, although he felt like a man.” This tribute was one of hundreds memorializing Granville Stuart when he died in Missoula on October 2, 1918. The accolades and remembrances of the man called “Mr. Montana” came from across the country and from persons who had known him throughout his 61 year career in the state. With his brother James, Stuart had arrived in Montana with the first white settlement. In many ways, his story is the story of Montana Territory and the fledgling state of Montana.

Granville Stuart was born on August 27, 1834 in Clarksburg, Virginia.. As a small child he moved with his parents to Illinois and later to Iowa. Stuart’s father joined the gold rush to California in 1849 and three years later James and Granville followed him there. The brothers left California with their companions, Reese Anderson in 1857 and settled in the Deer Lodge Valley. In 1858 the three men discovered gold at the mouth of Gold Creek (Powell County), a find that led to many placer strikes in Montana in the 1860’s. During the 1860’s, however, the Stuarts engaged in the mercantile business supplying mining camps with vital, and expensive provisions.

After James Stuart died in 1873, Granville became involved in freighting, mining, and banking. In 1879, he became a partner with Samuel T. Hauser and Andrew J. Davis in an extensive open range cattle operation in Fergus County, the DHS. Until 1888, Stuart was resident manager of this business, which as later known as the Pioneer Cattle Company, He was instrumental in organizing the Montana Stock Growers Association and he served as its president and as president of the Montana Board of Stock Commissioners. In 1883 he led a group of vigilantes, known as “Stuart’s Stranglers”, against stock rustlers in central Montana.

A strong Democrat, Granville Stuart sat in the Territorial legislature in 1872, 1875, 1879 and 1883. He served as President of the Council (Senate) in the ’83 session, and remained a significant force in Democratic state politics into the twentieth century. In 1894 Stuart was appointed U.S. ambassador to Uruguay and Paraguay, a position he held until 1898.

Upon returning to Montana, Stuart became head librarian at the Butte Public Library and worked diligently to document the history of Montana Territory (1864 – 1889). In 1917 the State Legislature funded some of his research and writing. The product of his last year is the two volume *Forty Years on the Frontier*, a pivotal work in the study of Montana history.

