

## **The Hanleys and Hanley Farm** **By Dennis Powers**

Michael Hanley was raised in Ohio, and the young 25-year-old was lured to San Francisco by the Gold Rush of 1849. After trying his hand at mining, he and a partner decided to start a more lucrative business: selling beef to the miners. Michael then met Martha Burnett, who had arrived in Douglas County by the Oregon Trail. The two married and decided on Jackson County to settle; they purchased a 636-acre donation land claim near Jacksonville.

They had nine children and six survived into adulthood. As they raised their family, Michael Hanley continued to buy land and pursue various businesses, including creating a regional agricultural industry on what is now Hanley Road between Jacksonville and Central Point.

Despite Michael Hanley becoming an invalid and pronounced legally insane in his later years, his family prospered in numerous ways. Son Bill left school when he was 10-years old to become a cattleman like his father. By age 17, he had left home for wide-open Eastern Oregon, where he created a farming and cattle empire just like his dad. Bill Hanley not only owned different ranches, including the 16,000 acre "OO Ranch", he ran for Oregon Governor and the U.S. Senate. Although not successful, "Big Bill" was instrumental in the rail and highway development of Eastern Oregon.

The Yukon Gold Rush lured son Ed to Alaska, where he also decided that selling mining supplies (and running a toll road) made more sense. Ed later moved to Seattle and built a cannery operation, but also continued ranching on property across the road from the Hanley Farm. Daughter Ella also traveled away; she spent time in Alaska with brother Ed, and then married mining engineer Harry Bush in 1903. The couple lived in Chile, where her husband ran a large copper mine for 16 years, and they returned to the Valley. Michael II inherited his father's Butte Creek Ranch property at age 18; in addition to running it, he also was involved with his brothers in other ranching endeavors. Over time, fortunes were made and lost.

Alice Hanley spent her life in the family home. Caring for her parents until their deaths (Martha in 1887 and her father two years later at age 65), she inherited 100 acres of the original farm and ran it for the rest of her life. Alice helped to establish the Oregon Home Extension Service (OSU's agricultural extension) and served on its board from 1919 until her death. In 1922 she ran for state representative but lost.

What was left of the original homestead was deeded to the Southern Oregon Historical Society in 1982 by Mary Hanley, the last descendant of Michael Hanley to live in the house and on the land. The 37-acre farm is open to the public and preserves the history of the early settlers and their contributions to this region. Owing to Alice Hanley's long-ago purchase of auctioned pioneer furnishings, the rooms appear as when the home was built around 1875. The historical society has numerous public activities and presentations at the Hanley Farm--and is a must visit.

Source: Southern Oregon Historical Society: "The Hanley Farm and the Family," at [Hanley Farm History](#).