

Robert H. McClelland

(February 8, 1844 – March 12, 1922)

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Shortly after the War Between the States erupted in 1861, Robert Henry McClelland, age twenty-seven, enlisted in an Indiana infantry company. He became seriously ill and was discharged, but soon recovered, re-enlisted and served the duration. For years after his discharge, he exhibited a restlessness, moving from farm to town to city, teaching, working the railroad, and reading law. On April 6, 1874, he was admitted to the Minnesota



bar.¹ In October 1876, he began practicing in the village of Jordan, Scott County, and later served one term as county attorney, 1881-1882. He

remained there until August 1886, when he and his family moved to Glencoe, the seat of McLeod County. The next year, his business card appeared in the local newspaper, which he helped publish.²

In 1888, he placed the following sketch in a collection of biographies of prominent residents of Meeker and McLeod Counties. His pride in his family and his military service is evident.

ROBERT HENRY McCLELLAND, a leading and prominent attorney of the village of Glencoe, was born in Coshocton county, Ohio, February 8, 1844, and

¹ On this date, he was admitted by the district court. It was not until January 5, 1909, however, that he was admitted before the Supreme Court on a certificate from the lower court. 1 *Roll of Attorneys: Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, 1858-1970* 95 (State Law Library, 2011).

² The Glencoe Enterprise, July 7, 1887, at 5. It was a small bar: the cards of only two other lawyers appeared in this issue.

is the son of Samuel and Jane (Henry) McClelland. Both of his parents were natives of Pennsylvania, who had removed to Ohio after their marriage and settled in Holmes county. In 1851 the family moved to Grant county, Md., and in 1856 to Shakopee, Scott county, this State. They had come to Minnesota on account of their son John S., who had nearly perished by freezing in March of that year, as did his companion, Dr. Frederick N. Ripley, while crossing from Cedar City to Forest City in Meeker county. Mr. McClelland, more fortunate than his friend, whose dead body lay in the snow near where Litchfield now stands until spring, still was so badly frozen that it was necessary to amputate both of his legs below the knees. His father, hearing of the disaster, came to Shakopee, where his son was under the surgeon's care. The elder Mr. McClelland came to Glencoe June 11, 1856, and took up a claim on section 2, Glencoe township, and was one of the earliest settlers of this counts He remained here until 1861, when he sold out and returned to Indiana, where he died in 1863. His wife, in 1871, returned to this State, and died here in 1874 at the residence of her son, John S. in Becker county, Minn. The subject of this memoir, Robert H. stayed with his parents until the spring of 1860, when he returned to the old home in Wells county, Md., where he engaged in farming.

On the breaking out of the late war he enlisted in the Twenty-second Indiana Infantry, Company A, but being taken sick shortly after was discharged. However, being one of those "whose faith and truth on war's red touchstone rang true metal," September 12, 1861, he again enlisted, this time in Company A, Thirty-fourth Indiana Infantry. This regiment was attached to the Thirteenth Corps, and served with Grant in his campaign through Mississippi, at the battles of Clinton, Raymond, Jackson, Charnpion Hill,

Black River Bridge and the siege of Vicksburg. After the surrender of the latter place the regiment returned to Jackson, where they remained some five weeks. At Champion Hill the brigade to which it was attached suffered a loss of nearly half of those present in action. Joining the Nineteenth Corps, the regiment, or most of them, veteranized, among them Mr. McClelland. After the usual furlough he joined the regiment at New Orleans, where they were on detached duty for over a year. From there they went to Brazos Santiago, Tex., to watch the course of the Rio Grande River, and from there to Brownsville, opposite Matamoras, at which place they were mustered out, February 3, 1866.

Mr. McClelland returned to Indiana on receiving his discharge, but, shortly after went to the Iron City Commercial college, at Pittsburgh, and remained one term. Teaching school the next winter and running on the railroad was his next occupation, but in the summer of 1867 he went to Michigan, where he stayed until September, and then came to this county and joined his brother, John, with whom he remained, teaching school that winter in the Koniska district. March 13, 1868, he married Miss Isabella Johns, of this county, and the next winter taught school in the same district, but from there went to Minneapolis, where he stayed two years. He taught in Watertown five years, and while there held the office of justice of the peace and read law. He was admitted to the bar April 6, 1874, and the following spring opened an office at Howard Lake. During the grasshopper troubles of 1876 he went to Detroit, but in October opened an office at Jordan, Scott county, where he stayed until August 19, 1886. In 1881 he was elected county attorney, and while there he ran for the Legislature but was defeated, the county being democratic.

Our subject is a member of the Masonic fraternity, of the A.O.U.W., and of the G.A.R. He removed to Glencoe, McLeod county, Minn., August 19, 1886, where he opened a law office, and where he has ever since been engaged in the practice of his profession. While in resident of the village of Jordan he originated the journal known as the *Jordan Independent*, which he edited and published for over a year.³

He practiced law for many years with future judge Cyril Tifft and at other times by himself. He was active in Republican politics, served as mayor in the late 1890s, and helped publish the weekly *Glencoe Enterprise*. He died on March 12, 1922, at age seventy-eight. The *Enterprise* carried his obituary on its front page:

**R. H. McCLELLAND
CROSSES DIVIDE**

—————
**WAS PROMINENT RESIDENT
AND LAWYER OF GLENCOE
FOR 25 YEARS**
—————

Hon. R. H. McClelland, a former prominent citizen of Glencoe, died from pneumonia at the home of his niece, Mrs. L. F. Chalfant, at Ossian, Ind., on Sunday, March 12. He attained the age of 78 years.

Robert Henry McClelland was a resident of the city of Glencoe for 25 years. He was engaged in the practice of law and was regarded as one of the most brilliant jurists in this part of the state until he retired in 1910.

He was born Coshocton county, Ohio, February 8, 1844. On the breaking out of the civil war, Mr.

³ *Illustrated Album of Biography of Meeker and McLeod Counties, Minnesota 599-600 (1888).*

McClelland enlisted in the 22nd Indiana Infantry, being discharged shortly thereafter on account of sickness. September 12, 1861, he again enlisted this time in Co. A, 34th Indiana Infantry. Being mustered out of the service on February 3, 1866, he entered the Iron City Commercial school at Pittsburg, Pa., and later engaged in teaching in Michigan, and then came to this county and taught at Koniskla.

March 12, 1868, he married Isabella Johns, who preceded him to the grave. Mr. McClelland taught school at Waterloo, Carver County, and at the same time read law.

He was admitted to the bar April 6, 1874, and located at Howard Lake. Later he went to Jordan, where he served Scott county as county attorney, removing to Glencoe in 1886.

He founded the *Jordan Independent*, and was first associated with Judge Cyril M. Tiftt, and later with F. A. Tudhorne in the publishing of the *Glencoe Enterprise*.

Mr. McClelland was twice married, his second wife nee Georgia A. McKinney, survives him.

Mr. McClelland served the public in various capacities wherever he lived, and was for several years mayor of Glencoe.

He was a member of the Masonic fraternity, A.O.U.W. and the G.A.R. During his active years he was a power in politics and a jurist of exceptional ability.

The many friends of the deceased in this city and county, and among the bar in this judicial district, will regret to learn of his passing.⁴

⁴ The Glencoe Enterprise, March 23, 1922, at 1 (photograph omitted).

On May 18, 1922, the district bar association held a memorial service for recently deceased members at a special session of the district court over which Judge Tifft presided. Several speakers recalled McClelland.

Mr. Collins: I knew Robert H. McClelland when he practiced law in Shakopee. I became acquainted with him and it was at the same time my first campaign in politics in Scott County was made; that campaign was made in company with R. H. McClelland. He was running for County Attorney, and I was running for Clerk of the Court, when I was twenty one years old. We got together and campaigned together in Scott County.

Mr. Hinds. I knew him well. We often met in campaigns, both at the table in the court room and in the arena of politics, and he was a fine gentleman.

To which Judge Tifft added cryptically:

With Mr. McClelland, I was associated, as you all know, in the practice of law, as I recall it for some thirteen years.⁵ ■

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⁵ “Memorial Services for Charles G. Bowdish (1870-1922)” 8-9 (MLHP, 2010).