

James William Denver – The Man & His Times



Original Matthew Brady 1861 carte-de-visite taken of General Denver in his Washington D.C. studio. When this picture was taken in fall of 1861 Denver was 44 years old, well over six-foot-tall, weighed over 250 pounds and was a formidable figure. Signed by Denver on back. Fewer than four recorded examples in private hands.

PURPOSE - The purpose of this exhibit is to trace the life and explain the historical importance of James William Denver from his early years in Virginia, through the end of his life in 1892. This will be accomplished with postal history items, letters and other material related to his long and fascinating life. The exhibit is essentially chronological, with minor exceptions.

BACKGROUND - James W. Denver was born in Virginia in 1817 and moved to Ohio in 1830. After graduating from law school he moved to Missouri. He served in the Mexican War, returned to Missouri afterward and in 1850 co-led a wagon train to California. He

started a freighting business and became involved in politics, serving as state senator and secretary of state. In 1854 was elected to the US House, and subsequently appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In late 1857 named Governor of Kansas Territory. While serving as Governor, the new town of Denver, Kansas Territory (Colorado) was named in his honor. Resigning in late 1858 he returned to his Indian Affairs post until March 1859 when he left to return to California running unsuccessful but close races for the US Senate and governor.

Lincoln commissioned Denver Brigadier General and he eventually served under Sherman's command before resigning in 1863. Established a lucrative legal practice in Washington DC, as well as numerous business investments. He remained active in politics, and aspired to the presidency, never receiving the official nomination. Maintaining residences in both Washington DC and Wilmington, Ohio, he died a very wealthy man in 1892.

Exhibit Outline:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| I. Virginia, Ohio & Missouri Years | VII. Return to California |
| II. Early California Years | VIII. Civil War Years |
| III. Congressional Years | IX. DC Law Practice |
| IV. Indian Affairs 1 st Term | X. Other Business Interests |
| V. Kansas Territory | XI. Presidential Politics |
| VI. Indian Affairs 2 nd Term | XII. Epilogue |

***Featured items are edged in dark red.**