



Biography of James Benton Grant *By Terry Ketelsen, Colorado State Archivist*



James B. Grant was a Private in Company B, 20th Alabama Light Artillery Battalion, Confederate States of America during the War for Southern Independence and later served as the 3rd Governor of Colorado from 1883-1885.

Grant was born on January 2, 1848 on a plantation in Russell County, Alabama to parents of affluent heritage. He was educated in local schools and eventually joined the military service of the State of Alabama. It was during this time that his interests in agriculture and mining began to appear. Upon leaving the military, he went to Davenport, Iowa, to attend Iowa Agricultural College. From there, Grant went to Cornell College in New York for a year and shifted his focus of study to civil engineering, and more specifically mineralogy.

He then traveled to Germany to study at the Freiberg School of Mines, where he studied metallurgy. Upon completion of this training Grant returned to America. The expansion of the mining industry in the West provided a natural opportunity for him to utilize his mining training, and thus brought him to Leadville, Colorado in 1877.

His uncle was just beginning the construction of a lead smelter in Leadville and Grant joined him as a partner in the project. In 1882 they moved the smelter to Denver to take advantage of the economies of rail transportation. The smelter was to be called the Omaha and Grant Smelting Company. It was later bought by the Guggenheims of New York and simply referred to as the Grant smelter. A significant landmark this smelter was to become, with a smokestack towering

some three hundred and fifty feet in the air. The Denver coliseum and stock show arena now sit on the site of this former smelter.

The success in the mining and smelting business brought Grant considerable wealth. He built a "mansion" at 770 Pennsylvania Street in Denver, which still stands today. The financial responsibilities of managing the smelter, earned him a vice president's seat on the board of directors of the Denver National Bank. He was also elected as the president of the Denver School Board for eight years.

The general election of 1882 brought a major political change to Colorado politics. The citizens elected their first Democratic governor to the statehouse since the state was created in August of 1876. James Benton Grant was chosen to lead the affairs of state much to the chagrin of the Republican Party.

As Governor of Colorado, James Benton Grant gave great impetus to the expansion and development of the mining industry. His technical knowledge of mining techniques and metallurgy was well respected by many Coloradoans. It was during Grant's term that many of the mines in the southwestern part of the state were opened for development, especially the "Gunnison Country" which had been previously part of the Ute Indian reservation. Grant also proposed the legislative bill to authorize the building of the Colorado State Capitol Building in Denver.

Grant died on November 1, 1911 in Excelsior Springs, Missouri and is buried at Fairmount Cemetery (Lots 7 and 8, Block 88) in Denver.

