

Funeral for County Judge John Hart Held Saturday Afternoon in Cisco

John S Hart, 72, county judge of Eastland County for 16 years and a prominent citizen of this region for more than 60 years, died at 9:30 p.m. Thursday in a hospital at Temple about a month after undergoing major surgery.

Funeral services for Judge Hart were conducted at 2 p.m. Saturday at the First Baptist Church in Cisco with Dr. P.D. O'Brien of Big Spring, a long-time friend, officiating, assisted by the Rev. Jesse E. Cassle, pastor. Judge Hart was a long time member of the Cisco church.

Burial followed in the Corinth cemetery, midway between Cisco and Eastland, in a plot near the graves of his late parents, I.N. and Katy Hart. Hamner Funeral Home of Eastland was in charge of arrangements.

Judge Hart had gone to Temple with his wife last Wednesday for a checkup. Death was attributed to complications from abdominal surgery.

The veteran county official was born Nov. 28, 1890, in Bell County. He moved with his family to Eastland County as a boy eight years old. In his early manhood, he taught school for a time before entering politics. He was elected county tax collector in 1919 and served three terms. In 1926, Judge Hart was elected sheriff of Eastland County and it was during this term of office in 1927 that the famous Santa Claus bank robbery took place in Cisco. After one term, Judge Hart joined the Texas Railroad Commission's prorational forces in East Texas and spent several years in the employ of the state, working also at Midland.

In 1941, Judge Hart ran for sheriff of the county and was elected. After two terms, he was elected county judge. Last spring he won re-election over two opponents without a runoff and was to have started a new four-year term next January 1.

Judge and Mrs. Hart were married Dec. 1, 1912, and planned to observe their golden wedding anniversary this year. The family home has been a rural residence on their farm six miles northeast of Cisco on the Breckenridge Highway for many years.

Besides his wife, Judge Hart is survived by three sons, John L. Hart of Abilene, N.O. Hart of Odessa and Bill Hart of Midland; a daughter, Mrs. Wayne Brock of Olden; 12 grandchildren; three brothers, I.N. Hart, Jr. and Gus Hart of Cisco and: J.B. Hart of Midland; and four sisters, Miss Rosa Hart and Mrs. J.E. Norris of Cisco, Mrs. Joe Mathis of Eastland, and Mrs. T.A. Thompson of San, Angelo.

Pallbearers were Ed Pritchard Sr., A.M. Hearn, Frank Sparks, Harl O'Brien, Bill Wright and W. J. Herrington.



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Services Today for Judge Hart

EASTLAND — Funeral for John S. Hart, 72, Eastland County judge since 1946, will be Saturday at 2 p.m. in Cisco's First Baptist Church, of which he was a member.

Burial will be in Corinth Cemetery under the direction of Hamner Funeral Home of Eastland.

Judge Hart died at 9:30 p.m. Thursday in Scott and White Hospital in Temple, where he had gone for a checkup Wednesday after undergoing heart surgery about a month ago. His unexpected death was attributed to complications arising from the operation.

His career in public office began in 1919 with election as Eastland County tax collector. It also included three terms as Eastland County sheriff and several years as a proration officer for the oil and gas division of the Texas Railroad Commission.

He was elected sheriff after serving three terms as tax collector. During his first term as sheriff, the notorious "Santa Claus" bank robbery occurred in 1927 at Cisco.

He was elected to two terms as sheriff after serving as proration officer, first in East Texas and later in Midland.

First elected county judge in 1946, he defeated two candidates without a runoff in this year's Democratic primary.

Due to Judge Hart's illness Eastland County attorneys met and appointed Charles Freyschlag, an Eastland attorney, as temporary county judge. Commissioners of Eastland County probably will meet soon to discuss the vacancy.

A native of Bell County, Judge Hart was born Nov. 28, 1890, and moved with his parents, the late I.N. and Katy Hart, to Eastland County in 1898. He and Bess Hock were married Dec. 1, 1912, in Eastland County.

For many years Judge Hart lived on his farm six miles northeast of Cisco. It is located in the

Corinth community. Before entering public office in 1919, he was a rural school teacher.

His survivors include his wife; three sons, John of Abilene, O'Brine and Billy, both of Midland; a daughter, Mrs. Marie Brock of Olden; three brothers, Nute and Gus, both of Cisco, and Josh of Midland; four sisters, Kate Thompson of San Angelo, Mrs. Mary Norris and Miss Rose Hart of Cisco and Mrs. Alma Matthews of Eastland; 10 grandchildren. Three brothers preceded him in death.

Demise of a Public Servant

County Judge John S. Hart was buried yesterday in a cemetery in the heart of the county which he loved and served for the biggest part of his life.

An elected employee of Eastland County for almost 40 years, he had a various times been its Tax Collector, its Sheriff, and for the past 15 or so years, the county's highest elective office. A 24-hour-a-day official, Judge Hart was a favorite and swept the may primary for Democratic nomination for re-election. Eastland County voters gave him 3,071 votes to his opponent's 1,856. Practicing in the old-school manner, the door to Judge Hart's office was open to everybody.

Few loved to swap stories better than he, and few can do the type of deep reasoning and thinking "inside" while at the same time, spinning a yarn for the delight and pleasure of the listeners. Friendliness and fairness seemed to be the Judge's hallmark.

Criticized by some for his "give-away" practices, Judge Hart reasoned that it was the county's place to help its own people. With the Judge, it was "Charity begins at home."

The number of youngsters he has counseled, and perhaps scolded in a favorite uncle manner is legendary, and there are probably hundreds who can remember the Judge starting out a conference with "Now young man, I can remember when your old daddy and me used to . . ." He came from a big family of boys, and raised a good crop of his own. He knew boys backwards and forwards.

Generations have come and gone since Judge Hart was first elected to an Eastland County office in 1920, and during that time his chief pleasures were seeing the courthouse which he loved so dearly, "paid off", and the financial coffers of the county grow from near bankruptcy through depressions and drought to a sound base today.

Judge Hart was a big man in stature, and in purpose. There's a big, brown, over-sized leather chair on the second floor of the courthouse. It groaned under the weight of Judge John Hart for a long, long time. That chair is going to miss the Judge. And so will a lot of people in this county.