

NOTED BOOTMAKER

# C. Rokahr, EP Pioneer, Dies At 87



CHARLES ROKAHR.

Charles Rokahr, 87, 3700 Memphis Street, who was the Southwest's first bootmaker, sang in St. Clement's Episcopal Church choir for more than 50 years, was a charter member of the old McGinty Club and rode in early bicycle races here, died Saturday in Masonic Hospital.

Seventy-seven years ago he started to learn bootmaking in Hanover, Germany, where he was born. Four years later, in 1869, he came to the United States. He settled first in Chicago, then moved to Joliet, Ill., where he remained two years, learning English. From there Mr. Rokahr went to Morris, Ill., where he was made foreman of a shoe shop.

In Morris, he married Miss Ann Topping in 1876 and their marriage ended with her death here in 1939, 63 years later. After his marriage he moved to Cheyenne, Wyo., and went into business for himself.

When he heard the railroads had completed lines in the Southwest in 1881, he sold his business in ~~the city~~ ~~where~~ where he opened a boot shop.

"Deming," he used to recall, "was a boom town in those days. I suppose it was as big then as it is now."

He visited El Paso, liked the town so well he decided to come here in 1887.

Here he perfected his trade, made not only a study of shoes but of the  
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human foot until he became such an authority the Government made him a "dollar a year" man during World War I as a shoe and foot expert with the Army.

As a result of an accident in which he suffered a broken foot arch in 1914, Mr. Rokahr invented an arch supporter that attracted the attention of Secretary of War

Patrick J. Hurley. Mr. Rokahr signed a patent waiver on his invention and gave it to the Army.

Mr. Rokahr, who learned his trade from his father, acquired his hobby, music, from his mother.

When he was not devoting his time to his business, which made him known in Europe and Africa and all the principal cities of the United States, he gave his time to music, playing the cello and singing. He played in the McGinty Club concert orchestra and its string band.

### CONTINUED IN GOOD HEALTH UNTIL PAST 85

An athlete in his youth, Mr. Rokahr continued in good health until he was well past 85 years of age. Except for a slight defect in his ears that made him hard of hearing in recent years, he was as active and alert as a man 50 years younger.

Foot health, he maintained, was the secret of good health—and he knew the human foot, he said.

He made more shoes "the old way," he used to say, than any man in America, and he was still making his custom-built shoes as recently as February, when his health began to fail.

Mr. Rokahr is survived by his son, Russell Rokahr, El Paso County probation officer; a daughter, Mrs. Amelia L. Milligan, with whom he made his home; a sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaffner, of Joliet; nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were pending with Barry Hagedorn Funeral Home.