

Gibson Clark

Gibson Clark was born 5 December 1844 in Millwood, Clarke, Virginia. He was the third of six children of James Hopkins Clark and Jane Adelaide Gregory. He was living with his parents in Clarke, Clarke, Virginia, in 1850.¹ His mother died when he was fourteen years old²; his father never remarried. He is living with his father and brothers in Clarke, Virginia, on the 1860 census.³

Gibson enlisted in Parker's Company of Virginia Light Artillery 1 June 1863 in Richmond, Virginia, as a private. He was promoted to full corporal 15 August 1863 and mustered out 9 April 1865 at the Appomattox court house.⁴ After the war, he returned home to Virginia, then went to St Louis, Missouri, in 1866, where he engaged as a clerk in a mercantile house. Later that year, he traveled to Fort Laramie, Wyoming, where he was employed as a clerk and bookkeeper in the post sutler's store until 1872.⁵ On the 1870 census, he was listed as a store clerk living in Fort Laramie, Laramie, Wyoming Territory.⁶ He served in the Wyoming territorial legislature in 1871-1872.⁷ From 1872-1883, he was engaged in mining in Nevada and Utah.⁸

In Utah he read law and was admitted to the bar in the territory in 1880 but did not begin his legal practice until 1882 when he opened an office at Ft Collins, Colorado.⁹ He served as the secretary of the International Order of Odd Fellows in Silver Reef¹⁰ and was one of the original organizers of the Good Fellowship Lodge No 6 of the Ancient Order of United Workmen.¹¹ On the 1880 census, he was an attorney, living in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory.¹²

In March 1880, John and Edward Pike, publishers of the Silver Reef Miner newspaper, wrote an article about the two-reef, one-fault theory of silver ore placement in the Silver Reef area.¹³ Gibson, secretary of the Christy Mining Company, was left in charge while Henry S Lubbock, part owner and superintendent of the company's mines, was in New York City trying to sell the entire company for the sum of \$320,000. Gibson telegraphed a synopsis of the article to Lubbock, who instructed him to seek the arrest of the Pike brothers for libel to Lubbock. The Pikes were arrested, and after a preliminary examination were held under bail of \$4,000 (the same justice of the peace set bail of \$1,000 for an alleged murderer a short time later).¹⁴

The case of the People vs. John W and Edward Pike came up for trial in July 1880 in Beaver, Utah.¹⁵ Even though it was titled the "People", it was really the Christy Mining and Milling Company that hired Clark as an attorney and paid the court costs.¹⁶ Lubbock and Clark testified that the article was

¹ United States Census, 1850.

² Virginia Deaths and Burials, 1853-1912.

³ United States Census, 1860.

⁴ Progressive Men of Wyoming, by A W Bowen & Co, 1903, pp. 472-3; National Park Service at nps.gov/civilwar; US Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865; US Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865; American Civil War Soldiers.

⁵ Wyoming State Archives.

⁶ United States Census, 1870.

⁷ Wyoming State Archives.

⁸ Ibid, Progressive Men of Wyoming, by A W Bowen & Co, 1903, pp. 472-3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Silver Reef Miner*, 21 June 1879.

¹¹ *Silver Reef Miner*, 16 December 1880.

¹² United States Census, 1880.

¹³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 29 July 1880, p. 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Southern Utah Memories: Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864-1994.

¹⁶ *Salt Lake Herald*, 29 July 1880, p. 3.

detrimental to the interests of the Christy Company, and that the published theory was in in direct conflict with the theories and opinions of some of the best experts who had visited the camp.¹⁷

Clark “denied having paid Justice Paddock the sum of \$200 in gold or any other sum of money for the purpose of influencing his action in the preliminary hearing of the case, but admitted having given an “open order” to George Miller, proprietor of a saloon kept next door to the court-room, to furnish liquors and cigars to anyone calling for the same during the examination, and that the same during the examination, and that the bill of cost for drinks, etc., had on said order, amounted to \$145, which sum was paid by the Christy Mining Company. He also admitted having requested John W Pike to make favorable mention of the Christy [Company’s] mines during the months of January and February; that he had requested him to publish “a hypothetical visit” through the company’s mines, meaning thereby that he should publish a fictitious or what might be considered a false statement of the condition and value of the property, which Pike refused to do.”¹⁸

Lubbock claimed that he was being blackmailed by the Pike brothers for \$3,000 not to publish the articles.¹⁹ Lubbock, upon being asked “whether he regarded the article as a libel upon his character, he replied that he did not know the meaning of that, but had come to court for the purpose of finding out whether the article was libelous or not. In answer to the question whether he would knowingly sell a mine for more than its value, he replied, with much emphasis, that he would “sell a mine for the last dollar he could get.”

The Pike brothers received a letter, threatening to “clear out the Miner”. They answered, “we will permit no man nor any number of men to clean out this shebang while a round of ammunition can be procured wherewith to defend it.”²⁰ Colonel E A Wall testified in their defense, and Judge Van Zile against, with John M Macfarlane testifying as surveyor. A verdict of not guilty was rendered and the directed that a fault did exist between the two reefs. The editor of Engineering and Mining Journal did not accept toe Pikes’ fault concept nor the jury’s decision.²¹ The Silver Reef Miner published an extended synopsis of the testimony in the libel suit.²²

Gibson was a member of the fire committee, organized after the great fire of 1879 in Silver Reef.²³ He married Frances Amanda Johnson in 1881 in Utah Territory. They had four sons.²⁴ That year he was appointed the Supreme Court Commissioner for Silver Reef.²⁵ He advertised as an attorney at law and notary public²⁶ and was a probate judge for Washington County, Utah Territory.²⁷ He was the prosecuting attorney in the case of Greenbaum and a conspiracy to start an incendiary fire in the business section of Silver Reef.²⁸

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 29 July 1880, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Silver Reef Miner*, 22 September 1880.

²⁰ *Silver Reef Miner*, 10 April 1880.

²¹ *Silver, Sinners, and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, pp. 56-7.

²² *Salt Lake Herald*, 23 September 1880, p. 3.

²³ *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, pp. 126-7.

²⁴ United States Census, 1900; Wyoming Tribune, 15 December 1914, pp.1-2.

²⁵ *Salt Lake Herald*, 27 April 1881, p. 3.

²⁶ *Silver Reef Miner*, 5 November 1881.

²⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 17 September 1882, p. 9.

²⁸ *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, pp. 130-1.

In 1882, he was retained as the attorney for the defendant in the case of the People vs. Steele. Herbert Steele had retired to Capital Saloon²⁹ for a night of drinking, about eleven-thirty³⁰ on 4 February 1882. The bar tender, Johnny Quillen, refused to extend him credit for a drink.³¹ Steele was quarrelsome and “heaped considerable abuse on him” until Quillen struck him in the face.³² Steele kind of staggered back and the report of a pistol was heard. Several men rushed him and got the pistol away.³³ Rafferty died within a few minutes.³⁴

Steele was immediately seized and jailed, and strongly guarded for the dual purpose of preventing his escape and protecting him from the fury of the excited citizens. There was talk of lynching.³⁵ Steele was tried for murder in the Second District Court in Beaver, Utah, where Gibson was his defending attorney. Quillen testified that Rafferty told Steele to put up his gun and Steele fired at him. Steele claimed that his gun had gone off accidentally. Steele testified that he drew his pistol while staggering back from the attack by Quillen and it accidentally discharged.³⁶ It appears he shot at Quillen and then turned and mortally wounded Rafferty.³⁷ The jury found him guilty of voluntary manslaughter. A motion for a new trial was denied.³⁸ He was sentenced to prison for four years in the prison in Beaver, Utah.³⁹

Later that year, at the rally of the Peoples Party of Washington County, Judge James N Louder granted Gibson fifteen minutes on behalf of the Liberal Party.⁴⁰ Gibson was also one of the attorneys that defended the law in the case of Ann M Thompson who attempted to register to vote in Beaver, Utah Territory. Conflicting laws required a person to live in the territory for six months and be a taxpayer in order to vote, and the Female Suffrage Act of 1870 allowed women to vote. Most women were not taxpayers. The judge’s decision went against Thompson, with the proviso that the taxpayer clause be honored, repealed, or partially repealed to be equal in the case of men and women.⁴¹

From 1883 to 1885, Gibson served as the US commissioner for Silver Reef.⁴² By 1885, he was a lawyer living with wife and two sons in Fort Collins, Larimer, Colorado.⁴³ In 1886, he moved to Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming, where he built up a lucrative business and won an enviable reputation. In 1892, he spoke at the political convention at the opera house, with nearly 500 people present, many of whom were women. This was important because at the time, Wyoming was the only state in which women were allowed to vote for president.

Gibson was appointed as an associate justice of the Wyoming supreme court in 1892, and qualified as a justice in 1893.⁴⁴ He resigned his position to accept President Cleveland’s nomination⁴⁵ of US

²⁹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³⁰ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³¹ *The Montana Standard*, 8 February 1882, p. 7; *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³² *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³³ *Silver Reef Miner*, 4 February 1882.

³⁴ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³⁵ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³⁶ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8; *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³⁷ Memories of Silver Reef, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, Vol 3, No 4, p. 108.

³⁸ *Deseret News*, 24 May 1882.

³⁹ Southern Utah Memories: Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864-1994.

⁴⁰ *Silver Reef Miner*, 4 November 1882.

⁴¹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 20 September 1882, p. 8; 23 September 1882, p. 5.

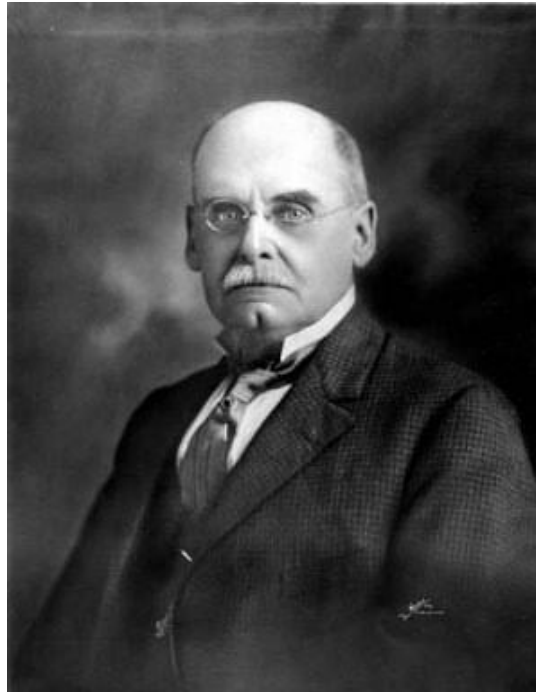
⁴² Official Register of the United States, 1883, Vol 1, p. 712; Utah Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1884, p. 381; Register of the Department of Justice and the Judicial Officers of the United States, 1885, p. 124.

⁴³ Colorado State Census; Wyoming State Archives.

⁴⁴ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 January 1893, p. 1.

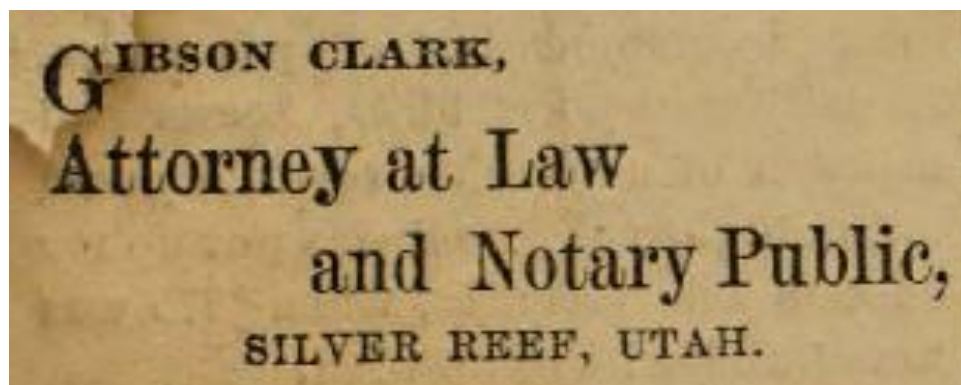
⁴⁵ *Salt Lake Herald*, 3 August 1894, p. 3.

district attorney in August 1894.⁴⁶ He resumed his private law practice in 1898.⁴⁷ He also served as a trustee for the Cheyenne school district and University of Wyoming.⁴⁸ He was a lawyer, living with his wife and four sons in Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming, in 1900.⁴⁹ He suffered a paralytic stroke from which he never recovered, however he was able to continue his profession. Gibson died 15 December 1914 in Cheyenne, Laramie, Wyoming. His funeral was held at St. Mark's Episcopal church⁵⁰; he was buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Cheyenne. Frances died in 1918 in Claremont, Los Angeles, California⁵¹ and is buried in Cheyenne, Wyoming.



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(image from wyomingstatearchives.wikispaces.com/Gibson+Clark)



(Image from *Silver Reef Miner*, 5 November 1881)

⁴⁶ *Progressive Men of Wyoming*, by A W Bowen & Co, 1903, pp. 472-3; *Reno Gazette-Journal*, 30 July 1894, p. 1; *Nevada State Journal*, 31 July 1894, p. 2; *Salt Lake Herald*, 31 July 1894, p. 1; 28 August 1894, p. 6.

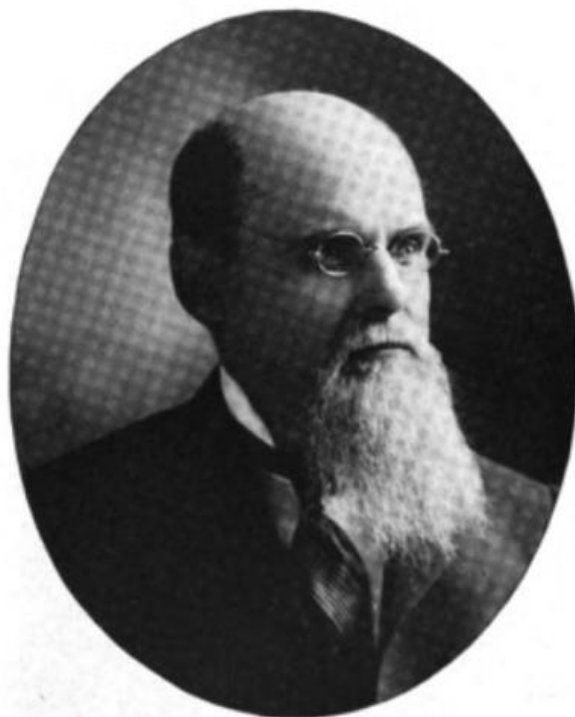
⁴⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 5 November 1892, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Wyoming State Archives.

⁴⁹ United States Census, 1900.

⁵⁰ *Wyoming Tribune*, 15 December 1914, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ *J. E. J. Trail to Sundown*, by Rufus David Johnson, 1961.



Gibson Clark (image from *Notable Men of the West*, 1902, p. 147)



(Image from *Findagrave.com*)

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