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James Hamilton Mills to Newspaper Hall of Fame

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FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY P. M., MAY 10

Capt. James Hamilton Mills, editor of the Montana Post in the state's territorial days, will be installed in the Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame during ceremonies at Montana State University's Dean Stone Night next Sunday.

The installation ceremonies at the annual School of Journalism banquet will be conducted by Donald R. Coe, president of the Montana State Press Association.

Capt. Mills, third editor of the Montana Post and founder of the New Northwest in Deer Lodge, was known by his contemporaries as a "king among territorial editors."

He is the sixth person to be elected to the Newspaper Hall of Fame since it was established by the Montana State Press Association in 1958.

Portraits and biographies of the journalists so honored are displayed in the School of Journalism.

Capt. Mills was born Dec. 21, 1837, in Lisbon, Ohio, and was the eighth generation of his family to live in America. He enlisted as a private in answer to President Lincoln's plea for volunteers in the Union army on April 27, 1861, and left as a brevet-lieutenant colonel with honors for "heroic conduct."

When Capt. Mills came to Montana in the spring of 1866, he tried mining on the Yellowstone River but soon left this venture and arrived in Virginia City with only 10 cents in postal currency.

An article Mills had written to an eastern journal attracted the attention of D. W. Tilton, publisher of the tri-weekly Montana Post. Capt. Mills was offered the editorship of the Post, and became the third man to fill the editor's chair of what was the first newspaper published in Montana territory.

The Post office was, in Capt. Mills' words, "simply a little space furnished with a chair and pine tables alongside the Campbell power press."

(more)

He continued as editor of the Montana Post, both in Virginia City and later in Helena where it was moved, until July of 1869, when the paper ceased publication.

Capt. Mills then founded the New Northwest in Deer Lodge and was editor and publisher there for 22 years. Through the paper, according to a contemporary, he "exerted a marked influence upon public sentiment in this state."

He married Ella M. Hammond in 1875 and their children were Mary E., Nellie G., and James E. Jr.

Mills was the first president of the Montana Press Association, and served two consecutive terms. He also served in the Territorial Legislature, as a member of the First Constitutional Convention, collector of internal revenue for Montana, Idaho and Utah, receiver of the Northern Pacific Railway, manager of the Helena Water Works Co, and first clerk and recorder of Powell County. He served in many organizations and was a director of the Montana State Historical Society.

Capt. Mills died in Deer Lodge on Sept. 5, 1904.

Others previously inducted into the Newspaper Hall of Fame are John H. Durston, editor of the Anaconda Standard; Arthur L. Stone, first dean of the School of Journalism; Joseph D. Scanlan, editor and publisher of the Miles City Daily Star; O. S. Warden, publisher of the Great Falls Tribune, and Harry J. Kelly, editor of the Flathead Monitor of Kalispell.

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