

Annie Berry, Well Known To El Paso "Oldtimers", Dies

Annie Berry, negress, known to all El Paso's oldtimers as Annie Rooney, is dead.

For 40 years, "Old Annie" had been a familiar figure in El Paso. And for 25 years she had wielded an uncanny influence among negro voters of the city.

Oldtime police officers Saturday expressed real regret when they heard that Annie died at midnight Friday in her home, 411 South Kansas street.

Annie did the cooking for city jail prisoners during mayor Tom Lea's administration and, according to officers, she "wielded a wicked frying-pan". Seldom was a complaint registered among the prisoners about Annie's cooking. She prepared the meals at her home, and twice every day she brought the food to the police station.

Wielded Power.

Annie's power among the negroes of the city extended back to the "old days", as veteran policemen refer to it. Back in the '90s Annie operated a saloon in the lower part of town. She was possessed with two rare qualities, generosity and flight.

Whenever a negro attempted to "put anything over" on Annie, she usually got the best of the argument. She could whip any two negroes in town, it was said, and there were none who disputed her claims.

Annie's word was her bond whenever she had occasion to go to police headquarters to intercede for other negroes who had fallen into the clutches of the law.

Word Was Bond.

"I have been on duty dozens of times when Annie came down to help someone out. Whenever she agreed to have the culprit at court, we held her word as good as a banker's," Capt. S. C. Houston said Saturday.

"She never failed to have her client at court at the appointed hour, no matter what the circumstances may have been. Her word was her bond. And usually, when Annie told a negro to vote a certain way, that meant just another vote for Annie's side. The negroes, almost without exception, obeyed her wishes."

Although Annie made scores of visits to the police station to help other negroes, she seldom was in any trouble of her own. She attended to her own business, except when she would occasionally thrash some negro for "trifling" with the law.

"Old Annie was a real asset to the department of the police station. She helped us as much as any outsider in the city."

Annie's body was being held by Peak Hagedorn.