

GEORGE BEAR MCCLELLAN
1862-1934

Researched and compiled by Faye Bell (SLC) 2013

(Most of the data came from U.S. Census and the publication "Prominent Men of Wyoming," FHL of SLC

George B McClellan was born in October of 1862 in Delhousie, Ontario, Canada to John and Ellen McClellan. His parents had emigrated from Scotland in 1820 and had arrived at Quebec. He was married 21 Mar 1888 to Mary Nuce Foley, daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Foley. In the 1891 census of Ontario Canada, there were two small males, Wilfred and Thomas (ages 2 and 1, respectively) in the McClellan home. As per the 1900 U.S. census the couple were living at Red Bank, Big Horn County, WY. There were no other persons in the household in 1900, but in the 1920 census Fanny E. Washburn and James H Tully were listed (both single persons). In a 10-year period they had taken into their home, Fanny Washburn (Iowa) and Catherine MacBean (Scotland). Those two 'foster daughters' married in turn Henry Tully and Bill Wood, both cowboying at the time for George Bear.

He began his American/Wyoming career as a hunter-guide with a Crow Indian companion. As time went by, he met and guided the men of affluence and posture in their local communities, and George B felt the need to settle down. Ranching was a natural solution to his needs and that of his wife Mary. He purchased the land that had previously been owned and occupied by William A Richards, governor of Wyoming 1893-94. From 1907-1934, the "Bear" served in the State Legislature of Wyoming and was running for the Senate again when he passed away in 1934.

OTHER COMMENTARY: The prowess of the Bear 'hunter extraordinaire' preceded his in the legislature. The boast of his tale is that he managed to kill four bear in one grizzly saga. Good stories on the well-known legislator were published. All in all, George McClellan got a lot of mileage out of his remarkable skills as a hunter. (Vanguards of the Valley, by Faye V Bell 1987.

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Last Rites for McClellan Held

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Services were held for George B. McClellan on Sunday afternoon, at the Methodist Church under the direction of the Cloud Peak Lodge with Grand Master Alton Denton reading the services with his assistant officers.

A quartet consisting of Mrs. C. H. Harkins, A. G. Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Ferry accompanied by Mrs. R. C. Shultz sang "In the Garden" and "In the Hour of Prayer." Mrs. Donald Harkins sang "The Prayer Perfect."

The following tribute written by an old friend was read by Alton Denton:

The late George B. McClellan of Washakie County leaves behind him perhaps one of the most colorful lives of any man, in the State of Wyoming, a multitude of friends extended throughout the entire state and a career that is so full of hardship and pleasure, adversity and good fortune that he will linger in the memory of the people in the Big Horn Basin.

As an adventurous youth of seventeen, he came into the territory of Dakota, where he spent his first year in the west, hunting Buffalo around old Fort Laramie and into the Big Horn mountains, where he, with a Crow Indian partner trapped beaver for one winter, and finally engaged in the cattle business at Red Bank, Wyoming with the late Governor W. A. Richards and Dr. Harris of Chicago.

Known generally throught Wyoming as "The Bear" he typified this unique name in his most individual and realistic manner by telling bear stories and rehearsing his experience hunting them.

McClellan had served as State Senator and State Representative from the Big Horn Basin intermittently for the last 35 years, always manifesting a vigorous, fighting attitude in defense of the stockmen and the farmer.

His powerful physic, his dynamic personality, combined with an irrestable determination to further his principles, exemplified a most dominating yet lovable individuality long to be remembered.

His demise tho not unexpected, already cause a pull at the heart strings, because of his long and continued residence, reflecting constant and sympathetic interest in current affairs.

State Senator, "Bear" George McClellan Dies Here Following Second Paralysis Stroke Sunday

Hon. George B. McClellan, State Senator since 1930, passed away at a local hospital this afternoon, soon after three o'clock, having reached the age of 72 today. He was born at Simcoe, Ontario, Canada, Oct. 18, 1862. He was one of five boys and has 3 sisters, Mrs. Tillie Wiltrout of Los Angeles, being the only one now living. Oscar McClellan, who passed away at Worland some years ago was a brother.

Mr. McClellan suffered a stroke of paralysis at his home on the Red Bank ranch on Sunday Oct. 14, when he fell as he stooped over in the yard. A doctor was sent for as soon as possible and Mr. McClellan was brought over to the hospital on Monday, where everything possible was done for him but to no avail.

George McClellan or "The Bear" as he was known all over the state and in many other states was again a candidate for election on the Republican Ticket and up to the last conscious moment his thoughts were of going to Cheyenne and of his election.

As a small boy George McClellan came to Kansas with his parents in 1868 when that part of

the country was still a vast open country and millions of buffalo roamed the plains. As soon as he was old enough to ride he became a cowboy and for several years followed the trail, he made several trips up the old Chisholm trails, completing his last trip to Fort Laramie in 1877, for the next fifteen years, he worked as a cow puncher for large outfits in Wyoming and hunted large game for the markets and guided big hunting outfits through the mountains & Yellowstone; on occasions these parties consisted of noblemen of Europe and some of the most distinguished men of America.

Mr. McClellan came to the Big Horn in 1883, when he hunted game for meat for the soldiers at Fort Custer, Montana. George McClellan killed the first bear in the Big Horn that was sold for hide and meat, the bear was packed to Sheridan, Wyoming. His record for killing bear was as high as seven in one day and thirty six in one season in the Big Horn mountains, thus came the title of "The Bear." Mr. McClellan was famous for his bear stories over the state and had written numerous bear stories from time to time.



Hon. George B. McClellan