

Sen. Thomas J. Walsh

Hailed for his exposure of Teapot Dome scandal

Among the many Montanans who left indelible footprints on the sands of time, none made a greater impact than lawyer-statesman Thomas J. Walsh.

He is best remembered for his relentless effort to bring to book notorious swindlers of the 1920s who were involved in the Teapot Dome oil scandal.

As a U.S. Senator from Montana, Walsh was a dominant figure on the Washington scene. He was slated for the post of U.S. Attorney General in the first Franklin D. Roosevelt administration when he died on a train en route from Florida to Washington. Of Sen. Walsh, President Roosevelt said:

"While to properly fill his place in my cabinet will be difficult, to fill his place in my circle of friends will be impossible."

SEN. WALSH HAD an inauspicious start in life. He was born June 12, 1859 in Two Rivers, Wis. At the age of 16 he was teaching in a rural school. Later he became a high school principal at Sturgeon Bay, Wis. With money earned as a teacher, Walsh put himself through the University of Wisconsin Law School. He was graduated in 1884 and spent the next six years in private practice at Redfield, S.D., then part of the Dakota Territory.

On Aug. 5, 1889, he was married to Elmer McClements, a comely school teacher from Chicago. They moved to Montana in 1890 when they still was pretty much a frontier. The young attorney decided to hang out his shingle in Helena which still was a booming mining town. He set up an office in the Gold Block.

WALSH FIRST CAME to public attention when he started fighting the legal battles of the underdog. He became known as the champion of the working man. He won case after case for injured employees of big corporations. His services soon were more in demand in Butte and Anaconda than in Helena.

Finally, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company officials were so impressed by Walsh's legal talent that they offered him the post of chief counsel. He turned the job down but said he would be willing to handle litigation for the company as well as appear against it.

In 1908, Walsh lost a race for the

U.S. House of Representatives. In 1910, he was defeated for the U.S. Senate. In 1912, he won a Senate seat where he served from March, 1913 until his death.

FOR NEARLY 10 YEARS after he went to Washington, according to biographers, Sen. Walsh pursued a single-minded, unspectacular course marked by devotion to public welfare. He was on the progressive side of all Senate debates. He fought for women's suffrage and stringent child labor laws. He also was an ardent supporter of President Woodrow Wilson and backed the League of Nations, World Court and the Treaty of Versailles.

On April 1, 1922, the Senate ordered an investigation of the Teapot Dome oil leases. Sen. Walsh was put in charge of the investigation. This bold attempt to rob the nation of necessary oil reserves in Wyoming and California was uncovered due largely to the persistence and uncanny intuition of the senator from Montana.

For this public service he was acclaimed as "the first man in history who is worth a billion dollars to his own government in his own lifetime."

At the Democratic convention in 1924, Sen. Walsh's name was presented for the presidential nomination. He had 123 votes on the 162nd ballot. When the nomination went to John W. Davis, Sen. Walsh declined to run for vice president.

IN 1933, after Walsh had been a widower many years, he met a brilliant and charming woman, Senora Nieves Perez Chaumont de Truffin. The senora's husband, a wealthy Cuban banker and sugar planter, had been dead several years.

In February, 1933, Sen. Walsh, 73, went to Havana. Senora de Truffin became the bride of the Montana senator at a civil ceremony which was followed by religious rites. The newlyweds crossed to Florida and started for Washington when the senator was stricken fatally. Sen. Walsh was buried in Helena's Resurrection Cemetery beside the grave of his first wife on March 9, 1933.

Shortly before his ill-fated trip to Cuba, Sen. Walsh told friends he considered his early legal activities in Helena and Butte as the happiest period in his life. Lawyers still talk about some of his spectacular court triumphs.



C.R. Anderson

A life devoted to education

"It is only fitting that the school should be named after the man who has done the most for building Helena's finest elementary institution."

With these words from Dr. Gordon L. Doering, chairman of the board of Trustees of School District No. 1, the name of West Side School at 1200 Knight St., was changed to C. R. Anderson.

The board made the change in 1961 by a unanimous vote over the strenuous objection of then Superintendent of Schools, C. R. Anderson.

It was a fitting salute to a

The Winesteins

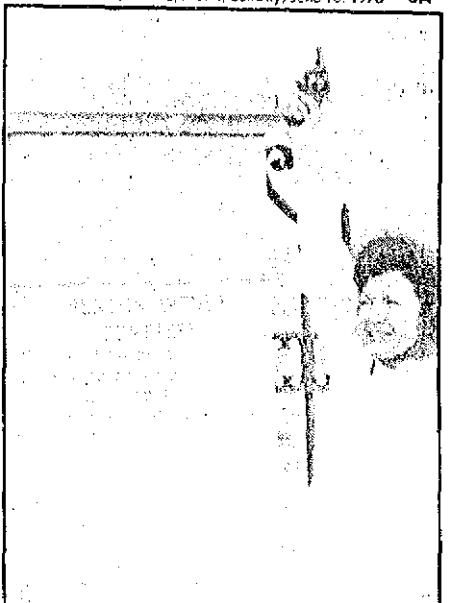
Keeping the fame at home

How many of Helena's youngsters have left home and brought back fame like it was a souvenir? HOW MANY MORE HAVE NOT COME HOME AT ALL?

A couple finding their place in the world without ever really leaving Helena is Norman and Belle Winestein. It was Belle Fligelman who brought her new husband back to Montana from the world outside. She was working in Jeanette Rankin's Washington office and he was a young Yale graduate working for the Hoover administration and later on the staff of "The Nation" when they married in April 1918. They stretched their world as far as Paris before returning to Helena in 1921 where Norman took over management of Fligelman's New York Dry Goods Store.

The store as already an institution when he arrived, but Winestein helped rebuild it after the disastrous fire of 1928, steered its course through the Great Depression, the war, and into the '50's when, as president, he announced sale of the store in 1958 to the M. M. McDonald Co.

Belle, to whom the women of Montana and much of the United States owe their fundamental right to vote, continued to champion the cause of women's rights at home and in the nation. She ran for the state Senate in 1932 but was overcome by the Democratic tide of that year. Her main enthusiasm has been writing. She has produced articles, short stories and plays.



Lucille Baker fires starting pistol in mid-1960s to kick off another clean-up day at the old Benton Avenue Cemetery.

Lucy Baker

Pinched a sleeping city

Many of Helena's early pioneers rest easier in their graves today because of Lucy Baker.

They were laid to rest amidst flowers and tears at the old cemetery on Benton Road when ox-drawn wagons crept along their way between Helena and Fort Benton.

They panned the tiny nuggets that turned a wilderness gulch into a frontier town. They were the storied Vigilantes. Their voices rose in debate in the territorial legislature. They were the gold seekers and the gamblers and they had been long forgotten by the people of Helena.

Then Lucille Baker stopped to remember.

She could have pulled a few weeds and called it square as a few others had done before. But Lucy Baker was also a leader. In her zeal to get the old burial plots fixed up and looking as they should she pinched the sleeping conscience of a city. By the time she had finished she had not only restored the dignity of the Old Benton Cemetery but our own as well.

The crowning result of her efforts came when the Governor's Commission on Historical Preservation designated the cemetery as a historical site in 1974 assuring that it would never be abandoned again.



man who has devoted his life to education. He began his career as a high school teacher and coach at Lake Benton, Minn. In 1925 he became principal of the Sidney high school and in 1927 he was named superintendent of schools in Richey.

He came to Helena in 1935 as principal of the Hawthorne and Broadwater

schools, leaving in 1942 to become superintendent of the Livingston schools.

From 1943 until 1946 he served as a director of the American Red Cross with the First Marine Division and saw much active war-time service from the South Pacific through Okinawa to China.

In 1948 he returned to Helena as research director for the Montana Education Association and in 1949 he joined the state department of public instruction.

In 1955 he was named superintendent of Helena Schools where he served until his retirement in 1966.

Wilbur Fisk Sanders

First U.S. Senator, he was nemesis of outlaws

Col. Wilbur Fisk Sanders, remembered as one of Montana's first lawyer-statesmen, also was a nemesis of the area's badmen.

In the light of 100 years of Montana history, Col. Sanders is revealed as one of the greatest champions of law and order which the Big Sky frontier produced.

A nephew of the Montana Territory's first governor, Sidney Edgerton, Sanders traveled west with a wagon train.

Before he started for what is now the Treasure State, Col. Sanders had a notable career as a Union officer during the Civil War. He was born in Leon, N.Y., May 2, 1834, and began his career as a school teacher.

In 1854 Sanders moved to Ohio and studied law. A couple of years later he was admitted to practice. He proved an able advocate and quickly won the respect of other members of the Ohio legal profession.

In 1861 with the Civil War in progress, Sanders organized a company of infantry. Later, he assisted in the building of fortifications for railroads south of Nashville, Tenn.

Late in 1862, Sanders' health failed and he was forced to resign from the Army. It was partly to seek a high, dry climate, which doctors believed would be beneficial, that Sanders decided to go west.

The Edgerton train arrived in Bannack on Sept. 17, 1863. It wasn't long before Sanders became well known both in Bannack and Virginia City as well as other parts of what is now Montana.

The young lawyer soon proved conclusively that he was able to deal effectively with the lawless element in the territory which came into existence on May 26, 1864.

MOST HISTORIANS who dealt with Sanders' career, put special emphasis on the part he played as a frontier crime crusher. Although Virginia City, Nevada City, Bannack and other mining camps were infested with some of the most ruthless killers and robbers this country has known, Sanders neither was frightened nor awed by them. He often expressed a determination to see the road agent and other desperados eliminated through due process of law.

Undoubtedly the climax of Col. Sanders' experience with robbers

came when he served as prosecutor at the trial of one of the most cold-blooded of the Montana outlaws, George Ives.

Ives, a six-foot, blue-eyed gunman, was brought to trial before a people's court at Nevada City for murdering a German immigrant who owned some valuable mules.



Wilbur Fisk Sanders with granddaughters in 1897

With Sanders as chief prosecutor, the proceedings were carried on with constant fear that Ives' pal, Sheriff-Road Agent Henry Phinmer, would attempt a rescue.

When the trial concluded, Ives was sentenced to be hanged. An attempt was made by the doomed road agent's friends to have the execution postponed. The delay was blocked by Col. Sanders. Summarily, at a spot not 10 feet from where his trial was held, Ives was hanged. This is how a newspaper described the agent's death: "George Ives swung in the night breeze, facing the pale moon that lighted up the scene of retributive justice."

AS ONE BY ONE, and sometimes in greater numbers, the Vigilantes continued to execute road agents. Law and order was firmly established in the territory. Col. Sanders became immersed in political affairs. He also was devoted to his family. Back in Ohio on Oct. 27, 1858, he had married Harriet Penn. They had three sons,

James, Louis and Willie. He took up residence in Helena.

Early in his career as a frontier lawyer, Col. Sanders became involved in a criminal case which had international repercussions. It was the famous Helena hearing which followed the Indian massacre at Cypress Hills.

The massacre in the Cypress Hills across the U.S. border in southern Saskatchewan was precipitated by a horse stealing foray perpetrated by a band of North Assiniboines against a party of hunters and traders from Fort Benton.

Seven men were arrested for the Indian deaths on June 21, 1875 by federal troops at Fort Benton. A hearing was held by a U.S. Commissioner in Helena on July 7, 1875. Feeling was running high and drunken men protesting the proceedings pressed into the courthouse.

Col. Sanders appeared as attorney for the Canadian government. He resented his case with extreme vigor in contrast to the reluctance of Merritt C. Page, chief prosecutor, to defy public opposition.

Col. Sanders denounced the trappers whom he referred to as "Belly River wolves, outlaws, smugglers, cut-throats, horse thieves and squaw men." Evidence offered was inconclusive and contradictory. The accused slayers were released and returned to Fort Benton where they were acclaimed as heroes.

Paul F. Sharp, writing for the Montana Magazine of History, stated that as late as the general elections of 1880, Fort Benton Democrats were still referred to by Republicans as "Belly River wolves!" They never forgave Col. Sanders for his role in the Helena hearing.

THE COLONEL SERVED in the Territorial Legislature from 1872 to 1878. Several times he was a Republican delegate to Congress and he served also as delegate to several GOP conventions.

Seventy-five years ago after Montana had achieved statehood, Sanders was elected by the Legislature as one of the new commonwealth's first U.S. Senators. He was picked for the short term and served only three years.

When Col. Sanders died in Helena on July 7, 1905, his passing was marked by one of the most impressive funerals ever held in Montana.



Not all Helenans were good

In Helena's wilder days, there were always plenty of outlaws for Vigilantes and tough prosecutors like Wilbur Fisk Sanders to deal with. We mention them here because criminals, too, set the tone of a city. One convicted murderer, Bill Gay, is shown moments before, inset, and after he was

hanged on a scaffold next to the county courthouse in May, 1896. But Gay's execution showed subtle changes were taking place in Helena's early string-em-up-quick type of justice — the old hanging tree, reported to have been near the corner of Davis and Broadway, was no longer being used.