



[Image obtained from 'History of Sacramento County California' in 1880, published by Thompson & West, Oakland, Cal. 1880]

THE ORR STORY

We share with you a sketch of George Orr, husband of Mary McFarland Orr, niece of John McFarland and heir to the McFarland ranch. George and Mary Orr were the parents of Beatrice Orr Hayenga Smithson who was born in the McFarland home and spent her entire life there.

George Orr was born in Ontario, Canada October 20th, 1864. At the age of 19, he came from Canada to Galt where he went to work for John McFarland. Two years later, he married Mary McFarland and at first they lived in a home built for them by John McFarland one half mile east of his home. Later McFarland asked that they move to his house and live with him. They did, and it was there that they raised their five daughters.

George Orr was not only a wise rancher, but also an exceedingly good businessman. In 1912, he became the vice-president of the Bank of Galt, a position he still held at his death. For a look at George Orr as he was seen by his fellow citizens, we share an excerpt from The Galt Herald at the time of his death:

"George Orr had a genial and kindly disposition, and was ever ready to place himself at the disposal of others if he could be of service in any way. No sacrifice of time or self seemed too great for a friend in need. Throughout the duration of the war, he was an active member of nearly every board of relief work and although not well, gave the use of his car and his service constantly with utmost cheerfulness for every department of the work.

He was prominent in church and lodge work and in the community at large, where he will be sorely missed by a large circle of friends and acquaintances who valued his true friendship, his wise counsel, and his genuine interest in all progressive work."

When George and Mary died, Beatrice remained on the ranch, and, later, with her husband Charles Hayenga, continued the farming legacy left by John McFarland. Charles Hayenga died as a result of a ranch accident, and for a time, Beatrice continued the ranch work. Later she married Otto Smithson and they leased the ranch. Eventually, she sold her ranch to the Nature Conservancy with the right to live on the ranch until hers and Otto's death.

The Nature Conservancy has sold 105 acres of the ranch to the Sacramento County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces. They, in turn, have leased 35 acres of land to the Galt Area Historical Society with the understanding that the Society will restore the McFarland home and create a living history ranch on the property.

A portion of the land that was once known as the McFarland Ranch has returned to that name. When the Society has completed the project, the McFarland Living History Ranch will be available for visits from children and their families throughout Northern California.

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