

# THOMAS CHARLES POWER

1839 – 1923

One of the first two Montanans to gain seats in the U.S. Senate following statehood was T. C. Power whose mercantile firm dominated trade on the northern plains.

During his one term, Power concentrated on free coinage of silver, disposal of the public domain, irrigation and a wool tariff.

Business enterprises of Montana's "merchant prince," as Power was sometimes described, included Missouri River steamers and freighting interests. His Fort Benton Transportation Co., founded in 1874, dominated Upper Missouri commerce in the years before railroads rendered river traffic impracticable. In 1897, Power formed the first of several stagecoach lines which served northern and central Montana and eventually linked with the transcontinental Northern Pacific Railroad at Billings.

Between 1880 and 1920, Power invested in cattle and sheep ranching, lumber, coal, electric power, hotels, auto distribution, banking, grain milling, oil and irrigation, among other endeavors. During his career, he founded or invested in more than 95 companies.

Power has been described as a man who "exemplified the finest spirit of individual and civic loyalty, and he did much to advance the varied interests of the state . . . ."

