

Stories of Texas Women: Mary Ann Maverick

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The end of the Texas Revolution brought with it an increase in immigration from the United States to the newly formed Republic of Texas. Amongst these immigrants was Mary Ann (Adams) Maverick, the young wife of Samuel Maverick. Mary became the first known Anglo woman to settle permanently in San Antonio de Bexar. Later in life she wrote her memoirs detailing her trip from South Carolina to San Antonio and life in San Antonio. Mary witnessed events such as the Council House Fight in 1840 and the "Runaway of '42."

Born March 16, 1818 in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama to parents William Lewis Adams and Agatha Strother Lewis, Mary married Samuel Maverick of Pendleton, South Carolina on August 4, 1836 at the Adams family plantation home in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Samuel Maverick, had immigrated to Texas via Alabama in 1834. He settled in San Antonio in 1835 and when rebellion broke out, he joined the Texan army, fighting in the Battle of Bexar under the command of Benjamin Milam. After the battle, he remained in San Antonio until March of 1836 when he was elected by the men of the Alamo to represent them at the Convention in Washington-on-the-Brazos. In this capacity, he signed the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836. Following the Battle of San Jacinto, Maverick returned to Alabama where he wed Mary Ann Adams.

On October 14, 1837, the young couple and their newborn son, accompanied by ten slaves and Mary Maverick's younger brother Robert Adams, set off from the Maverick family



Mary Adams Maverick
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plantation in South Carolina bound for Texas. The party crossed the Sabine River and entered into Texas on December 31, 1838. Their journey up this point had been without "serious trouble or accident" according to Mary. The thus-far uneventful trip took a turn for the worse as the group traveled through Texas. They experienced swamps, Northers, a lack of provisions and an encounter with a group of Tonkawa Indians. After an extended stay in Spring Hill, the Mavericks finally settled in San Antonio in June of 1838 joining Mary Maverick's older brother William Adams, who had immigrated there in late 1836.

Mary Maverick's memoirs are full of details about life in San Antonio during the 1830s and 1840s. She talks in great detail about her neighbors - Tejano and Anglo alike - and the entertainment and work that Texan women partook in. In one story Mary relates a trip to visit the headwaters of the San Antonio river with guests from Houston. She comments that even the ladies were "armed with pistols and bowie knives," an indication of the threat of Indian attack that was pervasive during this period of San Antonio's history. In another passage Mary describes the summer of 1841 saying,

"During this summer, the American ladies led a lazy life of ease. We had plenty of books, including novels, we were all young, healthy and happy and were content with each others' society. We fell into the fashion of the climate, dined at twelve, then followed a siesta, (nap) until three, when we took a cup of coffee and a bath."

Life in San Antonio was not entirely carefree, however, as there were threats from both the Comanches and Mexicans in this frontier town.

Relations between Texas settlers and Indians dominate a good portion of Mary's memoirs. The hostilities between the citizens of San Antonio and Comanches most notably resulted in the Council House Fight on March 19, 1840, an event which Mary witnessed. On this day approximately sixty-five Comanches entered into San Antonio seeking to make a peace

treaty. They brought with them Matilda Lockhart who had been captured in December 1838 during a Comanche raid. The Comanche party included women and children as well as male warriors. Mary noted that, "The young Indians amused themselves shooting arrows at pieces of money put up by some of the Americans; and Mrs. Higginbotham and myself amused ourselves looking through the picket fence at them."



The Council House, Main Plaza, San Antonio.

The peace talks quickly went sour and the two sides began shooting at one another.

Mary described the war-whoop given by the Comanche at the beginning of the fight as, "so loud, so shrill and so inexpressibly horrible and suddenly raised, that we women looking through the fence at the women's and boy's

markmanship for a moment could not comprehend its purport." Ultimately 33 of the Indians were killed and the other 32 taken prisoner. There were seven fatalities on the Texan side. Most of the imprisoned Indians ultimately escaped and returned to their tribes and a peace treaty was never struck.

In January 1842, the Mexican army reinvaded Texas, capturing Goliad, Refugio and Victoria. As the Mexican troops began to advance towards San Antonio, the women and children of San Antonio began an exodus that they called the "Runaway of '42". This event was reminiscent of the 1836 Runaway Scrape during the Texas revolution, but not nearly as widespread or treacherous. While the Runaway Scrape had been plagued by rain and mud, Mary describes the weather in 1842 as "charming, the grass green and the whole earth in bloom...Strange that we refugees should be such a happy crowd, but so it was. So it always will

be with youth and health - heedless of trouble and misfortune awaiting us." The Maverick family would not return to San Antonio until 1847.

Not all of the hardship faced by the Maverick family came from violence. Illness was a constant plague as well. Mary writes that in June of 1846 three of her children had the whooping cough and that in September of the same year all of the children had the measles. The family's return to San Antonio in October 1847 was met with more illness. Mary writes that,

"The weather grew quite cold, and we learned that many people were sick with colds and diarrhea, and almost every day somebody died, which made us quite doleful. I recalled our first residence in San Antonio, and it seemed that in those days there was scarcely any sickness and positively no case of fever, save the case of Colonel Karnes which was yellow fever imported from Houston. Now, all of our children suffered from some illness."

The constant illness and disease continued into 1848 and on April 30, 1838, Mary and Samuel Maverick's seven year old daughter Agatha died from a fever. In August 1849 another daughter, Augusta, died from cholera. In July 1850, the couple's seventh child John Hays (named in part for legendary Texas Ranger John Coffee Hays) also succumbed to cholera. The couple's tenth child died in October 1857; she was less than a year and a half old.

The Mavericks continued as prominent San Antonio residents until Samuel's death in 1870 and Mary's death in 1898. Mary was an active member of the Episcopal Church in San Antonio, helping to found St. Mark's Church, which is still an active parish. Mary was also a member of the San Antonio Historical Society and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. She was very



Mary Maverick with Five of Her Children. Center for American History, University of Texas.

involved in the Battle of Flowers, the annual commemoration of the Texan victory of San Jacinto that is the precursor to the modern day Fiesta. Through these organizations, and the printing of her memoirs, Mary Maverick worked hard to preserve the memories of the men and women who lived in pioneer Texas and helped shaped the future of the state.

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