

James Virgil Burnett 1862-1951

July 24, 1951 Hamilton, Montana

James V. Burnett Pioneer Of Bitter Root Dies, Last Rites Yesterday

When James Virgil Burnett passed away at Daly Memorial Hospital in Hamilton Monday, July 23 there ended a pioneer life that was devoted to building. Coming to Montana in 1878 and to the Bitter Root in 1882, Jim Burnett left his mark upon the western areas of the state in buildings and houses which he constructed or helped to construct, which will remain as silent memorials to the man. Even after he was 80 years, of age he built structures at Salmon and St. Regis.

Funeral services were conducted at the Dowling chapel in Hamilton yesterday afternoon by Rev. Lawrence Roupf in tribute to Mr. Burnett. Burial was made in Riverview cemetery beside the grave of the wife of the deceased, the former Etta Sanders who he wed in July, 1890 at Stevensville, and who passed away July 4, 1936. Pallbearers named were grandsons and husbands of granddaughters of the deceased brick mason-farmer. They were John Dowling, Jr., James Howard Dowling, Donald Burnett Dowling, C. M. Buxton, Jr., James Buxton, David B. Tawney, Jr., Harley Beasley, Jack Burnett, Ray Ryan, James Lauderback, Douglas Flanagin and Neil Flanagin, Jr. with the first eight able to be present and actively serve. The others are at remote points, some outside the nation on military duty and hence unable to attend the rites.

James V. Burnett was born at Terre Haute, Ind., Sept. 22, 1862. He is survived by seven children, a sister, 14 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren. The sister is Mrs. Olla B. Iddings, former Bitter Root who now resides with her daughter, Mrs. Lloyd Spencer, at Collins, N. Y. The children are Leonard, Missoula resident who follows his father and grandfather in the contracting business; Mrs. John W. Dowling of Hamilton; Lloyd of Richland, Wash.; Clifford of Kalispell; Mrs. Neil Flanagin of Stevensville; Mrs. Marlin Buxton of Hamilton; James V. Burnett, Jr. Philipsburg.

Mr. Burnett first settled with his folks at Glendale, Mont., then a booming mining camp, where his father for a time operated a hotel. Later the father engaged in contracting and building as a brick-mason, constructing many structures in western Montana, usually assisted by his son, James Virgil Burnett. One of these buildings was the Main hall at the University of Montana at Missoula, first permanent structure on that campus.

Some of the numerous buildings erected by J. V. Burnett in Hamilton include the old Lincoln building, now known as the court house annex, the Hamilton hotel, the Bitter Root laundry, the Burns Block (now the Nickel building), the European hotel.

Always active in public affairs Mr. Burnett served on the Stevensville school board and served one term (1919-1925) as a Ravalli county commissioner. He was a member of the Republican party and of the Bitter-Root Fifty Year club. When he came to the Bitter Root he came on saddle-horse and first stopped at the Iddings ranch on Canyon creek, later known as the Shea place. The ranch, one of the earliest in this area, is now owned by Dale and Elva Huskinson.