

## **Chauncey L. McFarland**

### **RCBA President 1927**

As part of this magazine's goal to provide our readers with individual biographies about all of the past presidents of the Riverside County Bar Association, this article features one of the earlier past presidents.

Chauncey Leavenworth McFarland, who served as the RCBA president back in 1928, was born in Galesburg, IL on September 22, 1870 to John McFarland and Mary Leavenworth McFarland. This author could not find any information about when he moved to Riverside nor where he attended law school. In an article from the *Los Angeles Herald* dated June 4, 1905, however, it was announced that his marriage to Jean Henderson, age 23 and originally from New York, had taken place at "the bride's parent's (Robert and Jennet Henderson) beautiful home on Hawarden Drive." Thus, he was clearly living in Riverside by this date.

It is also apparent from various newspaper articles circa 1905 that, by the date of his marriage, he was also the mayor of Riverside. Interestingly, however, his title as "mayor" was not the typical one. This is because Riverside was not incorporated until September 25, 1883 and, until the city ultimately adopted its charter, the city was run by a board of trustees. The president of the board was unofficially referred to as the "mayor" and McFarland served as the board's president. Technically, Riverside did not have an official "mayor" until 1909 when Samuel Cary Evans, Jr., the son of a prominent Riverside family (think of Lake Evans in Fairmont Park and the Evans Sports Complex), was elected as mayor.

There is evidence that McFarland was also an intelligent student as a youngster. Various newspaper articles describe him as achieving the honor roll on several occasions while "at Arlington school".

McFarland was evidently very lucky to have eventually become the mayor because, in a later column dated August 11, 1916 from the *Riverside Daily Press* entitled "In Earlier Days", it was noted that McFarland "almost drown in Laguna Beach 28 years ago". Unfortunately, no other details are included in the column about this event.

Besides his duties as mayor, he also participated in numerous other political activities. He served as president of the Riverside County Republican Central

Committee. In an article dated May 4, 1906 from the *Riverside Daily Enterprise*, it was noted that, in his capacity as mayor, he had traveled to Berkeley to provide relief funds from Riverside to that city. This was presumably related to the devastating San Francisco earthquake which occurred on April 18, 1906.

His reputation was such that he was appointed to a committee to evaluate whether Riverside should prosecute Howard Thomas Hays on the charge of embezzling funds from the Orange Growers Bank. According to an article in the *Riverside Enterprise* dated June 10, 1905, Hays had previously been acquitted of this charge in Federal court in Los Angeles. McFarland's committee ultimately opined that no further action should be pursued in Riverside court against Hays since the evidence against him was "flimsy".

McFarland was subsequently on a committee to help solve what was referred to in the press as the "orange situation". According to the November 14, 1914 edition of the *Riverside Daily Press*, this committee was formed to devise plans for the distribution of 100,000-150,000 boxes of oranges to various commission houses. There had been a bumper crop that year.

McFarland's name is also associated with another criminal matter in Riverside. Per the *Riverside Enterprise* edition of May 19, 1918, W. W. Phelps was sentenced to 7 ½ years in Federal prison for embezzling \$16,500 from the National Bank of Riverside. Phelps was the former president of the bank and, evidently, a very popular citizen. The newspaper reported that McFarland, along with many other prominent citizens, had attended the sentencing hearing to request that the court show leniency toward the defendant.

According to records from the State Bar of California, McFarland was admitted to the bar in October of 1897. He was assigned bar number 9,119. Subsequent newspaper articles describe him as an authority on water law. He served as counsel for the Riverside County Water District. Other articles describe his legal work in domestic and criminal defense matters. He also represented the Riverside Cement Co. in a labor dispute which it has with its employees.

His name also crosses paths with Frank Augustus Miller—the legendary founder of Riverside's Mission Inn. In an article in the *Riverside Enterprise* dated May 2, 1905, there is mention that a celebration was held in Riverside to greet the new Salt Lake Overland train which was arriving in the city. It was heralded that it would

now take only 33 hours to travel from Riverside to Salt Lake City. Miller secured the services of the band from the Sherman Indian Institute to play for the attendees. Oranges were handed out to the passengers on the train. McFarland was described as one of the members of the Chamber of Commerce who greeted the train.

McFarland was also present with Miller when, according to the *Riverside Enterprise* dated April 8, 1916, the city's prominent Japanese citizens gathered for a luncheon at the Mission Inn. As part of the festivities, Miller presented to Ujiro Oyama, the Japanese consul in Los Angeles, a peace flag which contained the emblem of the Riverside Peace Society.

Like Frank Miller, McFarland was also an entrepreneur. In an article dated December 4, 1907 in the *Riverside Enterprise*, it was noted that he was one of the directors of the Riverside Development Co. and that the company had purchased 1,000 acres of the "old Patton Ranch" in west Riverside. The company planned to grow oranges and lemons on the property and develop much of the land for subsequent sale.

Speaking of development, McFarland's name again made the news on September 10, 1908 when the *Riverside Enterprise* reported that he had taken out a building permit for the construction of a "handsome two-story home" on West 11<sup>th</sup> Street at a cost of \$3,500. The home was further described as containing eight rooms and being "one of the most modern in the city."

In later years, it was noted that he lived in the Woods Streets area of Riverside at 3621 Castle Reagh Place.

In a December 19, 1912 edition of the *Riverside Enterprise*, it was reported that McFarland's mother Mary Leavenworth McFarland, age 65, had passed away. He subsequently followed her in death many years later when he died on July 19, 1949 in Los Angeles County. He is buried in Riverside's Olivewood Cemetery

*Written by Bruce E. Todd*