

WILLIAM W. MILLS DIES; WAS PIONEER EL PASOAN

Former Collector of Customs and Consul to Chihuahua
Closes Notable Career at Austin on 70th Anniversary
of His Birth; Was Brother of Gen. Anson
Mills; Had Exciting Experiences in War.

WILLIAM W. MILLS, pioneer El Pasoan and brother of Gen. Anson Mills, died at his home in Austin, Tex., Monday on his 77th birthday anniversary.

Member of the Texas constitutional convention, collector of customs at El Paso during the civil war, American consul at Chihuahua, Mexico, gallant soldier under Gen. Canby at Val Verde, and the last but one of the men who were prominent in El Paso affairs preceding the civil war, W. W. Mills has an important place in the early history of Texas and of El Paso.

He was a native of Thorntown, Ind., where his brother, Gen. Anson Mills, has erected a beautiful fountain to the memory of their mother and father. He was a Quaker descent, the Quakers having settled in and around Thorntown in northern Indiana in the early days of that state. The congressman from his home district offered Mr. Mills an appointment to West Point when he was a young man. This was declined in favor of his brother, Anson Mills, who attended the military academy, but did not graduate, coming to El Paso in the early days preceding the outbreak of the war. In 1858 W. W. Mills joined his brother Anson here, coming overland to the frontier stage station. He obtained employment in the Rohman and St. Yrain general store, which was located on the site of the present 13 story concrete Anson Mills building.

Kidnaped by Confederates.
When the civil war broke out Mr. Mills and his brother were almost the only favored union sympathizers in the El Paso valley. Gen. Mills went east and through the efforts of his former classmates at West Point, obtained a commission of same rank which he would have held if he had graduated with his class at the academy. W. W. Mills remained in El Paso. Of his experiences in the exciting days preceding the outbreak of the war, Mr. Mills tells interestingly in his little volume "Forty Years in El Paso." He was kidnaped by Confederate soldiers, who invaded the country and Mills had openly sided with the union cause. He was captured in Juarez by Confederate sympathizers and confined for several weeks on the American side, expecting hourly to be killed. He was permitted to escape in order to secure the liberation of prominent Confederate sympathizers in Santa Fe, N. M., who had been arrested and held as hostages for Mr. Mills's safety.

About this time, according to W. H. Coldwell, a third brother, Emmett, who was with Mr. Mills in El Paso, was killed, with about a dozen others, by the Apaches at Mangas Colorado, an Indian settlement, 40 miles from Deming, N. M., in Cook canyon. This was a memorable Indian fight, Mr. Coldwell says, and the Americans were killed after a defence which was heroic.

Appointed Customs Collector.
Soon after he was released by the Confederate sympathizers, Mr. Mills joined the union army, under Canby, and rendered good service in the stirring campaign which followed, including the engagement at Val Verde. For his services in this campaign, Mr. Mills was offered a commission in the regular army, but declined, and was appointed collector of customs at El Paso about the end of 1862, a position which he held until 1870. About this time he was married to Miss Mary Hamilton, the daughter of Gov. A. J. Hamilton, of Texas, who had been a leader of the unionists of Texas, and was at that time head of the Republican party. Mr. Mills was a member of the constitutional convention of 1869 and took an important, conservative part in the

Texas reconstruction. He opposed Gov. E. J. Davis, postbellum governor of Texas, in his policies of reconstruction.

In 1897 president William McKinley appointed Mr. Mills United States consul to Chihuahua, where he was stationed until 1907, when his failing health forced him to resign. The last few years of his life were spent in Austin, which was the girlhood home of his wife and her illustrious father.

Writes of El Paso Experiences.
Mr. Mills wrote "Forty Years in El Paso" about 15 years ago, which told of his early experiences in El Paso, of his trip across the plains country with Mrs. Mills on their honeymoon, and of an attack by Indians en route, and many interesting events in El Paso, including the historic killings and the salt war.

Mr. Mills is survived by his wife, his brother, Gen. Anson Mills; two sisters and a brother, now living in Thorntown, Ind. When Gen. Anson Mills was in El Paso last, he returned to Washington by way of Austin to visit his brother, having told his friends in El Paso that he expected to see him for the last time.

W. W. Mills was an intimate friend of W. M. Coldwell who is familiar with his early history. Of Mr. Mills's part in the constitutional convention of Texas, Mr. Coldwell said: "He took an important and conservative part in the reconstruction of Texas. If his advice and that of men like him had been followed, there would have been no carpet baggism in Texas, and the very name Republican would not now insure the defeat of a candidate at the polls."

Coldwell Pays Tribute.
"He served as United States consul at Chihuahua with honor to himself and with great advantage to his country until 1907, when to the regret of the state department, failing health compelled him to resign. The death of Mr. Mills," said Mr. Coldwell, "leaves Joseph Magoffin as the last representative here of the men who were conspicuous in this city in the days preceding the civil war. He was in El Paso and helped to erect the incoming railroads, which have made a city of a stage stand. During the years which followed he was always a consistent and outspoken Republican, though receiving no recognition from the dispensers of Republican patronage."

Was First American Bride.
Mrs. Mills was the first American bride to come to El Paso, following her marriage to W. W. Mills. They came by stagecoach from Austin to El Paso and their home was an adobe where the present chamber of commerce building stands. It was then the best furnished in the city.