

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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EDWARD AUGUSTUS STEVENSON
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A native of New York, E. A. Stevenson had resided in Michigan before coming to the Pacific coast. He made the long trip west at the age of eighteen when he joined the California gold rush in 1849. Going into politics at an early age, he entered the California legislature when he was only twenty-two. Before he was through he had served four terms, and had risen to the position of speaker pro tem. More than that, he had been mayor of Coloma, and a deputy sheriff as well.

Coming to Boise Basin in 1863, he acquired important mining interests near Grimes Pass. He kept up his political career at the same time. A candidate for the Idaho legislature six times, he was elected to the Council in 1866, to the House (where he presided as speaker) in 1874, and to the Council again in 1876. He also worked in a term as Boise County commissioner, to which office he had been elected in 1872. Moving to Payette Valley in 1882, he identified himself with Idaho's growing agricultural interests, an appropriate addition to his earlier mining pursuits.

During Grover Cleveland's first presidential term, Stevenson became territorial governor, serving from October 10, 1885, to May 1, 1889. When Congress belatedly decided to annex North Idaho to Washington in 1887, Stevenson managed to induce Cleveland not to approve the measure. Idaho thus was saved at the last moment, and Stevenson then assumed a position of leadership in the Idaho admission movement. When the legislature failed to get around to calling a constitutional convention in 1889, he summoned one on his own initiative as governor. However, the counties claimed to have no money for such a project, so it had to wait until George L. Shoup became governor for the constitutional convention to actually take place. Even after George L. Shoup succeeded him as governor, he continued to work effectively for Idaho admission. Taking over a Boise Basin stage line after Idaho became a state, he got the Democratic nomination for governor in 1894. The Democrats had no chance that year, though, and he did not live long enough to try again in 1896 when fusion of the silver forces transformed Idaho's political structure.

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