

Preservationist, city beautifier dead at 91

Mabel Welch, a 60-year resident of El Paso who spearheaded campaigns to beautify the city and to preserve historic buildings, died Thursday at a hospital in Redondo Beach, Calif.

The 91-year-old widow of Malcolm H. Welch was an architect and owner of a local contracting firm.

She is survived by a son, Elvin C. Welch, of Torrance, Calif.; a brother, Peter Brandenburg of DeKalb, Texas; and three sisters, Lorraine Stevens, Justene Lawrence and Gertrude Welch, all of Dallas.

A graveside service will be in El Paso Dec. 12.

Mabel Welch left mark on El Paso

Friends who admired her good will and determination and those who live in the elegant homes she built are expected to pay tribute to Mabel Welch at her funeral Saturday.

Mrs. Welch, 91, died Dec. 3 in a Redondo Beach, Calif., nursing home.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Saturday at Harding-Orr and McDaniel Chapel, 320 Montana, in El Paso. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery.

Those who did not know Mrs. Welch personally probably knew of her, her many friends and acquaintances say.

In the 60 years she lived and worked in El Paso, Mrs. Welch entered what still is considered by some to be a "man's" world of home building.

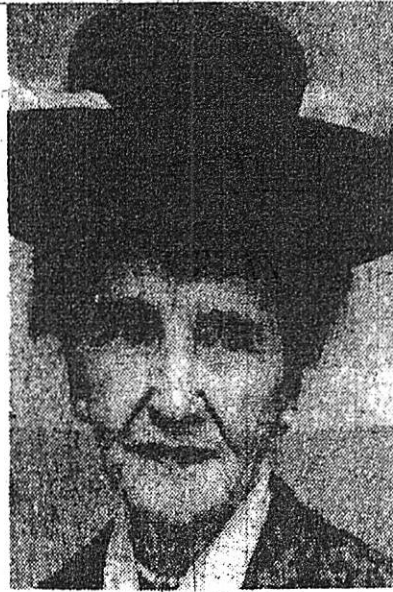
Local architect Louis Daeuble Jr. called Mrs. Welch "a great, great lady, first class in every way."

He said he knows of no woman in El Paso today who heads her own construction business.

By 1950, Mrs. Welch had built more than 1,000 homes in the El Paso area. As an architect, she designed the A.B. Poe and Arthur Gale homes, both on Rim Road. She also designed and built the Roy Hoard home at 3039 Federal St., among many others.

She said she particularly liked the Colonial style house but advocated Spanish architecture for El Paso homes.

"She did make a name for herself," said William J. Reynolds Jr., who had Mrs. Welch build his home at 3038 Federal St.



MABEL WELCH

... "First class in every way"

"She could be a mean woman at times," he said, "but you don't get to the top unless you're mean. You've got to be driven to achieve what she did."

"If you're giving her a eulogy, give her the best they have," he said.

Born in Mississippi, Mrs. Welch came to Texas as a child.

When her husband, M.H. Welch, died in 1927, she took over his home build-

ing business and studied architecture in Chicago and California.

In 1955, Mrs. Welch and several other members of an architecture committee battled city fathers on the remodeling of the old County Courthouse — now the City-County Building.

As the chairman of the group, she ultimately lost the struggle to retain what she felt was "the classic and traditional" beauty of the building's columns.

But she then directed her creative energy to lead the Beautify El Paso Association and was named to President Lyndon B. Johnson's Beautification Committee.

In 1967, she was named First Lady of El Paso by Beta Sigma Phi and was honored as Outstanding Democratic Woman in 1965.

"She was a lovely, beautiful woman," said Mrs. Jarratt Harden, whose parents hired Mrs. Welch to build their home on Rim Road.

Mrs. Harden last saw Mrs. Welch in Providence Hospital after she had had a stroke in November.

"She didn't want to pull up her roots and leave El Paso (to enter the California center)," Mrs. Harden said. "But she had no family in El Paso. Somehow, though, part of her is still here."

She is survived by her only son, Elvin C. Welch, of Torrance, Calif.; a brother, Peter Brandenburg of De Kalb, Texas; and three sisters, Lorraine Stevens, Justene Lawrence and Gertrude Day, all of Dallas.