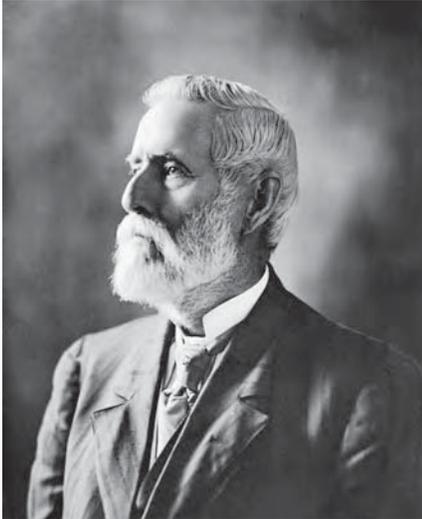


Granville Stuart

1834 – 1918



Granville Stuart entered Montana in 1857 over what would be known later as Monida Pass.

He immediately took note of the condition of the land and the abundance of wildlife, writing, “Instead of the gray sagebrush covered plains of Snake River, we saw smooth rounded hills ... covered with yellow bunch grass that waved in the wind like a field of grain.”

Stuart further noted “there was plenty of game, consisting of black tailed deer, big horn or mountain sheep, and also many bands of elk.”

Settling first on the Clark Fork River, he celebrated the 4th of July in 1863 “by having a fine dinner with trout as the principal dish.”

Later, he said, “The Deer Lodge Valley is famous for two things, one is that mountain trout are more plenty in it than any other place of the same extent in the world.”

In 1880, Granville rode into the Judith Basin looking for a ranching opportunity.

As he later wrote, “Thousands of buffalo darkened the rolling plains. There were deer, antelope, elk, wolves, and coyotes on every hill and in every ravine and thicket.”

However, that sense of bounty didn’t last long. In just three years, Granville saw wildlife populations plummet. “In the fall of 1883,” he later noted, “there was not one buffalo remaining on the range and the antelope elk, and deer were indeed scarce.”

In the course of these experiences, Granville wrote, “If the legislature does not enact some laws in regard to game and fish there will not be in a few years so much as a minnow or deer left alive in all the territory.”

Along with his brother, James, Granville took action seeking legislation to protect fish in the First Territorial Legislature in 1864.

More comprehensive game protection was won in 1872, providing some closed season protection for a number of species including “mountain buffalo, moose, elk, black-tailed deer, white-tailed deer, mountain sheep, white Rocky Mountain goat, antelope or hare.”

All through Montana’s territorial years, the Stuarts led legislative efforts to curb the commercial carnage of fish and wildlife.

Thus legislative efforts to conserve fish and wildlife in Montana began in territorial years, as early as 12 years before Custer died on the hills above the Little Big Horn River.

One year after that famous battle, in 1877, Granville formed the Helena Rifle Club, Montana’s first rod and gun club to promote the sporting code—thus, citizen conservation advocacy was born in Montana.

One historian noted, “Granville Stuart persistently strove to improve wildlife protective measures and his bills formed the platform for the evolution of wildlife laws in the territory ... Granville was ... a dreamer and philosopher, a lover of all creation.”

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– Granville Stuart
