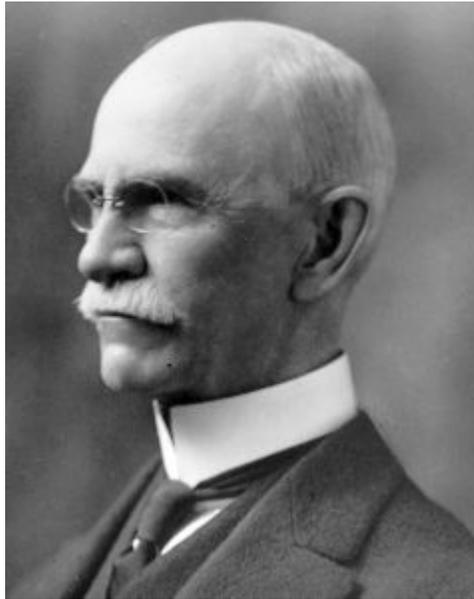




## **Biography of Charles Spalding Thomas** *By Terry Ketelsen, Colorado State Archivist*



Charles S. Thomas was a Private in the Georgia State Militia, Confederate States of America during the War for Southern Independence and later served as the 11th Governor of Colorado from 1899-1901 and as a U.S. Senator.

Charles Spalding Thomas was born on December 6, 1849 in Darien, Georgia. He attended private schools in Macon and several other communities in Georgia. He then moved to Michigan where he enrolled in the University of Michigan, graduating in 1871 with a law degree. Soon after graduation Thomas moved to Denver to seek improvement with his tuberculosis condition; later, he would begin his law practice with a focus on mining law. In 1873, he married Emma Gould Fletcher. They would eventually have five children. His legal skills were soon noticed; and in 1875 he became the City Attorney for Denver, serving for two years.

Thomas then returned to private practice and became involved with the Democratic Party. In 1884, he was invited to serve on the Democratic National Committee (DNC), which was a sure sign that he was politically respected. He continued with the DNC for a period of twelve years, finally leaving in 1896. During these twenty odd years, Thomas became very prominent in mining litigation. His name appears on numerous civil cases in the mining districts of Aspen, Leadville, Creede, Cripple Creek, Boulder and other parts of Colorado.

The fall election of 1898 brought Charles S. Thomas the governorship of Colorado. Some have labeled him as the "Fusion candidate". This term was applied because Thomas not only had the

backing of his Democratic Party, but that of many Republicans and those of the Populist Party as well. His administration concentrated on making some fiscal sense of the state's finances.

The Panic of 1893 and the loss of the silver standard several years earlier had taken its toll on state revenues. Mines and mining property had been reappraised which resulted in a noticeable decrease in assessed valuations. This loss of property tax was playing havoc on county and state revenue streams. Thomas undertook the reorganization of the state's tax laws in an attempt to ensure a more stable revenue flow. He worked for the introduction of revenue laws as a means to support state institutions such as the penitentiary, deaf and blind school and university. He perceived that many Coloradans were "dodging" their tax obligation by receiving tax-free inheritances and so proposed the establishment of an inheritance tax. He wrote many letters around the country espousing the advantages of "bi-metallism" or free silver in hope that silver and gold would once again be the measure of our nation's currency system. The nation never again adopted the silver standard, but Governor Thomas was unceasing in his commitment to defending its value to the Colorado and national economy. The people later elected Thomas as United States Senator, serving from 1913 - 1921. He was also the special counsel to the Korean Commission in Washington D.C., which tried to secure the independence of Korea.

Charles Spalding Thomas died on June 24, 1934 in Denver. His remains were cremated at Riverside Crematory in Denver on June 25, 1934.

