

This distinguished gentleman was born in Lyons, Wayne county, New York, on the ninth day of August, 1827. His father was a native of New England, of Scotch descent. His mother, whose maiden name was Miranda Morris, was a descendant of a well known New York family.

Early in 1850, being then twenty-two years of age, Mr. Stewart bade farewell to his old home, and started for California via the Isthmus of Panama. His capital consisted principally of a stout heart, a determined spirit, and a sound mind in a sound body. He arrived in San Francisco on the seventh day of May, 1850.

There are few public men on the Pacific Coast whose connection has been so close, continuous and influential with our mining interests as the object of this sketch, and we doubt if there is any other individual whose acts have left so deep and beneficial an impression on these interests as those of William M. Stewart. A man of Herculean form, with a massive, well-poised head and irrepressible will-power, he is one of those who appear born to command. Such men seldom fail to accomplish whatever they undertake. Thus, soon after his arrival here, we find Mr. Stewart as an "honest miner," working with a zeal that insured success, in the "Coyote Claims," as they were called, on Buckeye Hill, in Nevada county. While prospecting in the Fall of 1850 he discovered the Eureka diggings, which have been worked continuously ever since, and are among the more valuable of the placer diggings of to-day. To work these rich mines, he projected the Grizzly ditch, which is in use now—taking the waters of Grizzly Canyon and Bloody Run, and carrying them, at an immense expense, down to the Cherokee diggings. To provide the miners and their families with lumber, he built the first saw-mill on Shady Creek, which was in operation for years. In the Spring of 1852, having had all he wanted of mining and sawing, he sold out his business and commenced the study of the law, with J. R. McConnell, at Nevada City. Such was the rapidity of his progress, and the force of his presence and speech, that in December, 1852, he was appointed District Attorney, to which office he was the following year elected by an almost unanimous vote, and performed its duties so satisfactorily, that in 1854, he was appointed Attorney General, and took up his residence in San Francisco. It was while residing here that he married a daughter of ex-Governor Foote, of Mississippi. Tiring of city life, he returned to Nevada City, thence to Downieville, in Sierra county, then one of the most important mining camps in the State. There he devoted himself to the study and practice of laws concerning mining—ditch and water rights—a most important and lucrative branch of litigation. He continued in this business till April, 1860, when the excitement about the Comstock mines induced him to go to Virginia City, where he at once entered into partnership with Henry Meredith, who within a week or ten days after was killed by the Plute Indians. Mr. Stewart's thorough knowledge of mining law soon brought him abundance of profitable business. He was engaged in the conduct of nearly every suit brought before the higher Courts of the Territory and State. The settlement of title of nearly all the mines on the Comstock is due to his sag-

acity and influence. The money obtained by his great legal talents was invested in the development of the mines, and he soon became one of the leading operators on the Comstock, and built for himself the finest private mansion there was at that time in the Territory.

In 1861 he was chosen a member of the Territorial Council, which office he subsequently resigned, and in 1862 was elected a member of the Constitutional Convention, and to him more than to any other individual, is the Silver State of Nevada indebted for those provisions in its Constitution which have made it one of the most prosperous States in the Union. In appreciation of his services the citizens of Nevada elected him to represent them in the Senate of the United States for two terms.

He was first elected in 1864, and was re-elected in 1869. In this august body Mr. Stewart exhibited that dignity, industry and perseverance which have been the leading characteristics of his busy life. Ever careful of the interests of his constituents, he there rendered most important services to the mining interests of the country. It is to his efforts the miners are indebted for the defeat of the measure introduced in Congress in 1866, to sell all the mining lands of the country at public auction.

On the third of March, 1863, while Nevada was a Territory, an Act was passed in Congress providing for a Mint at Carson City, but no steps were taken for the construction of the same, and it was claimed that the appropriation had lapsed. In February, 1865, an Act was passed for the purpose of acquiring title to a site for the Mint building. The Treasury Department, however, opposed the construction of a Mint at Carson, and recommended instead the construction of an assay office of the same character as those established in Oregon, Idaho and Montana. On the 20th of June, 1868, Mr. Stewart made a determined effort to secure an appropriation for the construction and equipment of the Mint at Carson. With the assistance of his colleague, Senator Nye, he induced the Finance Committee to report an amendment to the Sundry Civil Appropriation Bill of \$150,000 for that purpose. Upon this amendment a lively debate took place between Mr. Fessenden of Maine, a member of the Finance Committee, who opposed the amendment, and Mr. Stewart, in which Mr. Stewart exhibited the statistics of the production of the precious metals of Nevada as compared with other mineral producing States and Territories, and conclusively stated the reason why the appropriation should be made, after which the amendment was adopted by the Senate and the Mint constructed.

Mr. Stewart's most enduring claim on the mining interests of the country rests on the important services he rendered them while member of the United States Senate. It is to his efforts the miners are indebted for the defeat of the measure introduced in Congress in 1866 to sell all the mineral lands of the country at public auction. It was Mr. Stewart's thorough knowledge of mining laws, and the rights of miners, and his forcible style of reasoning, that defeated that measure, which, had it passed, none but the rich could have owned the mines. Scarcely a law relating to the mineral lands and mines of the country but contains evidence of Mr. Stewart's watchfulness and fidelity to the rights of bona fide miners.

Mr. Stewart was especially watchful of the interests of Nevada. On the 5th of May, 1866, he secured the passage of an Act annexing to Nevada from the Territories of Utah and Arizona all that territory lying south of

the 37th degree north latitude and east of the 115th degree of west longitude within the present boundary of Nevada. The country annexed includes a portion of Esmeralda county, nearly half of Nye county, and the greater part of Lincoln county, more than one-half of White Pine county, and all that portion of Elko county east of a line drawn north and south through a point about a mile and a half east of Tulasco (a station on the Central Pacific railroad), which embraces more than one-third of Elko county. The annexed territory includes all the mineral region of Pioche and White Pine and a large portion of the best grazing and agricultural land in the State.

Upon the question of reconstruction he acted an important part. He was the first to advocate universal amnesty and universal suffrage in Congress. While he voted for the Fourteenth Amendment, he advocated the incorporation of a provision in that amendment whereby any rebellious State might be restored to the Union and receive universal amnesty for all citizens, upon the establishment of universal suffrage and equal rights before the law.

Since his last term in the Senate Mr. Stewart has devoted him-

self to mining and the practice of his profession, in which he is an acknowledged leader. As Senator from Nevada he will be the peer of any man in that august body, and the people of this State and of the whole Pacific Coast will be proud of him.



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