

Funeral For 'Uncle Jimmy' Smith, El Paso Pioneer, Will Be Held Tomorrow

Death Takes One Of City's Most Colorful Characters At Age Of 80.

Funeral services for J. A. "Uncle Jimmy" Smith, 80, pioneer El Paso postmaster, newspaper publisher and business man, who died at Masonic hospital early yesterday, will be held at the Peak-Hagedorn chapel at 2 p. m. tomorrow. Burial will be in Evergreen cemetery.

Mr. Smith underwent an operation last week and was thought recovering. His condition suddenly changed late Wednesday night and he died shortly after.

With the death of "Uncle Jimmy," as he was affectionately known to the many friends whom he had made since he first came to El Paso in 1884, another chapter in the colorful history of El Paso has ended.

Saw City Made.

He knew El Paso as a "bad man's" town in the early and more ferocious days of the southwest and as the modern capital of a mining-cattle empire.

He was born at Hume, N. Y., moving with his family shortly after to Wisconsin and then to Missouri. He became a clerk at Osborn, Mo., where he came to know Fred Harvey, of eating house fame, who was then a postal clerk between Quincey and St. Joseph, Mo. In 1871 he went to Colorado where he followed several occupations, including the publishing of the Central City Register. Later he joined the railway mail service on the Kansas City-Deming run, the longest run ever in the service.

It was while working in this capacity that Uncle Jimmy first got the idea that he would like to settle in El Paso. The thing that influenced this desire was the large amount of mail that he had to set aside for this city.

Was Wild and Woolly.

When he came here to set himself up in business, he found a wild west town with saloons on every corner and many in between, street fights almost too numerous to notice, booted cowboys the order of the day, and gambling halls a matter of course.

He went into the produce business under the firm name of Smith & Thompson. The business was located on the corner of Overland and El Paso streets, on the site of the old Grecian theater.

Uncle Jimmy made his first sale to the late W. J. Fewel, selling him a barrel of apples. A second barrel was sold to Charles Davis, father of Ex-Mayor Charles Davis.

Named Postmaster.

He was appointed postmaster in 1890 and held the position until 1894, receiving the appointment again in 1907 and holding the place until 1914.

Uncle Jimmy continued in El Paso the newspaper career he had begun on the Central City Register when he purchased the old El Paso Herald in 1891, holding it until 1899 when it was taken over by H. D. Slater who had been editor for some time. During his ownership of the paper, Uncle Jimmy conducted a vigorous and successful campaign against gamblers.

The El Paso Dairy company, which Mr. Smith started with one cow, was the biggest project of his life. It grew until it numbered 1300 head of cattle among its assets. He resigned as manager Oct. 12, 1922.

Prominent Republican.

Mr. Smith was prominent in Republican circles, local, state, and national. He served as referee for his party in the matter of postal appointments in western Texas. He attended nearly all state Republican conventions held during his residence in El Paso. In 1905 he ran for mayor on the G. O. P. ticket, being defeated by Charles Davis, Sr. He polled an unusually large vote.

Irrigation projects occupied much of Uncle Jimmy's interest. He was active in the establishment of Elephant Butte dam and served for three years as president of the El Paso Water Users' association.

He was prominent in civic and fraternal activities of El Paso. He served a term as president of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce and for many years was one of the directors of that organization.

He was a booster for good roads and owned one of the first automobiles in the city.

He married his third wife, Mrs. Hattie Dunn, a former El Pasoan and at that time a resident of Dallas, March 18, 1928. He was living with her at their home, 2121 Portland street, at the time of his death.

Appointed to Office.

Mayor R. E. Thomason appointed him head of the city employment office in the same year, a position he held until he was released this year in line with the city's economic policy.

Uncle Jimmy was a member of the Elks, Masons, Kiwanis and Knights of Pythias.

He has two daughters living, Mrs. Lily Howard, principal of Lincoln Park school, and Mrs. Thomas Franklin, Los Angeles.

On Oct. 11 of last year he was one of the honored guests at the celebration of the El Paso Y. M. C. A. of its 40th anniversary of incorporation.

Mr. Smith also is survived by a niece, Mrs. W. M. Walter, Fort Bliss, whom he called his daughter. He took her into his home when she was three years old and reared her.