

# ABOUT THE HOUSE



## From the Foundation President

The McHenry Mansion, a historic gem, has seen a remarkable transformation over the decades. The journey of this architectural marvel began in 1976 when Julio and Aileen Gallo purchased the then-dilapidated apartment building for \$150,000. Little did they know that their vision and generosity would breathe new life into what would become a treasured landmark. In a gesture of great civic pride, the Gallos sold the McHenry Mansion to the City of Modesto for a symbolic \$1.00, with the important stipulation that it be restored to its original state and be available to the Community.

The purpose of this retrospective is to highlight the incredible progress that has been made thanks to the invaluable contributions made by you as a member of the McHenry Mansion Foundation that was established in 1983 in partnership with the City of Modesto that began this restoration journey.

The McHenry Mansion has been the focus of several recent projects aimed at preserving and enhancing this historic landmark. Recently, we undertook the painting and repair of the fence and gates around the Mansion. This important project helped restore the elegance and security of the property, ensuring



*Christmas Tea preparations*

that the Mansion continues to present a well-maintained face to visitors and passersby.

In addition to fence and gates, the Visitors Center/Gift Store also received a fresh coat of paint. This update not only improved the aesthetics of the building but also enhanced the visitor experience, providing a welcoming and vibrant space for guests to learn about the Mansion's history and purchase memorabilia.

We are also pleased to announce that we received significant donations from the Holiday estate, amounting to over \$300,000, and an additional \$10,000 from the Farquhar estate. These generous contributions have enabled us to build a new barn to house our historic buggy and store essential records and supplies for fundraising events organized by the Foundation and the Docent Society. The remaining funds have been wisely invested in a high-

performing fund to ensure long-term financial stability for future projects.

Looking ahead, we have several exciting projects in the pipeline. One is updating and upgrading the caterer's kitchen. This will improve the functionality of the space, allowing us to better support events and gatherings at the Mansion. Another project is the remodeling of the orange grove on the Mansion grounds. This endeavor aims to revitalize the grove, preserving historical significance while creating a beautiful and productive area for guests to enjoy.

Additionally, we plan to resilver the pieces in the dining room. This delicate process will restore the original luster and beauty of the Mansion's silverware, enhancing the historical authenticity of these pieces.

This newsletter is just a small token of our appreciation for your continued support. Your contributions make it possible for us to preserve and enhance the McHenry Mansion, ensuring it remains a cherished landmark for generations to come. We are deeply grateful for your involvement and look forward to sharing more updates on our progress in the future.

Thank you for being an integral part of our mission to keep the McHenry Mansion a vibrant and treasured part of our community.

Carole Dovichi  
McHenry Mansion Foundation President

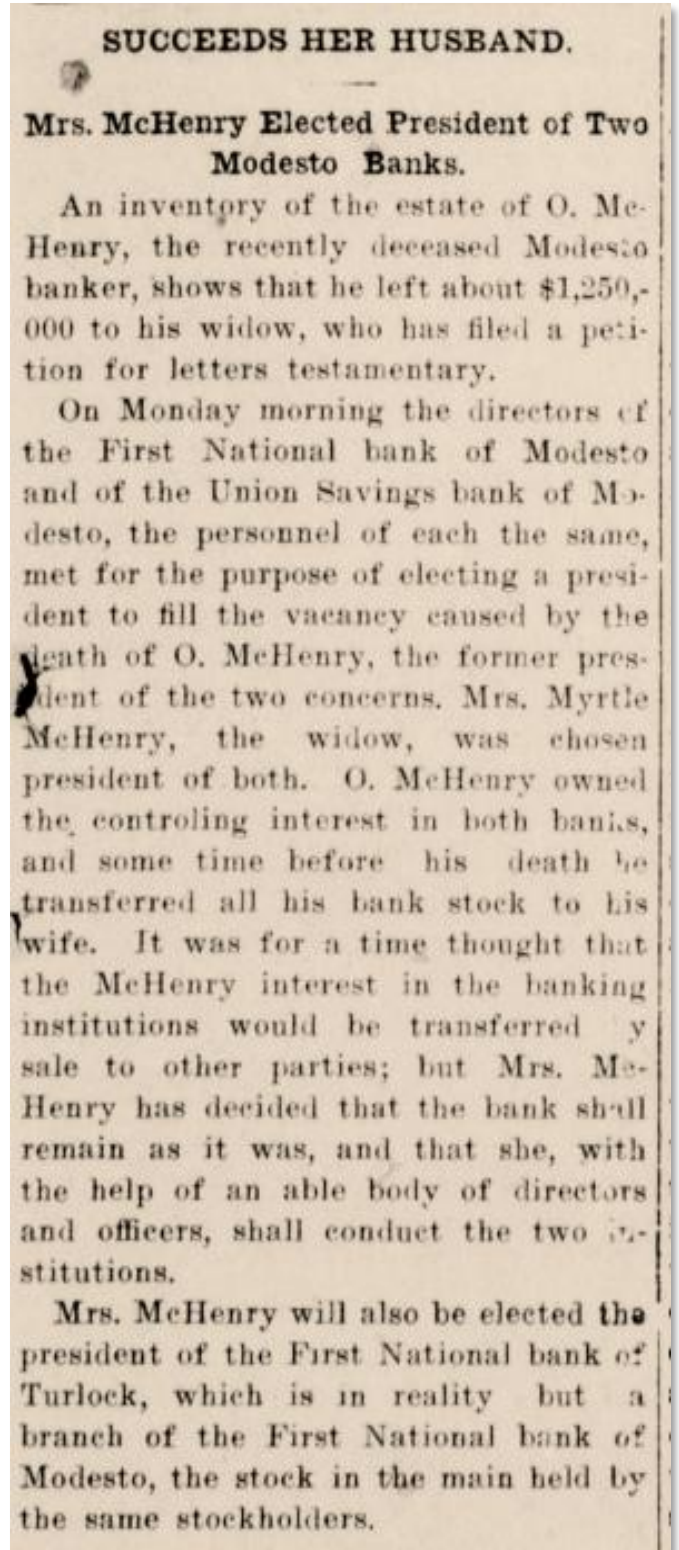
### THE NUMBERS ARE IN

- Christmas Tea attendees: 188**
- Foundation Christmas Party revelers: 140**
- Tours by Candlelight visitors: 984**
- Vintage Valentine Card Party participants: 31**
- Valentines Day Weddings at the Mansion:  
37 couples**

*Photos on page 4 by B. Rajewich & K. Beck*

## March 1, 1906: Hanford Journal

The following article was published in the Hanford Journal. A newspaper that distance away reporting on this event shows how far South the McHenry's influence went.



# Mansion Orange Grove Gets a Remodel

By Steve Hampton

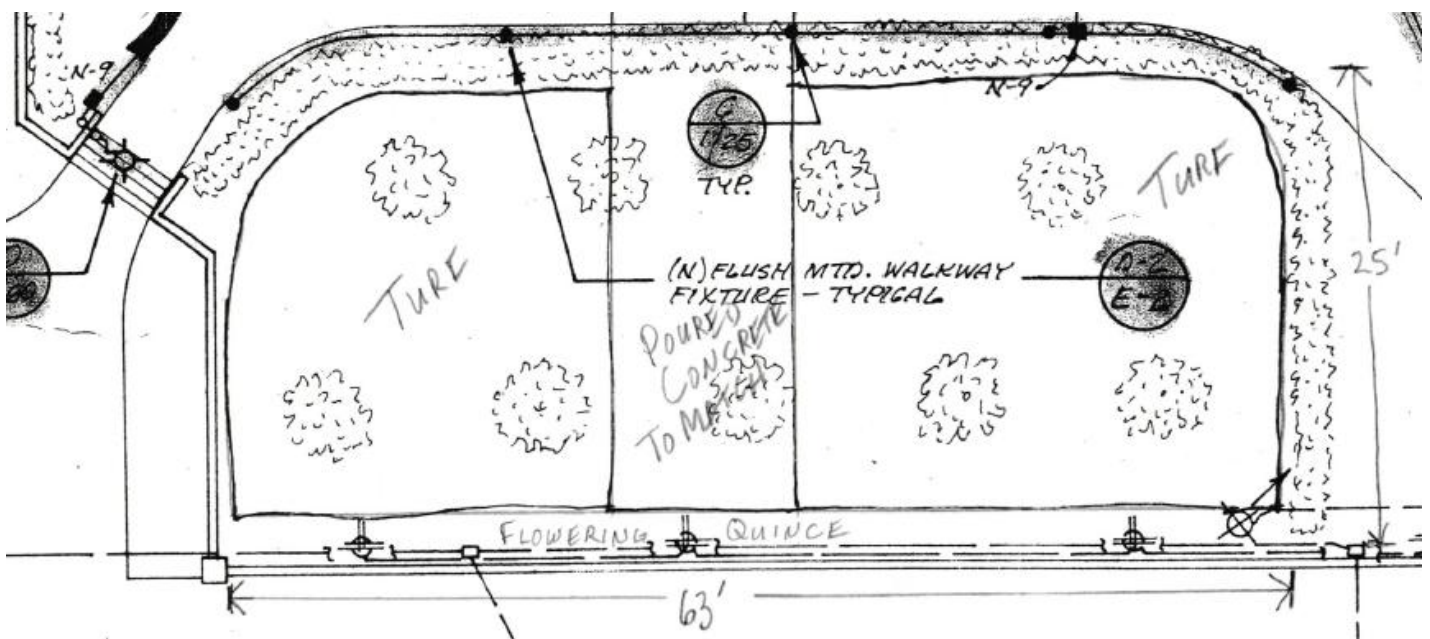
The McHenry's were known to have an orange grove on the North side of the mansion. As people migrated to the Central Valley, they learned our temperate winters were conducive to growing citrus. Stories of the orange grove persisted into the apartment era of the property, when residents were said to have received a bag of oranges as a Christmas gift. During the restoration a small orange grove was planted on the 15<sup>th</sup> street side to recognize the original grove.

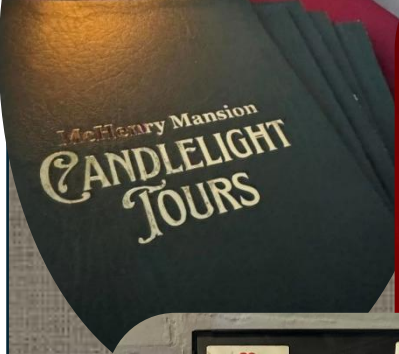


Sadly, these oranges have not grown into the healthy trees that this environment can produce, mostly due to the competition of nearby elm, oak, and magnolias. This 1500 square foot area has long been unusable due to lack of access through the hedge and the sometimes-muddy conditions inside.

The foundation has partnered with the Parks and Recreation team to re-imagine this area into a usable space. The foundation board voted during the November meeting to fund this \$27k remodel. The project includes opening a pass-through in the hedge, a concrete walkway bisecting the area, and artificial turf on either side. Flowering quince will be planted inside the fence to slightly screen the garden from prying eyes during events.

Once a formal memorandum of understanding is approved by the foundation board and City Council, construction can begin. The project is expected to commence this spring.





**Oramil and Myrtie McHenry held a St. Patrick's Day party** *at the McHenry Mansion on March 17, 1905. It was described as follows in the Stanislaus Weekly News dated March 24, 1905. Fortunately, the McHenry's had a photographer come in so, it is visually documented as well.*

## **Unique Affair at McHenry Home** **"The Fancy Dress Party Was an Unusually Brilliant Function"**

"The St. Patrick's Day dance on Friday evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. O. McHenry in this city will stand out as the most unique, gorgeous and delightful affair in the annuals of social events in Modesto for many a day as the function was one of unusual splendor and charm.

Several weeks ago, invitations were issued for a fancy-dress party on the evening of the seventeenth and since that time the favored young ladies and gentlemen have been preparing for the event and the result as shown last evening showed that their preparation left nothing to be desired in the matter of fancy dress, as all of them appeared at their best in their many-colored robes, and the ensemble made a gorgeous show as has never before been witnessed in Modesto.

In the neighborhood of forty guests in costume were present, and about thirty others were invited to enjoy the spectacle. Shortly after nine o'clock all were present and the grand march led by J.M. Walthall and Miss Alice Atwood, started an evening of rare pleasure.

The McHenry house must have been designed for just such functions as that within its walls last evening. The rooms are spacious and admit of the most charming decorations, which last night were exceedingly appropriate, conforming in idea with the day which the affair was designed to celebrate.

The carpets of the large rooms and halls were covered with canvas. In the double doorway hung an immense green bell surrounding an electric light. All of the lights were covered with green crepe paper making them cast a soft glow over the beautifully decorated rooms. Strands of large paper shamrocks were festooned from the chandeliers to the sides of the room, and flags with the harp of Ireland, bearing the legend, "Erin Go Bragh" completed the decorations of the dancing rooms.

In the hall Cook & Goeffart's orchestra discoursed most pleasing dance music, leaving nothing to be desired in that particular. Green dance programs, also bearing the harp of Erin were distributed and of the fourteen dances and extras thereon, three were devoted to the beautiful figures of the German, the snake, the scarf and the driving figures. The scarfs and ribbons used in the cotillion, also conformed to the color scheme of the evening. Favors were bestowed broadcast, and this new feature at Modesto parties was greatly enjoyed not only by the dancers themselves but by the spectators.

Soon the music had the merry throng gliding over the canvas in the mazes of the dance. Between dances a punch bowl on the enclosed porch furnished delightful refreshment.

Before the entire program had been danced, the guests, who had been invited to enjoy the sight, repaired to the dining room where they partook of most delightful and substantial refreshment.

The last dance of the evening was a ladies' favor, the young ladies presenting their dancing partner with a tiny clay pipe attached to a green ribbon.

About one o'clock the costumers were invited to the dining room and the beautiful decorations there elicited a general expression of pleasure. Streamers of green hung from the chandelier to the corners of the center table, and green place cards told the guests where to sit. Small silken shamrocks were at each place, and the general appearance of the room was of unusual beauty and taste.

The following menu was served and ample justice was done to it by the hungry dancers: Oysters on the half shell, Lobster salad, Turkey, chicken, jelly, olives, salted almonds, Neapolitan ice cream, cakes and confection.

The hour at the table passed rapidly with the delicious viands, songs and a few remarks by J.M. Walthall, expressing the sentiments of the entire company in stating that all present were really fortunate in having such royal entertainers as the McHenry's as friends.

It was almost two o'clock before the guests arose from the table and as they took their departure the many and sincere remarks of appreciation combined with the good nights, were received by Mr. and Mrs. McHenry.

Lack of space forbids a description of the many beautiful costumes as seen at the affair, but an idea may be received from the name, and the statement that the costumes were gorgeous and of great variety all together making a scene of beauty long to be remembered. The selection and the variety of the costumes reflect much credit upon the wearers.

Those present and the characters represented were: Misses Lettie Conneau, Spanish senorita; Vivian Englehart of Mills Seminary, dawn; Jessie Scoon, popcorn girl; Jessie Jacobsen, Grecian girl;

Alice Atwood, maid; Miss Cowery of San Francisco, modern belle; Hattie Logan, Columbia; Lena Conneau, fire queen; Betty Ullman, Japanese girl; Bertha Toombs, college girl with cap and gown; Maude Wildes colonial girl; Florence Boggs, 16<sup>th</sup> century girl; Therese Grollman, queen of night; Katherine Hewel, butterfly maid; Edith Kenney, gypsy fortune teller; Blanch Chapel, poppy girl and Mrs. O. McHenry, Indian maiden. Mesrs. M.F. Reynolds, Mexican vaquero; David Tulloch, Gloomy Gus; W.E. Austin, French hussar; L.B. Carpenter, French cavalier; Claude Shackelford, Chinese mandarin; John Leshar, Don Juan; Irvin Broughton, French Zouare; K.B. Smith, continental soldier; Ernie Conneau, cow puncher; Ed Briggs, Roman charioteer; Robert McHenry, ballet girl; Albert McHenry, Louis XII Cavalier; John Dunn, English swell; H.E. Davis, Gloomy Gus the second; Hannibal Blewett, George Washington; J.M. Walthall, English butler; Hugo Jacobsen, Turkish soldier; Frank Cressey, Charles II courtier; O. McHenry, Indian Chief, and Ward Schafer, the Red and Black Mascot.

### Photograph of the March 17, 1905, St Patrick's Day Party



## An Examination of the St Patrick's Day Party Photograph

By Wayne A. Mathes

This photograph shows the costumed guests assembled in the McHenry Mansion Library. Oramil McHenry, as an Indian Chief, is seated to the far right. Myrtie, as an Indian maiden, is the first person seated on the floor. Some of the other guests are easy to pick out such as Betty Ullman as the Japanese girl. Differentiating between a Louis XII Cavalier and a Charles II courtier presents more of a challenge.

Besides the costumes and the decorations, this photograph provides an opportunity to examine its interior decoration after the Mansion was remodeled in 1903. The central chandelier is entirely electric. As you may recall, it was during the 1903 remodel that the entire Mansion received electricity. The chandelier is very much in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Chains hold up a circular metal ring from which six lanternlike fixtures are suspended. The metal portions could easily have had a hammered metal finish. Also, shown in the photograph are two wall sconces on either side of the bay. Stylistically, they match the central chandelier. It is not known whether there were additional sconces in the room.

The wallpaper is in the latest fashion. The frieze consists of large circles of stylized foliage. The paper on the wall looks like a solid-colored burlap or canvas-like material that was quite popular at that time. It is known that this type of material was used in the Mansion since samples of this material were found in the dining room hidden by the apartment house remodel in 1923.

The window treatment also shows the latest trends. Gone are any over-draperies or valances. Instead, lace curtains are suspended from large brass rods with the tops flipped over to create the hint of a valance. This is the treatment that we have used in the rooms restored to Oramil's period on the second floor.

Oramil and Myrtie did not replace all of the furnishings in the Mansion. The overmantel mirror to the far right in the photograph is the same mirror that is now above the mantel in the Front Parlor. As you may recall, this mirror was purchased by Matilda McHenry in San Francisco. (In the process of having that mirror regilded, the glass mirror portion was separated from its frame. On part of the mirror hidden underneath the frame was a label indicating that it came from a shop on Front Street in the City.) On the mantel is a French Boulle clock. When Merl McHenry visited the Mansion at the beginning of the restoration, he mentioned that his half-sister, Lois, had the clock. Seeing my eyes light up and knowing that I was thinking about contacting her to see if we could get it back, he very firmly said that I was not to contact her. I didn't. Now all of these people have passed away. Has the clock descended in her family? I contacted some of Lois's descendants. They had no recollection of the clock.

The one picture in the photograph appears to be a print. The white band suggests a mat and the frame is probably gilt gesso with an inner band of dark velvet. This is also very typical of this time period. The only other piece of furniture in the room that can be seen appears to be a large bookcase in the Renaissance Revival style. Because of its style, this would have been a piece left over from Matilda's time. As for the floor, we really can't see it, but the article mentions that the carpets were covered with canvas. All the better for dancing!



at the

**McHenry Mansion, 906 15th St., Modesto**

**JOIN US Saturday, March 15, 2025**

**SOCIAL HOUR: 5 PM DINNER: 6 PM - Traditional Irish Fare**

**\$50 per person. Reservations required.**

**Call Janie at 209.522.1739**

**BE SURE TO ATTEND THIS YEAR'S EVENT!**



 **Come see what's**  
**NEW**  
**at the**  
**McHenry Mansion**  
**GIFT STORE**  
**OPEN 12 to 4 PM**  
**Friday, Sunday,**  
**Monday & Tuesday**





# Significant McHenry Dates

## January

- 1: 1884, 1885, 1886: Open House hosted by Robert and Matilda McHenry  
1887: New daughter-in-law Louise became part of the hosting party  
1903: Oramil and Myrtie hosted a party with “hearts” as the theme.
- 2: 1881: First Presbyterian Church dedicated.
- 3: 1994: Death of Merl McHenry
- 4: 1930: Death of Louise *Bilicke* McHenry Babcock
- 13: 1888: Re-election of Robert McHenry at Director and President of the First National Bank
- 15: 1896: Death of Russell McHenry, infant son of Oramil McHenry  
1904: New First National Bank building opened for business
- 28: 1910: Birth of Lois Ann Langdon Marr, daughter of William Langdon and Myrtie *Conneau* McHenry Langdon. She married Ned Marr.

## February

- 14: 1887: Robrt McHenry buys lots 23-26. Barn will be constructed on lot 26
- 21: 1906: Death of Oramil McHenry
- 24: 1893: Monument placed on McHenry family grave in Acacia Cemetery
- 25: 1854: Robert McHenry and Oramil Brewster sign petition in opposition to the creation of a new county. Stanislaus County was created anyway
- 28: 1896: Death of Matilda McHenry

## March

- 3: 1886: Marriage of Louise Bilicke and Oramil McHenry at the Ross House hotel  
1893: 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary party held at Bald Eagle Ranch for Louise and Oramil McHenry
- 7: 2008: Death of Robert Wesley McHenry, son of Robert McHenry, the grandson and Katherine Jones, the second wife.
- 17: 1905: Myrtie and Oramil throw a St. Patrick’s Day party at the McHenry Mansion
- 20: 1941: Death of Albert Hewitt McHenry, son of Louise and Oramil McHenry. He drowned at the Modesto Reservoir, was cremated, and buried in the same plot as his mother at Acacia Cemetery
- 23: 1888: Birth of Marie Rogers, the first wife of Robert Albert McHenry, the grandson of Robert McHenry.
- 27: 1904: 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Presbyterian Church
- 28: 1901: Divorce of Oramil McHenry and Louise *Bilicke* McHenry. It was announced the next day.

Compiled by Wayne A. Mathes