

A. P. Coles, El Paso Builder, Taken By Death

He Saw City Grow
From Dusty Village
To Metropolis

A. P. Coles, pioneer real estate dealer, who saw El Paso grow from a dusty, adobe village into a Southwestern business center, died today at his home at 800 Magoffin avenue. He was 80.

Mr. Coles had been in ill health for more than a year.

During the 53 years he lived in El Paso, Mr. Coles witnessed many major developments and changes in the city.

He came here from Lebanon, Tenn. After attending Vanderbilt University, he taught school at Bell-



A. P. Coles

wood, Tenn. He was then advised by physicians to go west for his health.

He arrived in El Paso April 5, 1888. He and Miss Nellye Bell of Montgomery, Ala., were married here Jan. 18, 1893, in the original frame Methodist Church building which stood on the present site of the El Paso National Bank building.

Mr. Coles was one of the first organizers and directors of the Chamber of Commerce. He served

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as vice president of the organization.

He was instrumental in the building of the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad after assisting Eddy Brothers in obtaining the franchise and right-of-way into El Paso. He was one of the first presidents of the El Paso Real Estate Board.

Mr. Coles was one of the organizers of the Federal Reserve Bank in El Paso and was one of the bank's first directors. He formerly was president of the American National Bank here and the El Paso Cotton Mills Co., now the Lone Star Cotton Mills.

Worked for Butte Dam

He was a member of the original joint Texas-and-New Mexico committee which worked with the United States and Mexico Boundary Commission to plan construction of Elephant Butte Dam.

H. B. Holt of Las Cruces, who worked with Mr. Coles on the reservoir project, is believed to be the only surviving member of the joint committee.

Mr. Coles often recalled that when he first arrived in El Paso there were two houses on North Mesa avenue, the same number on North Oregon street and one or two on North Stanton street.

"I cut brush at the north end of town, from St. Clements Church (except the church was not there then) east," he recalled.

Mr. Coles first entered the real estate business in El Paso through the firm of Newman, Russell and Coles. He later purchased the interest of Newman and Russell.

In 1897, the firm was known as A. P. Coles and Brothers, and was composed of A. P. Coles, J. Frank Coles and Otis C. Coles. At first, Mr. Coles had a real estate office in the Curry building at Oregon and Texas streets. He later moved to the Sheldon block at Oregon and Mills street, then to the Bronson block on the site of the present First National Bank building.

He later moved his office to the firm's present site at 204 North Oregon street.

Mr. Coles, as one of El Paso's early builders, constructed some of the first brick buildings in the city.

Long Hours And Hard Work

He often recalled that when he started in the real estate business here he worked on a commission basis and "was lucky when I made \$75 a month."

"But I liked the work," he recalled. "I put in long hours and worked hard. I tried to be the first at the office in the morning and the last to leave at night."

Mr. Coles was among the first El Paso builders who worked for removal of the railroad tracks. He had said that "if El Pasoans will unite on the program, something could and will be done about those tracks."

He often recalled: "I have watched El Paso develop into a real metropolis, but there is still greater development in store if citizens will get behind and support the city as they should. That means everybody imbued with a real community spirit."

His Survivors

Mr. Coles was a member of the Methodist Church, the Masonic Lodge and Knights of Pythias.

He was one of the organizers of the Toltec Club in El Paso.

Funeral arrangements are pending at Peak-Hagedorn Mortuary.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Nellye B. Coles; two brothers, J. Frank and Otis C. of El Paso; five nephews, William Fewel of Caracas, Venezuela, A. P. Coles Jr., a lieutenant at Ft. Bliss, O. C. Coles Jr., of Duncan Field, Tex., J. Walter Coles of Los Angeles and A. P. Coles III, of El Paso; two nieces, Mrs. Philip Wilcox of Denver, Colo., and Mrs. Roger P. Brown of El Paso.