

Gen. Anson Mills, Founder of El Paso, Dies at His Home in Washington at Age of 90

THE FLAG on the Mills building, lowered to half-mast yesterday, told El Paso of the passing of its founder, Gen. Anson Mills, 90 years of age, veteran of the Civil war, inventor and historian, who died in his home in Washington, D. C., at 3:30 o'clock yesterday morning.

A telegram was received by Horace R. Stevens, agent for General Mills here, announcing the death of the pioneer who surveyed and named the city of El Paso. Physicians pronounced the death due to advanced age, the message stated.

General Mills was born near Thorton, Indiana, August 21, 1834. He received his education in Charlottesville academy in New York state and in West Point.

Reached Here in 1858.

He left West Point without graduating, and came to Texas. "Coming to Texas," in those days, was quite an undertaking for a youth, but he arrived on foot in McKinney, Collin county, April, 1857, after having made most of the trip via the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, thence up the Red river to Shreveport, and then to McKinney on foot.

He taught school for a brief time while in McKinney, and while there met Sam Houston.

The journey on to El Paso was an exciting adventure, which included a holdup by Indians and dangers from wild animals. He arrived here May 8, 1858.

El Paso at that time was simply a ranch of 150 acres owned by J. A. "Uncle Billy" Smith. It had been named "Franklin," after Franklin Coontz, who was postmaster. Coontz was required by the postoffice department to give some name to his office.

"The town on the opposite side of the river was known as Paso del Norte, a city of 12,000 people controlled by well-to-do and educated Spaniards," General Mills wrote in his memoirs, called "My Story."

Surveys for El Paso.

General Mills in 1858 and 1859 made the first survey of El Paso, and plotted the first townsite. He then suggested the name which the city bears.

When the Civil war broke out General Mills enlisted and served throughout the war. He acquired a fondness for the service and remained in the army for years afterward, receiving rapid promotion.

He has written in his memoirs, at the age of 83: "I have served 54 years, 9 months and four days in the United States army, longer, I believe, than any other officer." This included his service as a cadet, in the regular army, and as a boundary commissioner.

His Survivors.

General Mills married Miss Nannie Cassell of Zanesville, Ohio, whom he met while in the army service, October, 1868. She died in Washington, May 14, 1917. His only son, Anson, died suddenly in the same city, February 25, 1894. He is survived by his only other child, Mrs. Constance Mills Overton of Piedmont, California.

General Mills was at various times during the long years of his army service stationed near El Paso and he never lost interest in the city. After

he went to Washington to live he was accustomed to pay a visit to this city every few years.

The Mills building, his only property here, and Mills street, were named for this pioneer.

General Mills was inventor of the Mills cartridge belt, which he devised for use in the United States army. This he accomplished while in army service.

"I was associated with Mr. Mills 24 years," said Mr. Stevens. "He was kind and trusting. I feel all broken up at his passing."

General Mills, from time to time while he was away from here, sent gifts of various kinds to El Paso, showing his interest in the welfare of the city. An appeal to him for the support of various enterprises always brought about moral and financial aid, his friends here say.

Quotations From Book.

Residents of the southwest, and particularly people of El Paso who are interested in the history of this city and country, have found delight in General Mills' story. It portrays the frontier days true to life. In it he tells of his hardships in fighting his way to El Paso and of his other experiences in the southwest.

"The journey to El Paso," he wrote, "was through a most desolate country, with Indians on all sides, some hostile and some friendly. Coyotes and other wild animals abounded, but most interesting were numerous buffalo east of the Pecos.

"I have seen the plains black with them, and, when moving, which they did at a kind of lope or gallop, I have felt the earth tremble under the impress of their heavy shoulders.

"At a station near Pecos river we were robbed by Indians and delayed three days.

"When I arrived at the bluffs overlooking the valley of the Rio Grande I thought it the most pleasant site I had ever seen.

Enjoyed Life.

"Mrs. Mills and I often congratulated ourselves that we lived in this nation and generation. In no other could we have seen and enjoyed so much conducive to the belief that mankind was rapidly advancing to the greatest possible perfection.

"We have seen the nation develop from 20,000,000 to over 100,000,000; we have seen it become foremost in sciences, arts and industries. We have seen 80 per cent of hand labor transferred to machinery; we have watched railroads and steamboat transportation develop from their infancy. We watched the birth of the electric light and power; we have seen the bicycle, motorcycle, automobile, sewing machine, knitting machine, typewriter, telegraph, wireless, telephone, dirigible, balloon, airplanes, under-sea boat, washing machine, power printing press, linotype, and hundreds of other inventions develop to their present perfection."