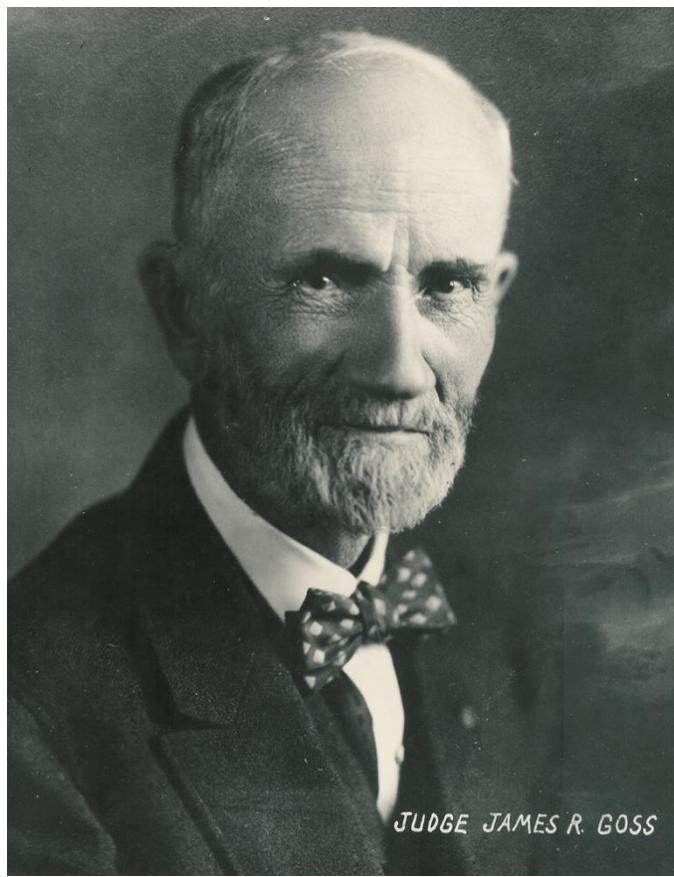


GOSS, JAMES RILEY



The Honorable James R. Goss was an attorney and judge in Billings for a long and admirable career. He was born near New York City in 1848, and moved with his family to Ohio when he was 6. At only 16, he enlisted in the 150th Ohio Infantry during the Civil War. His unit served with the army of the Potomac supporting Ulysses S. Grant. Their duty was to protect Washington DC, and that duty was tested in a July 1864 raid on nearby forts. Goss was proud to remember seeing Abraham Lincoln reviewing the preparations for the city's defense – and putting himself in harm's way.

After the war, Goss attended Oberlin College in Ohio, and continued on to law school at the University of Michigan, where he also married his wife, Florence. He practiced law in Michigan for several years before moving to Bismarck in Dakota Territory. There he heard promising things about the brand new town of Billings. Deciding to venture on what he heard, he took the train to Miles City and the stage to Billings, arriving in April 1882.

Goss set up a law practice, and got deeply involved in his new community. He was elected probate judge in 1884, helped incorporate the city in 1885, was elected mayor of Billings in 1887, and county attorney in 1888. He served as president of the school board for six years. He helped found the Billings Polytechnic Institute, now Rocky Mountain College, and was on its first board of directors. He represented the Billings family as they donated the original library to the city, and served on the Parmly Billings Memorial Library's board of directors for thirty years. He was active with the Pioneers of Eastern Montana (an association of early settlers) and was commander of the local and state posts of the Grand Army of the Republic (an association of Union veterans of the Civil War). And naturally, he chaired the Yellowstone County Bar Association. He died in 1931 after a long illness. The local courts were closed for his funeral to honor him.