



Henry Bayard McCoy

1866-1923

May Dorland McCoy

1870-1955

Founders of the
Col. & Mrs. Henry Bayard McCoy Memorial
in the
The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

In 1957, the will of May Dorland McCoy established the Colonel and Mrs. Henry Bayard McCoy Memorial, a philanthropic fund to be administered by the New York Community Trust.

"Committed to the Ideals of Their Native Land"

Henry B. McCoy and his wife May, an adventure-some and innovative couple whose influence was felt in politics and culture, lived most of their lives on the opposite side of the world from the country of their birth. Yet both were deeply committed to the ideals and to the service of their native land.

Henry Bayard McCoy was born in Carlinville, Illinois, on August 5, 1866, the son of Asa and Lydia Chamberlin McCoy. Henry grew up in Illinois and for a time pursued studies at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington. However, from early youth he was attracted to military, rather than academic, life. His first duty was as a non-commissioned officer in the Illinois National Guard.

At the age of 23, McCoy moved to Pueblo, Colorado, where he joined the Colorado National Guard. A natural leader, he rose rapidly through the ranks. His first commission was as an adjutant. Two years later he was made a major, and the next year, while still only 26, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Among his arduous assignments was a period during which the entire Colorado National Guard was called to handle a civil insurrection in Leadville in 1896.

During his days in Pueblo, the dark-haired, blue-eyed young military man, who in civilian life also served as clerk of the district court, met and married

pretty May Ludlow Dorland.

May, too, had moved west to Colorado. She had been born in Cincinnati, Ohio, the daughter of a young couple who had run away and married against the wishes of their families. Unhappily, while May was still quite young, her mother died in childbirth. A family by the name of Dorland took in the motherless child and later adopted her. When she was two or three years old, the Dorlands left Cincinnati for Pueblo, where May grew to young womanhood and met the dashing National Guardsman.

It was the outbreak of the Spanish-American War that brought a dramatic change to the lives of the young McCoys. Less than two weeks after war was declared, Henry McCoy signed up for active duty in a special service regiment of Colorado Volunteers. It was May 1, 1898 — the day on which the United States Navy, under the command of Admiral George Dewey, sailed into Manila harbor and defeated the Spanish fleet in the Philippines. Soon afterward, Colonel McCoy led the troops of the 1st Colorado Infantry in an attack on Manila and raised the first American flag to fly in the Philippine Islands. The armistice was signed and peace returned to the beautiful South Pacific islands on August 13, 1898, and as a result of his outstanding leadership Henry McCoy was promoted to full colonel. The 32-year-old officer liked what he saw in the Islands so much that he sent for his wife to join him.

Courageously undertaking the long ocean voyage half way around the world, May McCoy became the first wife of a U. S. Army officer to reach the Philippines. She found the Islands as enchanting as her husband did. Later, when the Colonel's regiment was mustered out, the McCoys decided to stay on.

Although the Spanish had dominated the Philippines for three hundred years, the arrival of the Americans at the end of the war was not popular with the natives. Gradually, however, the American government overcame the opposition of such Philippine

leaders as Aguinaldo, introduced many improvements, and helped the islands to prosper.

Henry and May McCoy prospered, too. With an older brother, James, Henry developed a gold mine on Masbate, one of the small islands of the group. In 1901 he was appointed Deputy Collector of Customs. In 1909 the assignment was upgraded to Collector of Customs, a position he held until 1913, when, with a change of administrations in Washington, many U. S. government officials were replaced by Filipinos. However, under Governor Francis B. Harrison, who was appointed in that year, the United States took on an increasingly larger role in the development of business ventures. One of these ventures was the establishment of the Manila Railroad. When the Harding administration took office in 1921, General Leonard Wood was appointed governor of the Islands, and he in turn made Henry McCoy manager of the railroad.

It was a good life for the McCoys. They built a beautiful home in Pasay, on the south side of Manila Bay. It was a wide-open, tropical-style house with teak

floors and a magnificent view of the Bay and the city of Manila to the north. An accomplished pianist, May McCoy enjoyed having a grand piano in her home, and she was a founder of the Manila Symphony. She even managed to persuade a number of well-known musicians to come from other parts of the world and give concerts there.

May McCoy continued to be an adventurous traveler. During the 1920s, she and her husband invited one of Henry's nephews to visit them in their tropical home. The young man, who planned to be a painter, stayed for three months, and then accompanied his aunt on a westward journey through the Orient, visiting places where few travelers had ventured before them. Their destination was Paris, where Mrs. McCoy financed a year of study for the talented boy. When her nephew was settled, she returned alone to the Philippines.

May devoted herself to culture and travel, but Henry's interest was in politics. He served as a member of the Republican National Committee from 1904 to 1912. In this capacity he returned to the United

Col. H. B. McCoy (right) leads the 1st Colorado Infantry in a parade in San Francisco, August, 1899, upon the return of the regiment from Manila.



States to attend the conventions, where he wielded considerable power as chairman of the Credentials Committee.

Polo was another of his preoccupations. He was one of the founders of the Manila Polo Club in 1909, and served as president of the club from 1915 until his death, after which his widow was elected an honorary member. It was another first for May McCoy: She was the first woman to be granted this honor.

Contrary to expectations, May McCoy did not leave her home and return to the United States after Henry's stroke and sudden death on September 30, 1923, at the age of 57. They had built a wonderful and rewarding life together in the Islands, and May, who had never been afraid to do things alone, chose to stay on.

Then on December 8, 1941, the Japanese attacked the Philippines without warning. By the beginning of the new year, Manila was occupied. The Japanese army set up headquarters in the McCoy home. By now in her seventies, Mrs. McCoy was interned in a concentration camp with other survivors of the invasion. Like the other prisoners, she was treated cruelly. Malnutrition resulted in failure of her eyesight, and she became almost totally blind.

But in October of 1944, General Douglas MacArthur made good his promise and returned with the Sixth Army. Several months later, Manila was retaken, and by the summer of 1945 MacArthur could announce that all the Philippines had been liberated. The arrival of U. S. troops was just in the nick of time for Mrs. McCoy, whose execution at the hands of her captors had been scheduled for only one day after the arrival of the American soldiers.

May McCoy's home had been burned to the ground, but the indomitable lady got together a few sheets of tin and put up a crude hut among the ashes. It was here that one of her nephews, an army chaplain on

his way to Japan with his troops, found her living. Though she was so intimidated by her experience at the hands of the Japanese that she would talk to him only through the locked door of her hut, she announced her determination to stay on. She took as an encouraging sign the fact that her beloved piano had been saved by her Swiss neighbors.

By 1950, at the age of eighty, May McCoy decided that the time had come to return permanently to the United States. The piano was shipped back, too. She divided her time between Boston and New York, where she lived at a hotel or stayed with her husband's sister, Clara McCoy Dixon. In spite of her blindness, she traveled fearlessly about the city. A niece recalls that she had complete, almost childlike faith in everyone around her. Rather than taking taxis, which she could afford and which would have been much easier, she chose instead to make her way by subway, trusting that someone would offer help when she needed it. Nor did blindness hinder her from making a long trip to Scandinavia.

Her one concession to her handicap was her willingness to hire people to read to her, so that she could study a number of academic courses that interested her. Whether in Boston or New York, she continued indomitably to pursue the study of history.

May McCoy was in her eighty-fourth year when, on January 27, 1955, her full life came to an end in Boston.

The McCoy's had been childless, but May McCoy had spent much of her life as a very special woman in what was very much a man's world. It had always pleased her to be able to help young men to get ahead. In her Will she expressed her wish to be of assistance

to young men who shared her interest in the subject of history. The Colonel and Mrs. Henry Bayard McCoy Memorial Fund was established to foster "particularly among boys, interest in and respect for the traditional ideals of American life and the constitutional republican form of government under which the United States has endured." Mrs. McCoy wanted to reward boys whose interests paralleled hers and her husband's. "There shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, or creed," instructed the woman who had lived most of her life surrounded by people whose race, color, and creed were different from her own.

*Photos courtesy of Library,
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