

Mrs. Phillips, Here Since 1854, Dies

Mrs. Mary M. Phillips, who came to El Paso in 1854, the year the Gadsden Purchase treaty was signed, died Saturday afternoon in her home at 208 Fewell Street. She was 97 and was believed to have lived here longer than anyone.

Rosary services will be held at 8 p. m. Sunday in Kaster and Maxon Chapel for the woman who was 4 years old when the first Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoach came to El Paso. The Very Rev. Lawrence E. Gaynor will officiate.

Funeral services will be held at 10 a. m. Monday in the Holy Family Church with Monsignor Gaynor officiating. Burial will follow in the family plot in Concordia Cemetery.

Mrs. Phillips was born in Los Angeles, but her father, Ben Dowell, moved his family to the little

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Mrs. Mary Phillips

village of Franklin City, now El Paso, when she was 6 months old.

Dowell served as the first mayor of El Paso when the town was incorporated in 1873. He also operated a store and was one of the first successful farmers in the Upper Valley.

As a child Mrs. Phillips played with children whose names are written prominently in the history of El Paso. She was confirmed by a Catholic bishop who came to the Pass of the North from distant Durango, Mexico. She played with the Hart children in the home of Simeon Hart and was well acquainted with the family of Juan Ponce de Leon, owner of the land on which downtown El Paso now stands.

As a young woman of 27 she saw the first train pull into El Paso in 1881.

Despite her advanced age her memory remained almost perfect. Last January she was interviewed for an El Paso Times feature story and readily recited names, dates

and incidents of the early days in El Paso.

Survivors include five sons, Ben D. and John N. of El Paso; Robert B. of San Diego, Calif., Austin of Peoria, Ill., and G. D. Prieto of San Francisco; and one daughter, Mrs. Harold Poppenhusen of Houston. Five grandchildren also survive.