



# GEORGE A. COLE

- **30<sup>th</sup> Missoula County Sheriff.**
- **Born.** August 11, 1877 in San-Lac County, Michigan to John M. and Susan (Seder) Cole. John Cole had been a Union soldier in the Civil War. George was one of 14 children in the Cole family.
- **Married.** Amanda Swenson in 1904 in Missoula, Montana. They had three children: Russell, Stanley, and Goldie.
- **Died.** March 1, 1953 of a ruptured aneurysm in a Veteran's hospital in Seattle, Washington.
- **Spanish American War.** George served in the Spanish American War. George was an excellent horseman. He rode with Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders up Kettle Hill during the war. According to a great-granddaughter, "After the war, President Roosevelt asked Grandpa to be in the Cabinet, but when

Grandpa asked Grandma, she said 'No'. Therefore, he didn't do that."

- **1903.** George arrived in Missoula, Montana to start work for the Northern Pacific Railroad.
- **1906.** Promoted to conductor for the railroad.
- **1920.** Appointed 30<sup>th</sup> Missoula County Sheriff when William Houston was fired for making moonshine in the jail. These were the hey-days of prohibition and bootleggers.
- **February 12, 1922.** Sheriff Cole presided over the highly controversial hanging of Joe Vuckovich. Vuckovich was accused of murdering Mrs. Jerry Shea in a love triangle. Mrs. Shea refused to leave her husband for Vuckovich. It seems a young woman saw Vuckovich 'run around a corner from the murder victim's home with one hand under his coat, as though he may have been concealing something.' Vuckovich proclaimed his innocence right to the end, although his attorneys never had him take the stand. They felt he had a better chance for freedom if his story was not told. The town came out in droves and even petitioned Governor Joseph M. Dixon to pardon Vuckovich. Governor Dixon stated he would not intervene in the proceedings. Added to the controversial sentencing was the fact that the hanging itself did not go smoothly and death was not immediate. Due to threats, Sheriff Cole took extreme caution by keeping the stockade well guarded inside, outside, and on all the cross streets. Crowds gathered outside the stockade the night before the execution and multiplied throughout the day. Ironically, the young woman whose testimony helped to hang Vuckovich would find her own husband, William Cates, in the same jail cell awaiting death by hanging thirteen years after the Vuckovich hanging.
- **1922.** Sheriff Cole's deputies seized a large shipment of moonshine brought into Missoula from Butte. The liquor was described as 'the worst kind'. Officers stated "It was the poorest grade of 'moon' and carried an awful wallop." The front men, J. C. Gilman and G. F. Kennedy, were in possession of a small amount of moonshine, six shooters 'ready for business,' and the 'recipe'. (Boil 5 gallons water, 18 pounds of spuds. Let Cool. Add 8 pounds sugar, 2 yeast cakes. Distill inside of 24 hours as bubbles will stop coming up.) The notorious moonshiner, Jack Keyes, was arrested in the Mercer Boarding House where he had 40 gallons of moonshine in his room.
- **1929.** Retired from railroad to operate a cattle ranch at Willow Creek, Montana near the town of Philipsburg. He taught his entire family his love of horsemanship.
- **1934.** George and Amanda sold the ranch and retired to be near family in Kirkland, Washington.
- Spanish-American War Veteran and Masonic Lodge member.



Grave 2 – Lot 10 – Block 39A

*George was buried alongside his spouse, Amanda, in the Dufresne family plots. His daughter, Goldie, and her husband, Julian Dufresne, were buried with them.*