

DAKOTA IMAGES

As a member of the territorial supreme court and a judge during the chaotic days of the Black Hills gold rush, Granville G. Bennett helped to build the foundations of justice in Dakota Territory by working to ensure equal treatment for all under the law.

Granville Gaylord Bennett was born 9 October 1833 in Fayette County, Ohio. During his childhood his family moved to Illinois and later to Iowa, where he stayed to receive his college education. Bennett studied law at Washington College in Washington, Iowa, and was admitted to the bar in 1859. He married Mary Dawson on 11 October 1860 and shortly thereafter enlisted in the Seventh Iowa Volunteer Infantry. He served as a second lieutenant with the Seventh and as adjutant of the Nineteenth Iowa Volunteers until the close of the Civil War.

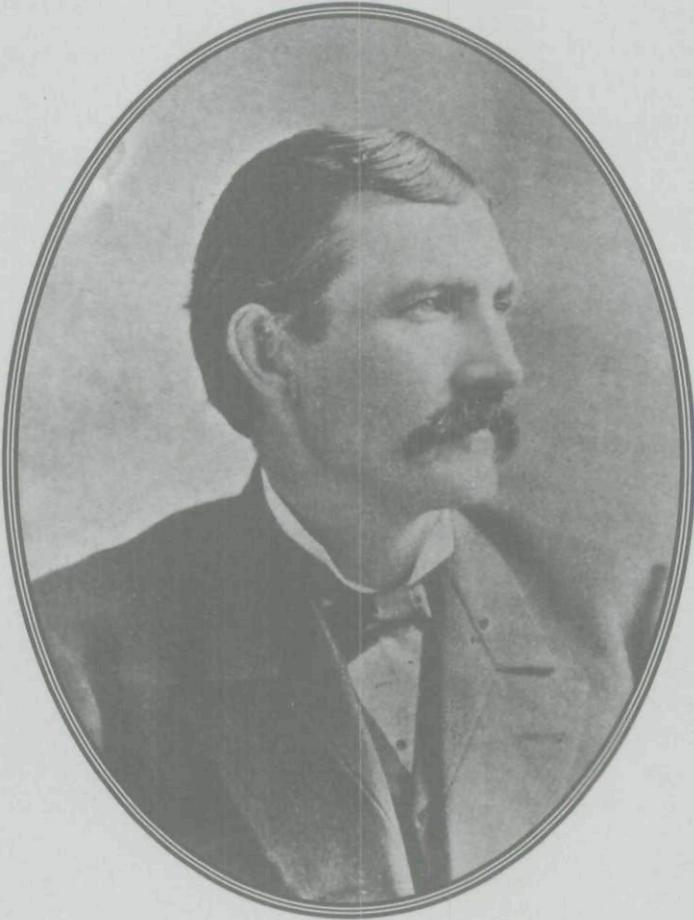
After the war, Bennett returned to Iowa, where he became active in Republican party politics. In addition to practicing law, he served in both houses of the Iowa legislature. In 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed him to be an associate justice of the supreme court of Dakota Territory. Bennett moved to the territorial capital of Yankton, where he helped to write a new legal code for Dakota Territory.

In 1877, after the Black Hills were opened to non-Indian settlers, Bennett was assigned to serve as a judge for the Black Hills judicial district, where he established the territory's first legally organized tribunal west of the Missouri River. He held court in a log cabin in Pennington County, ruling mainly on cases related to mining claims, but later moved to Deadwood in Lawrence County once a permanent court was established there.

In 1878, Bennett won election as the territory's delegate to the United States Congress. He served a two-year term before returning to Deadwood, where he set up a private law practice and remained active in Republican party politics. In 1892, he was elected to the position of court judge in Lawrence County, serving three terms. During his time of service he gained a reputation for being tough on petty criminals but tolerant in his treatment of American Indians and of Chinese immigrants, whom he also represented in court as a private lawyer.

Granville Bennett died in Hot Springs on 28 June 1910 at the age of seventy-seven. He was survived by his wife and two children: Gaylord Bennett, a minister, and Estelline Bennett, who wrote of her father's life in her book, *Old Deadwood Days* (1935).

—Travis Hull



Granville G. Bennett

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