



EL PASO, 1887—Featured among exhibits in the Pioneer Room, International Museum, is this view of El Paso while excavation for the old Sheldon Building was in progress. The open space is Pioneer Plaza, bounded (left to right) by the Schuster Building, Joseph Schultz's store building, Center Block with the tower, the Central Hotel, the Grand Central Hotel and, in the right foreground, a corner of San Jacinto Plaza. The Pioneer Room displays, are among many Museum exhibits, which record El Paso's colorful history.

—(Photo from Aultman Collection)

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OPENS PIONEER ROOM, DEVOTED SOLELY TO EARLY DAYS IN EL PASO

By Jo Freeman
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El Paso's colorful history, from the time of its earliest settlers through the stagecoach days and the coming of the railroads is depicted in the International Museum, 1205 Montana Street.

The Museum, which always has placed a special emphasis on Southwest lore recently has opened a Pioneer Room, devoted solely to El Paso's early days. Other mementos from the city's past are scattered throughout the Museum building.

An interesting story, which may be more legend than fact, is illustrated with an oil painting of W.T. (Billy) Smith, pioneer settler, who according to the picture's caption, "bought El Paso for \$5000 and sold it in 1857 for \$6500." The portrait was painted by Percy Moran, one of the five men

reported to have bought El Paso, then known as Franklin, from Smith.

Maury Kemp, pioneer El Paso lawyer, said recently he has never been able to find a basis in fact for the Smith story. He said that study of land titles, dating back to James Wiley Magoffin have never revealed that any man named Smith ever owned all of El Paso though he did own large tracts of land

PICTURES SHOWN

Pictures of pioneer citizens, photographs of the downtown district, maps, and clothes worn in the early days of El Paso are included in the Pioneer Room displays.

The memorable meeting in 1909 in El Paso of President Howard A. Taft and President Porfirio Diaz of Mexico, is recorded with many mementos in the room. They include a Feldman portrait of the two and pictures and printed records of the festivities which attended their meeting here.

A record of the 1910 Osaple parade, forerunner of the present Sun Carnival Parade is preserved with a photograph of the first-prize winner entered. The vehicle, a decorated touring car, was a frothy creation of white crepe paper in which three beautiful young women he rode in the parade.

Early-day voting practices are illustrated by another picture, undated, on which the label, written in faded ink, is: "After the primaries—paying off the Mexican voters."

A photograph of a portrait of James Wiley Magoffin, early El Paso settler and trader, hangs in a place of honor in the Pioneer Room. Magoffin moved here before 1850. A small military garrison, sent here to protect his settlement, Magoffinsville, from the Indians, became the first Fort Bliss.

MULE-CAR PICTURED

The first mule-car to run on San Antonio Street is pictured and an early-day picture of El Pasoans coaching in Cloudcroft is displayed in the room.

Downtown El Paso from 1880 to around 1910 is depicted in a number of old prints, including one of the first county courthouse in San Elizario 100 years ago the second county courthouse, established in Ysleta in 1882, and the old El Paso City-County Court House erected in 1885.

Old pictures of the McGinty Club, the old El Paso Baseball Club (taken in 1887) and the El Paso Pioneer Association of 1904 are included in the records, as well as individual portraits of many pioneer El Paso families.

The museum is seeking more information on old trails which went through El Paso. It has one display devoted to the history of the Butterfield Trail, highlighted by an exhaustive book on the subject by Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe Conkling who visited every stop along the trail route collecting information and items of interest. The Conklings, who were from New York, made their home in El Paso and donated their collection to the museum.

SHOW SHADY SIDE

Reflections from the shadier side of El Paso's life include a large scrapbook which was compiled by Tillie Howard, queen of the city's red light district. Most of the scrapbook is devoted to scene around Johannesburg, South Africa, where she lived for many years, but a few pages in the back of the book are devoted solely to local pictures.

Another book on the local scene is "El Paso Troubles In Texas," a military history of the famous salt war dated 1878. The book is

composed of communiqués to and from the War Department, including those which recommended establishment of a permanent post at Fort Bliss to include about 200 men, 50 of them cavalry.

A feminine touch is added with an old El Paso cookbook, published in 1898 by the Ladies Auxiliary to the YMCA. At the time, according to an ad in the book, the Magoffin's Homestead Addition was being laid out (lots were 190 feet in depth). Each recipe was contributed by a Pioneer El Paso woman.

Dresses trimmed with beautiful handwork and laces are displayed in the Pioneer Room on mannequins. The dresses, shawls and bonnets were also the property of pioneer citizens and have been given or loaned to the Museum.

Other items from El Pasoans which are displayed in local exhibits include chairs, chests and other furniture.

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