

Mary C. Williamson, National Bank President

By Karl Sanford Kabelac

MARY C. WILLIAMSON SERVED AS PRESIDENT of the First National Bank of Portales, New Mexico (founded in 1902, Charter #6187) for almost a year, from May 11, 1920, to March 9, 1921. She became president after the death of her husband, George M. Williamson, who had died on March 8, 1920. She relinquished the position when, in the settlement of his estate, the stock that had been owned by him was transferred to a group of Portales businessmen.

She was born Mary Cox on July 3, 1872. Her father was a prosperous rancher in Brazoria County, Texas. As a young woman she was courted by Williamson, who was several years her senior.

He was the resident manager of the JR Ranch in Crosby County, Texas, a ranch owned by his uncle by marriage. They were married on December 31, 1895, and spent the first years of their marriage at the ranch.

In 1902 they moved to Portales, a new community in east central New Mexico, about 15 miles from the Texas border. Williamson began a successful career in the cattle business. They were active in the community. He was a Mason and she was a member of the Eastern Star and the Portales Women's Club.

In July 1917, he was a leading partner in assuming the ownership of the First National Bank of Portales. The newspaper account noted his "sound business sagacity, good judgment and fair dealings with the public."

But hard times were ahead. The winter of 1918 was especially cold, and then the following summer very dry, making it costly to maintain cattle. Then the market price of cattle collapsed. Williamson himself became ill and, writing his will in late February 1920, died the next month at the age of 56.

Within a year of relinquishing the bank presidency, Mary Williamson moved to San Diego, CA. She died there on February 25, 1926, of cancer at the age of 53. She was survived by their two children.

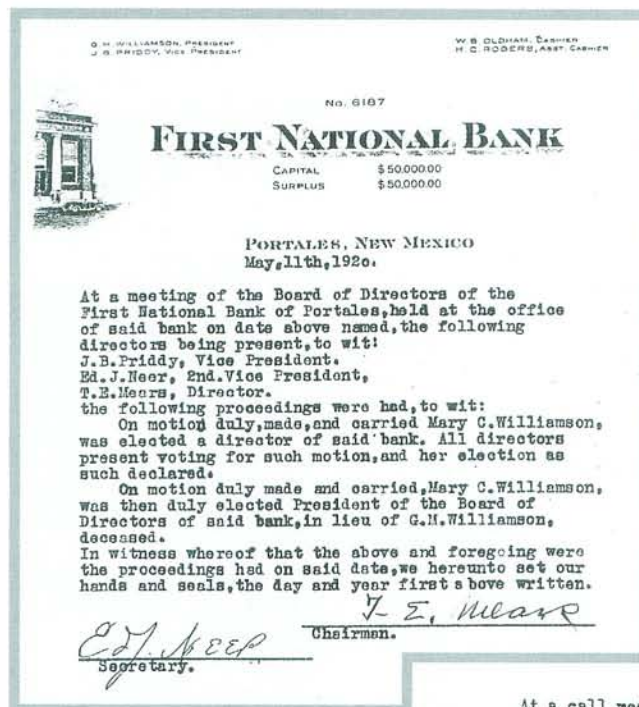
The bank itself continues to this day in Portales as a Wells Fargo Bank.

Sources and acknowledgments

The George M. Williamson and associates purchase of the FNB of Portales is found in *The Portales Valley News* for July 27, 1917; his obituary is found in the same newspaper, March 11, 1920; and the transfer of the Williamson bank holdings is in the March 10, 1921, issue. Helpful articles on the history of the bank are found in the *Portales News-Tribune*,

April 4, 1972. Williamson's career at the JR Ranch and his courtship and marriage to Mary are found in J. C. McNeill, *The McNeills' SR Ranch: 100 Years in Blanco Canyon* (1988); and summarized in the entry for the SR Ranch in the online version of *The Handbook of Texas*. Mary C. Williamson's death certificate is filed in the San Diego CA County Clerk's Office. The research skills and assistance of Janelle Foster of Portales NM are gratefully acknowledged. ❖

Minutes of the bank's Board of Directors, May 11, 1920, and March 9, 1921, recording the election of Mary C. Williamson as president and her resignation.



At a call meeting of Board of Directors of the First National Bank of Portales, New Mexico, on the 9th. day of March, 1921, the following members were present:

Mary C. Williamson, Chairman,
Wm. Reagan, Secretary,
Ed J. Neer,
J. B. Priddy,
C. O. Leach.

The following proceedings were had to-wit:

Mary C. Williamson tendered her resignation as president and director of said bank. Same was accepted.

Wm. Reagan tendered his resignation as Active-Vice President and director and same was accepted.

C. O. Leach tendered his resignation as director of said bank and same was accepted.

There being no further business before the Board the meeting adjourned.

Mary C. Williamson
Chairman.
Wm. Reagan
Secretary.