



October 2020



*From the Archives*  
**Orvis and Ritz**

Joseph Lloyd Orviz and Frank Joseph Ritz were typical of the Easterners who came to California in search of a better life. Joe Orviz was born in Wisconsin in 1870 and came to California around 1890, where he served in the California Infantry of the Army National Guard and participated in the Spanish American War. After being discharged, he met Frank Ritz, a native New Yorker and machinist by trade and one-time employee of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Together, the two bachelors opened their machine/plumbing shop. After a few years, Orviz and Ritz went their separate ways when Frank Ritz married local socialite Maude Ferguson. Joe Orviz went to work for the Southern Pacific Railroad and later became an independent local plumber, and Frank Ritz opened a machine shop in Galt. In the photo, Frank Ritz is in the center, and Joe Orviz is on the right.

## Donations

### Jim Ritchie Family

On Sunday, Dan and I met with members Jim and Barbara Ritchie, and their daughter Carol. They have many old photos, memorabilia, and historic equipment they want to give to the Galt Area Historical Society. Jim's parents, grandparents and other family members are buried at the Liberty Cemetery. His family includes the Hickeys, Stacks, and Aldrich families buried at the Liberty. They have many more photos to go through and send to us. Dan took many with him and will surely share some with the members in future newsletters. Thank you so much Jim, Barbara and Carol for your kindness and your desire to preserve more of the Galt area's history.

### Dennis McAllister

Dan was able to receive a loaned donation for the Rae of the old Galt High bench that sat inside the main hall. The bench is on loan from Dennis McAllister. Thanks so much Dennis.

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We welcome new member Kirk Swim. We look forward to meeting you all in person and sharing our goals of the Historical Society!

As a member of our Galt Area Historical Society you play an important role in protecting and preserving our historical records and also interpret the past to the public, especially our younger Galtonian. Each year that you renew your membership you join us in our mission of engaging and empowering each other to make history a meaningful part of our contemporary lives. Your membership helps preserve the legacy of our ancestors, commemorate local heroes and preserve our historic architecture. Our members in GAHS help answer the Who, What, Why, Where and When questions that make historical societies important. It puts those of us in the present in touch with the people of the past who shaped our landscape, named our landmarks, and made the decisions that ultimately affect us today.

Also, within our membership area, remember to please contact us for any address, phone or email changes that you have. We need to have updated addresses or it costs us each time a newsletter is returned for incorrect address. But more important is we want to keep everyone updated and informed of all our events and activities!

Please email any concerns to Rhonda Smith, [rhonda@galtsmiths.com](mailto:rhonda@galtsmiths.com) or call, 209-745-4504.

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### 2020 Historical Society Executive Board

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Lyle Lagge ~ 1st Vice President

Harry Souders ~ 2nd Vice President

Liz Haglund ~ Recording Secretary

Toni Gerling ~ Corresponding Secretary

Bobbi Lewis ~ Treasurer

Dan Tarnasky ~ Historian

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## A Message From The President

Fall is a welcome sight with leaves starting to turn color and drop from the trees. Hopefully, the heat of the summer has taken its last big breath for 2020. I certainly miss seeing many of you at our meetings, events, and gatherings. In many cases, we have been isolated from each other: Maybe we have waved or had a distanced chat. Let's hope for a return to normalcy in 2021. I trust that you and your families are well and trying to keep in good spirits. I, for one, am looking forward to the day we have our monthly meetings, monthly open house at the Rae Museum, Kite Day in April, Ladies' Tea in May, our annual car show in August, Sip & Snack at the MAC in September, our annual Yard Sale in October, and Christmas Open Houses at the MAC and the Rae in December. We missed having the City's July 4th Parade. At this time it appears the City is hopeful that there might be a Christmas parade. I will keep you posted. After the first of the year, our committees will begin planning our 2021 fundraising events. We cannot be pessimistic and think COVID will never end: It will and we just have to move forward making our plans as usual. We certainly do not want to lose our momentum. We can look back on 2020 as a part of our history: 2021 is our future. As they say, we have to pull up our sleeves and get back to work! The public, as well as our members, will be excited to attend our events, getting together with each other. We could have larger attendance than in the past because people have been held back. Of course, we have to see what the guidelines will be at that time. If anyone wants to get involved and help with any of our fundraisers, please contact me and I will put you in touch with the Chairperson.

Until next month, have a fun Halloween, stay safe and enjoy the cooler weather.

Janis Barsetti Gray



### News from McFarland Ranch

The rebuilding of the fence around the house is 100% complete. We have treated the fence to prevent pest damage. The next step is to repaint the entire fence and would like some volunteers to help. We are at the ranch every Monday and Wednesday 9 am until 2 pm.





# Bits & Pieces

**Liberty School House** We are still getting things together before work will begin to renovate the Liberty School House. This renovation will be costly and we only have so much we can use on this work. If anyone is interested in donating toward the renovation of the old school house, we would be most appreciative. Anyone who sends in funds will be recognized as a donor. Those who have been members for years will remember the "Save the Rae" campaign we had that helped us in the Rae renovation.

**Liberty Ranch High School** This past summer, Liberty Ranch High School contacted Dan for some old Galt photographs for their yearbook. Dan brought some over and while he was there he noticed some archive boxes. He was able to scan some of the historic documents, and hopes that if the school has no need for these historic papers, they will offer them to us for safe keeping.

**McFarland House Cleanup** Please contact Lyle if you can help with any outside cleanup around the McFarland House and washing down the house, new restroom, and porches. Lyle has many chores to do at the MAC if anyone wants to volunteer to help him.

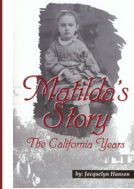
**Rae House Cleanup** This month we would like to start cleaning up the outside of the Rae House. We have not had visitors due to COVID; however, museums can open with social distancing and 25% capacity at this time. Dan is still working on the new displays inside, and will let us know when we can have a planned opening. If anyone wants to volunteer to help wash the outside of the house and clean windows and the garage outside, please contact Dan. We want to get everything winterized also.

**Cemetery Tours** Dan has so much on his plate these days, but he keeps going with all his projects. He is still working with the Galt Cemetery to identify with a tour, historic gravesites. His hope is to have it on our website and the Galt Cemetery for walking tours of the cemetery.

**McFarland Bookings** Heather is beginning to book weddings for 2021 at the McFarland. It will be good to get back to normal. However, some people are a little hesitant to commit at this time because no one really knows when normal will happen again. We just have to be positive that things will turn around.



## Author's Corner



### Matilda's Story

by Jacquelyn Hanson  
(Shellenbarger)

This story has been fictionalized, but clearly based on fact about Jacqueline's family coming to the Galt area and settling in Hicksville. It is about a farming community in south Sacramento County the last half of the 19th century.

(Available at Barsetti Vineyards Tasting Room or the GAHS website)

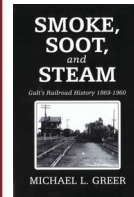


### The Last Real Hobo

by Terry Albritton

This is a historical fiction, loosely related to the history of Galt. It tells about the life of a hobo coming into town by train. Terry says that some old timers in Galt may recognize the resemblance to some towns people.

(Available only through Amazon)

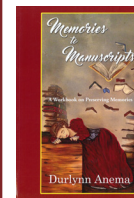


### Smoke, Soot, and Steam

by Mike Greer

Use this vivid, well-documented book as a guide to walk down Main Street and experience the sensations of smoke, soot, and steam from 1869 to 1960 in a Central California community as it grew from a berg to an incorporated city and found its spot in the history of the golden state of California.

(Available at Barsetti Vineyards Tasting Room or by contacting the author: igocamp.greer5@gmail.com)



### Memories to Manuscripts

By Durlynn Anema

Memories accumulate over a lifetime to be pleasantly recalled, especially when we are older. Your memories tell a great deal about a unique time and a unique you which needs to be preserved. This book evolved from a class Durlynn Anema taught called "Memories to Manuscripts. This book helps you go through the complete process from the simple act of writing to the final product. Learn writing techniques to turn your life into a book of memories.

(Available at Barsetti Vineyards Tasting Room or by contacting the author: durlynnca@gmail.com)

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# Policy and Procedure Review

## Duties of the Officers

### Purpose:

Per the Bylaws, the elected Executive Officers of the Society shall be President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, and Historian.

### II. The Duties of the Officers are as follows:

1. The President shall call and preside at all meetings with the approval of the Executive Board, shall appoint working committees and chairpersons. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee. The President may sign checks together with the Bookkeeper. In addition, the President shall plan the agendas for all meetings with the Recording Secretary.
2. The First Vice President shall assume all duties of the President in case of absence or inability to perform the given duties, except the signing of checks. Also, the First Vice President will assist the President and all other officers with duties of the Society, as needed. In addition, the First Vice President will oversee Society fundraisers; deposit money when the Treasurer is unavailable; and monitor "Check Out" forms for any item owned by the Society and borrowed for use in historic displays, fundraisers or events to assure that all such items are returned.
3. The Second Vice President shall assume all duties of the First Vice President in case of absence or inability to perform the given duties. The Second Vice President shall be responsible for Society public relations in all media including "social media" and shall see that it is kept up-to-date and current. Further, the Second Vice President shall oversee and assist the membership chairperson in membership recruitment and retention, and in maintaining a file of applications and up-to-date membership roll, and may issue membership cards as deemed necessary. In addition, the Second Vice President will work with the Society webmaster to make the Society website easy to use and up-to-date.
4. The Recording Secretary will take minutes at all Society and Executive Board meetings and has custody of the Society's current records, and a file that is in a designated place as per the Policy and Procedures Manual. In addition, the Recording Secretary will plan the agendas for all meetings with the President and email the agendas and the prior month's minutes to the Board members and ask them to read/comment if there are any changes needed to be made before printing and passing them out at the meetings.
5. The Corresponding Secretary shall answer and carry out any correspondence as directed by the President or the Executive Board. In addition, the Corresponding Secretary shall compose the February Annual Appeal Letter and mail to all of the Society members.
6. The Treasurer shall collect dues and monies and shall keep an accurate record. The Treasurer will follow the guidelines in regards to Society funds in the Policy and Procedures Manual. In addition, the Treasurer shall collect tickets/money at the door at any Society Dinner meetings; send donation acknowledgement forms to all donors; and in regards to Memorial donations, send a letter/card to the family of the deceased with the donor's information (name and address).
7. The Historian shall keep a permanent record of the Society. The Historian may choose a Historical Committee of any size to aid in these endeavors. In addition, the Historian shall send a weekly historic picture and write-up to the Galt Herald; and maintain the Society archives including scanning, documenting and archiving photos donated to the Society as well as archiving other tangible items donated.

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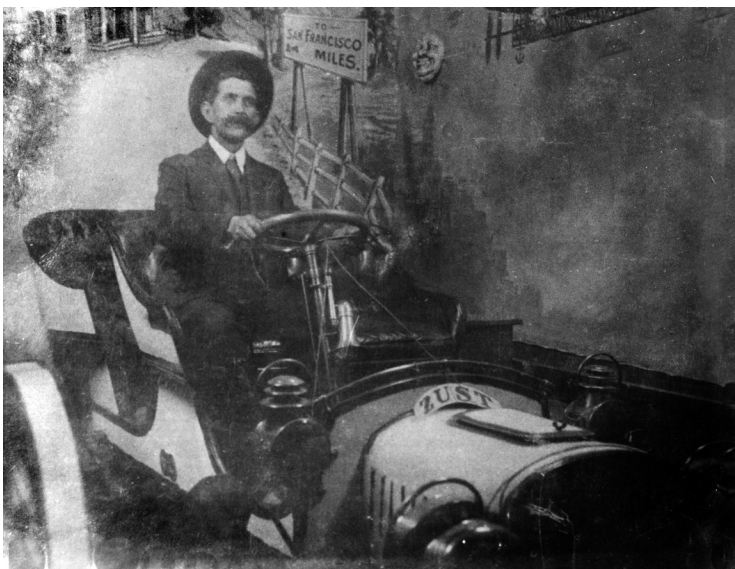


# Can you help us identify these Galt area citizens?

We have several photos that are unidentified. If you know who one of these people are, contact:

**Dan Tarnasky - GAHS Historian**

**Email: [blckrssn@hotmail.com](mailto:blckrssn@hotmail.com) | Phone: (916) 952-2368**





# The Incident at Murphy's Corral or The Real Beginning of the Bear Flag Revolt

This is the final part of a three-part series from Terry Albritton's article on the Bear Flag Revolt. In the second installment, Mexican Lt. Francisco Arce had been tasked with moving 170 horses to General Castro in Santa Clara. Stopping at Martin Murphy's corral for the night, Arce and his men were surprised by Ezekial Merritt and his "Osos" in what would become the "Incident at Murphy's Corral." Merritt seized most of the horses and sent Arce to Santa Clara with a message for Castro to "come after the horses if he dared." The Osos followed days later but General Castro was ill equipped to do battle. California was declared an independent republic.



They raised a primitive flag sewn together with petticoats and scraps of material. Depicted on a white background were a single red star symbolizing solidarity with the Texas independence movement, a brownish representation of a bear that resembled a pig, and a single red stripe across the bottom.

None of the players at Sonoma was aware that the United States had been officially at war with Mexico since May 13, 1846. The declaration made the Bear Flag Republic an unnecessary entity since the ultimate goal of the Osos was to make California a state. The Mexican American War, itself, was controversial in Washington where anti-slavery politicians viewed it as a Southern conspiracy to take slavery westward. Others saw it as a manufactured conflict designed by greedy men who wanted to strip Mexico of her rightly obtained territory.

Events at Murphy's Rancho and four days later at Sonoma reveal that the Californios, the Mexicans, and the American settlers had a level of interdependence and mutual understanding that did not have to lead to war. Sutter, Murphy, and other emigrants had become naturalized Mexican citizens in order to purchase land. Loyalty to country of birth was not an issue. Some officials, like Californio General Mariano Vallejo who was in charge of the garrison at Sonoma, believed that the U.S. government would rule more efficiently than the officials in Mexico City. He expressed



the hope that Washington would eventually annex California. Fremont, of course, was a strong proponent of this action. Nonetheless, he distrusted Vallejo and reportedly ordered Merritt and the Bears to arrest him and his followers at Sonoma. The prisoners were taken to Sutter's Fort where John Sutter treated them more like guests than hostages. John C Fremont did not start the Mexican American War; that conflict was already underway on the southern border. What seems plausible to some historians is that he created more ill will among the residents of the Sacramento Valley. Josiah Royce, a professor at Harvard University and Sutter's contemporary, conducted extensive interviews with the Pathfinder. He writes of Fremont,

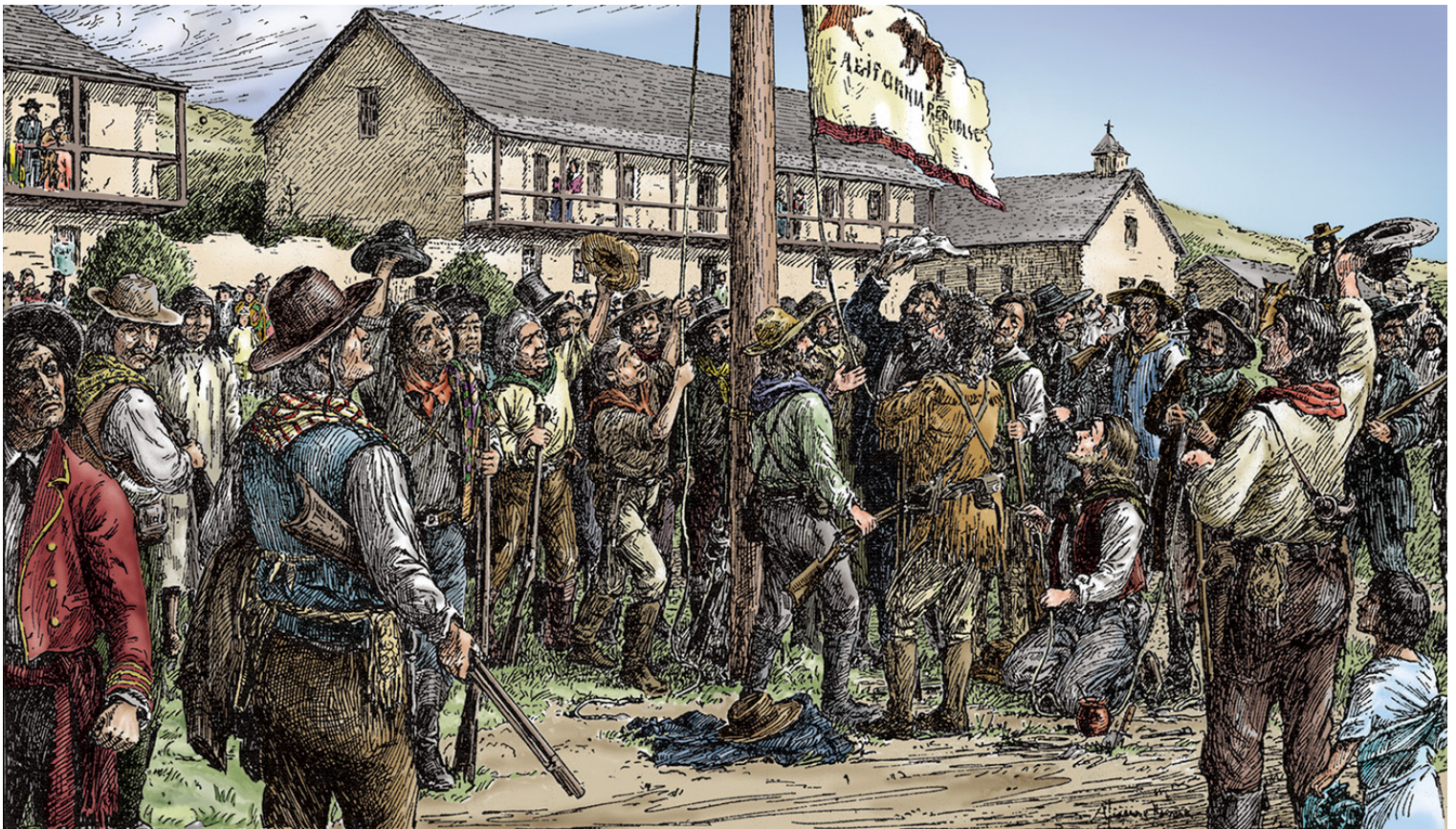
He brought war into a peaceful department: his operations began an estrangement, ensured a memory of bloodshed, excited a furious bitterness of feeling between the two peoples that were henceforth to dwell in California, such as all his own subsequent personal generosity and kindness could never again make good. From the Bear Flag affair, we can date the beginning of the

degradation, the ruin, and the oppression of the California people by our own.

Fremont never hid his political ambitions, and he had some success with a brief appointment as Governor of California and a single term as an elected U.S. Senator. He enjoyed these forays into government despite having been court martialed in 1848. Ever resilient, he became the first nominee for President by the new Republican Party in 1856. He lost the election to James Buchanan after which his political and personal fortunes declined. The Pathfinder remains an influential and controversial figure in history.

John Augustus Sutter participated as a delegate in the 1849 convention to draft the state constitution of California. With the discovery of gold on his land in 1848 and the ensuing rush for riches, Sutter lost all of his property holdings and became destitute by 1852. The California legislature allotted him a small pension which he used to live out his life in Lancaster, Pennsylvania until his death in 1880.





Ezekiel Merritt continued his allegiance to Fremont who appointed him the Quartermaster of the California Battalion, expressly organized "to conquer California." Illiterate and impetuous, he failed at his responsibilities, but served bravely at the Battles of San Diego, San Pascual, San Gabriel, and La Mesa. Following his discharge by Fremont in 1847, his activities are unknown. He may have disappeared in the spring of 1849 while on an errand to purchase supplies for some miners on the American River.

Following his close call at Murphy's Rancho, Francisco Arce eventually joined forces with Mexican governor Pio Pico in opposition to his former commander, Jose Castro. In 1850 he retired from the military and considered running for public office. His limited command of English and his marriage in 1853 with subsequent children dissuaded him. He lived with his family on Rancho Ysabel, southeast of present-day Paso Robles, until his death in 1878. With his extant memoirs, he left a familiar quote, "California was like a pretty girl—everybody wanted her."

Of the diverse players at that tense incident by the Cosumnes River, the Murphy family fared best. In 1850 Martin, Jr. sold his rancho and purchased large tracts of land in central California southward to San Luis Obispo. For a man with no formal education, he demonstrated business

acumen combined with civic commitment. He helped to establish the College at Santa Clara and supported many philanthropic causes through the Catholic Church. Perhaps he and his wife left their most enduring legacy when dealing with squatters on their expansive Rancho La Pastoria de las Borregas. "When squatters settled on (their) land, Murphy condoned their trespass on his property with charity while Mrs. Murphy ministered to their needs for food and clothing." Remaining apolitical and embracing individuals from every cultural background, the Murphy family members embodied the best of the early California emigrants.

In her extensively researched biography of Martin Murphy, Jr., Sister Gabrielle Sullivan attributes the following "firsts" in the

Sacramento Valley to the Stevens-Murphy emigrant party:

1. First emigrants to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains into California by way of the Truckee River and Donner Lake in 1844. This would become the same route used by the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869.
2. First emigrant group to bring wagons over the mountain pass into California.
3. First group to bring cattle into California.
4. First group to reach Lake Tahoe.
5. Murphy, Jr.'s daughter, Elizabeth Yuba, was the first child born of emigrant parents in California in December 1844.
6. Murphy established the first school in the Sacramento Valley.
7. Murphy, Jr. was the first emigrant to farm wheat successfully in the Sacramento Valley.



The site of Murphy's Corral is California Registered Historical Landmark 0680. It is located on the north bank of the Cosumnes River off Highway 99 at the Grantline exit between Galt and Elk Grove. A plaque was placed there by the California State Park Commission in cooperation with the California History Foundation of the College of the Pacific (UOP) and the Stockton Corral of Westerners on October 17, 1959. It is poorly maintained and needs immediate attention.



# The Local Nightwatchman



Deputy Marshals

One of the things I love to do as a Historian is research. I love to discover bits of Galt history that I never knew. Recently I ran across an obituary in a 1940 newspaper of a man named Bee Mellon. That name seemed odd, so I continued to read (I have this terrible habit of looking for one thing and getting sidetracked on something else, but I digress.). What was contained in the article intrigued me, so more research was needed. Here is the story of another of Galt's interesting characters.

Marshal B. Mellon was born in Chariton County, Missouri, in 1854 to farmers Henry and Catherine Mellon. Marshall, the second youngest of eleven children, continued to help with the family

farm after the passing of his mother (1873) and father (1884). By the time he reached the age of thirty-seven in 1891, Marshall Mellon had struck out on his own and headed for Fort Smith, Arkansas. There he met the "Hanging Judge."

President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Isaac Charles Parker Chief Justice of the United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas and the Indian Territory (Eastern Oklahoma) in 1875. He attained the nickname the "Hanging Judge" over his career because he sentenced 160 men to hang on the gallows. The court operated in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Upon his appointment, Judge Parker decided to hire and maintain 200 U.S. Deputy

Marshals for Arkansas and the Indian Territory. One of those hires in 1891 was Marshall B. Mellon. It is surmised that it was at this point that Mellon went by the name B. (or Bee) Mellon, after all, could he go by the name Marshal Marshall Mellon?

During the settlement of the "Old West," deputy marshals served as law enforcement in areas that had no local government. They were involved in apprehending fugitive felons such as Bill Doolin, Ned Christie, and the Dalton Gang. Some of the more famous deputy marshals included Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson. Bee Mellon worked in the Indian Territory, and from all accounts, he was more than a capable deputy



marshal. In those days, Mellon would spend days riding miles of trails looking for the men wanted by Judge Parker. Deputy marshals were paid for each prisoner brought in, so it was imperative that Mellon brought in as many as he could. In 1896, the system was changed to a monthly salary, but Mellon would not collect much.

1896 was the last year of Bee Mellon's career as a deputy US marshal. Out on assignment, he had a fugitive cornered but killed him in the attempted apprehension. Mellon went before

Judge Parker and was sentenced to three years in prison because he "did more shooting than was justified in an attempt to make an arrest." The actual sentence was manslaughter. He served less than a year before President Grover Cleveland pardoned him.

In 1897, Bee Mellon started work for a local telephone company as a laborer. He also met and married Louise Lawson. The following year they had a son William O. Mellon. Their first home was in Township 19, Creek Nation, Indian Territory, where another son George

was born in 1901. In 1909, Louise died from an undisclosed illness. Bee Mellon packed up his two sons and moved to Santa Ana in Southern California, where he married Lena Kastorff. Around 1915, the Mellon family moved to Strathmore in Tulare County and farmed oranges. In 1923, the family moved to Galt, where they built a home on McFarland Street.

Despite his late age (69), the businesspeople of Galt hired Bee Mellon as the downtown night watchman. Night watchmen patrolled the streets from the time businesses closed until sunrise and were expected to stop all suspicious characters. They also kept an eye out for fires. Local constables Frank Sutton, James Dimmick, and James Gann supervised Mellon in his nightwatchman duties. After several years, rheumatism forced him into retirement.

Marshall B. Mellon died in 1940 and is buried in the Galt Cemetery. Some of the pallbearers included Angus "Red" Quenell, Albert Steiner, and Galt Herald publisher Fred Wing. His obituary stated that the community lost one of its most beloved citizens and was a friend to all. Those who knew him said he would talk about his deputy marshal days recall people and place names with uncanny accuracy.

I would like to have met Bee Mellon. There are a million questions I would ask.

Historian



Judge Issac Parker



Mellon Grave Marker

# The Story of the Kenefick Home

Born in 1831, Jeremiah Kenefick was a pioneer farmer who settled in the Liberty Township in 1861. His ranch included 375 acres of grain land. On November 1, 1886, Mr. Kenefick married Rosa Dorsey, a native of Ireland, and they had five children: Annie, born on August 8, 1868, and later married Charles Conley; John Thomas, born December 24, 1865, and later married, Isabel Ellen Need; Edmund Hugh, who later married Sarah Ellen McEnerney; Rosa born in 1872 and died in 1900; and Ida Mary, born May 9, 1875, and died in 1939.

The Kenefick house was built for John T. Kenefick in 1911, on the farm purchased by his father, Jeremiah, in 1861. This house

replaced the old farmhouse. When the Central California Traction Railroad Company was looking for land on which to lay track, Mr. Kenefick gave them the land on the property's east side. Kenefick Station was established there with a siding to allow train cars to load and unload. Supplies to build the Kenefick home came around the Horn by ship, and up to Kenefick's ranch by train. Kenefick Station proved to be a significant stop for the farmers in the area who shipped cream and grapes to Sacramento. A granddaughter of Jeremiah Kenefick recalled when the grapes were shipped, the railroad provided a boxcar on the siding. It had ice in it to keep the grapes fresh. The railroad company gave the Kenefick

family permission to take some ice if they needed it, so the children would climb up on the car and get ice to make ice cream.

The home builder was Joe Vance, and E. B. Lachlan did the woodwork and staircases to the upstairs. It was a two-story wood-frame home with four bedrooms, a sewing room, a storeroom, and a bathroom upstairs. The southeast bedroom had curved glass windows and was larger than the rest. The downstairs had a living room with curved glass windows and a fireplace, a dining room with a fireplace, a library with a built-in bookcase and a fireplace, a kitchen, and a maid's bedroom.

A circular porch with massive support pillars surrounded the house from the library entrance on the south to the front door on the east. A screened back porch and a basement area completed the house.

A member of the Kenefick family resided in the family home, located on the corner of Liberty and Kenefick roads, until the death of Jeremiah's grandson, John E. Kenefick, in 1993. The house then sat vacant for several years, becoming the victim of the elements. It was hoped that it would be restored and preserved, but in the early 2000s, the home reached its end when on a Thanksgiving Day, it was engulfed in flames and entirely burned. Only a fireplace chimney remained standing as a salute to the lovely Victorian Kenefick home.



John and Isabel Kenefick





Kenefick House



Harvesting equipment on the Kenefick Ranch





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