

# Honorable Henry E. McCune Was A Dixon State Legislator

Foremost among the citizens of Solano County was Senator McCune, who was a splendid example of one who had risen to the heights of achievement because of sterling qualities of character. His well-earned success was attained through industry and perseverance. He came to California in the 1850's and encountered all the obstacles of early pioneer life. The vast number of acres owned by him, and high regard in which he was held, the large influence he was able to wield in the community, show in what way these obstacles were overcome. His early life was spent in Pike County, Mo., where he was born June 10, 1825, his parents being John and Rebecca (Ewalt) McCune, of Scotch and German ancestry. The father was a native of Pennsylvania and the mother of Virginia; they were married in Kentucky, but soon moved farther west and settled in Pike Co., Mo., where the father died in 1853. He served in the War of 1812, under Col. Dick Johnson, and the grandfather, William McCune, was in the Revolutionary War, and, being taken a prisoner by the Indians, was kept in captivity for three years.

In Pike County, Mo., Henry Ewalt McCune received his education. At the outbreak of the Mexican war he enlisted and served gallantly. He was wounded in the battle of Vera Cruz and, after eighteen months of service, was honorably discharged at the close of the war.

Resuming private life once more, Mr. McCune engaged in stock-raising, and in 1854 in partnership with M. R. K. Biggs, he undertook the tedious journey across the plains to California with 300 head of cattle. They settled in the northern part of Solano County, and Mr. McCune owned the quarter-section of government land which he pre-empted at that time.

In marked contrast to his present beautiful dwelling is the house in which he began life in California. His neighbors envied his little hut, 16x16 feet in size, with the boards running up and down, and a lean-to shed 12 feet square. The portion of the county where they located was termed the "desert" at that time, showing how little the people in general knew about the fertility of the soil and the productiveness of that particular section. The land was quite barren of trees and among the most notable improvements put in by Mr. McCune were the trees which he planted on his property. Some attained large proportions and beauty, one in particular, which probably the largest gum tree in California. In 1868 he planted a grove of

gum, walnut and elm trees which proved the term "desert" to be a misnomer when applied to Solano County.

The nearest postoffice was Vacatille. Mr. McCune fenced in his land and began to raise grain. Later he built in residence, but this was destroyed by fire in 1880. As he was prosperous in all his business ventures he invested his money in real estate and began to purchase land in other counties, thus acquiring a number of large ranches. He was one of the largest land owners of the county, owning twelve hundred acres in one body, devoted to grain raising; twenty-five hundred acres, part of which was in the foothills, and utilized both as a grain and a stock farm; seventeen hundred acres, known as the Big ranch, devoted to grain; the McMillan ranch, of 320 acres, also a grain farm; and in addition he was associated with other capitalists in the ownership of large tracts of land throughout the state. Not only did he conduct an extensive grain-raising business with great profit, but he also maintained an excellent record as a stockman and cattle raiser, breeding both thoroughbred Hereford and Durham cattle on his ranches. His cattle were numbered by the thousand at one time. Together with J. S. Garnett, he brought 1500 of cattle to Solano County. He generally kept several thousand head of sheep and also raised hogs extensively. With these different pursuits to take up most of his time and attention, Mr. McCune found it possible to engage in the raising of fine fruits with considerable profit.

Mr. McCune was married in Ralls County, Mo., Feb. 1, 1849, to Miss Barbara S. Rice, a native of Garrard County, Ky., and was well fitted to share with him all the hardships of the pioneer's life. She lived to enjoy his successes as well as his trials and fulfilled most loyally and faithfully the duties of wife and mother, rearing a large family of children. The following were the children and grandchildren: Mary M., now deceased, was the wife of J. A. Hills and mother of three children, Irene, Edna and J. Silver; Ruth A., the wife of P. R. Garnett, had three children, Inez, Reba and Hugh; Rebecca E. was the wife of H. C. Silver and the mother of two children, Ruth and Rose; Jessie S., the wife of C. A. Rice, had one child, Sadie; Sarah E., deceased, was the wife of Dr. M. Gardner, who later married A. Lindley; Joseph H., deceased, first married Elizabeth Baker, by whom he had two children, Barbara and Willie, and by his second wife, Sallie Baker, he also had two children, Josie and Ermyl. The mother of these children died at Dixon February 2, 1907. His home in Dixon was and is a fine place, well kept

and highly improved. He was one of the organizers and director of the Bank of Dixon.

Politically, Senator McCune was a Democrat, but was elected joint senator of Solano and Yolo counties in 1873 on the People's ticket, serving four years, and was chairman of the committee on agriculture. He was of great service to the public in furthering the cause of education, having expended a great deal of time as well as money in perfecting plans for the educational advancement of the community. For thirty years, or from its organization, he was a trustee of California College at Vacaville, later at Oakland, for more than twenty years of that time being president of the board. He was one of the organizers and president of the board of trustees of Dixon Academy, until it was turned over to the high school district.

Senator McCune was active not only in secular, but in religious affairs as well. He served as a deacon of the Baptist Church for over fifty years and also took active part in Sunday school work. His financial support to the church was generous. He was largely instrumental in building the Baptist Church at Silveyville in the early '60s, there having been no church building prior to that time, services having been held in the schoolhouse at Vacaville in 1856 and later in the Vaca-