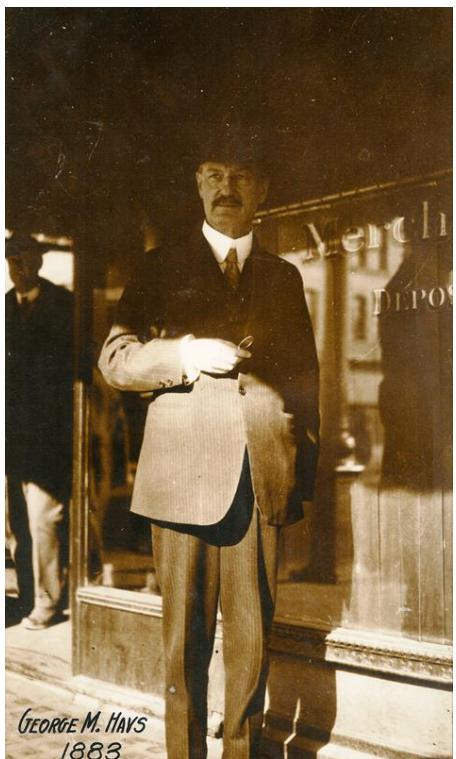


## GEORGE M. HAYS, SR.



George Miller Hays was born in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, in 1862. When still a boy, his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where he grew up. At the age of 21 in 1883, he left a bookkeeping job in Cleveland and took a steamer through the Great Lakes to Duluth, where he caught a train to Billings. He quickly found a job with the County as a Deputy in the Clerk & Recorder's office, and became active in the community.

Hays was a talented musician, and joined a singing quartet. He became a volunteer of the Maverick Hose company, the community's first fire department, and became a popular young man around the town. He had his eye on a young lady from Wales named Jennie Jones – soon to be his wife. He told the tale of trying to bid on her box lunch at a charity social, where the winner would have her exclusive company that evening. A winning bid would typically be around a quarter at that time, but his friends pranked him by bidding it up to cost him an extravagant \$4.00. They married in Cleveland in 1886, and later had four children.

Hays found success in the political arena as well. He was elected County Clerk & Recorder in his own right in 1886, and was the first Clerk of District Court in 1889. In 1896, the Hays family moved to Helena as George became the deputy state treasurer. He was elected Montana Secretary of State in 1900.

In 1904, Hays returned to Billings to take up a banking career. His rich bass voice was in demand for all sorts of entertainments. He also sang for funerals, and it was estimated he sang at over 500 of them. He returned to public office, serving several terms as the Yellowstone County Treasurer. In 1930, when the Clerk of District Court passed away, Hays returned to that office to fill the unexpired term. He was reelected to the office until his own death in 1938.

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