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This dissertation uses archival and interpretive methods to examine the life and contributions of Mary Smith McCrory Jones in Texas. Specifically, this project investigates the ways in which Mary Jones emerged into the public sphere, utilized myth and memory, and managed her life as a widow. Each of these larger areas is examined in relation to historiographically accepted patterns and in the larger context of women in Texas, the South, and the nation during this period.

Mary Jones, 1819-1907, experienced many of the key early periods in Anglo Texas history. The research traces her family's immigration to Austin's Colony and their early years under Mexican sovereignty. The Texas Revolution resulted in her move to Houston and her first brief marriage. Following the death of her husband she met and married Anson Jones, a physician who served in public posts throughout the period of the Texas Republic. Over time Anson was politically and personally rejected to the point that he committed suicide. This dissertation studies the effects this death had upon Mary’s personal goals, her use of a widow’s status to achieve her objectives, and her eventual emergence as a “Professional Widow.”

Mary Jones's attempts to rehabilitate her husband’s public image provided her with opportunities which in turn led her into a larger public sphere, enabled her to maintain her social-economic status as a widow, and to shape the public image of both her husband and parts of the Texas image. Mary Jones attempted to publish Anson’s papers, rehabilitate his memory, and preserve papers and artifacts from the period of
the Republic. Directly and indirectly this led to the preservation of the San Jacinto battlefield, the reburial of her husband, the discovery of a copy of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the founding of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and her key role as steward of the Alamo.

The research uses archival and interpretive methods to examine Women’s organizations and clubs as they emerged during her lifetime and her role as member or leader. Hundreds of Mary and her family’s personal letters survive in various Texas archives. Additionally, Anson’s journals and personal memoirs provide invaluable insight into Mary’s family life, character, and relationships. This research will include a review and comparison of her efforts with other women who in the process of protecting and reconstructing their husband’s images moved into a larger public sphere.

Mary Jones served as president of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas for seventeen years. This provided her with the platform she needed to promote Anson’s image, focus memory and money upon the Texas Republic era, and move into a public sphere for herself. This dissertation contends that the work that Mary Jones did in her efforts to construct a positive public image for her husband eventually drew her into state-wide leadership roles, aided her to successfully reach social-economic goals even though widowed, and to effect the preservation and role of the Alamo in public memory.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In an 1899 letter, Mary Smith McCrory Jones declared that she had, “literally grown up and old with the state.” Indeed she arrived as a teenager in the Mexican province of Texas on November 18, 1833 and witnessed firsthand its difficult transitions and triumphs through numerous critical periods. From a settler in a pioneering wilderness to an activist in the opening decade of the twentieth century, her life and contributions uniquely fitted her to serve as the first president of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, (DRT). Despite a growth and interest in nineteenth-century women’s history in the South, there are women who still lack an adequate biography. Biographical research, analysis, and interpretation have moved beyond the two-dimensional histories that some women were subjected to in the past and can provide a well-rounded image of one who moved through the history of Texas from the Mexican period through the Progressive era. A study of the life of Mary Jones demonstrates her path from Old South gendered norms to a New South that offered her opportunities to reach her own goals. Mary utilized her status as first-lady and then widow of Anson Jones, the last president of the Republic of Texas, to obtain influence in the Lone Star State. The tenacity Mary displayed helped her survive the loss of two husbands and the Civil War, yet she found a way to care for her family. In 1891 until her death in 1907,
she presided over the DRT, a large organization of women who resurrected a period of the past and provided a definitive interpretative narrative that helped to shape self-understanding for generations of Texans. In many ways, Mary was a pioneer who lived in frontier Texas and then, as the first president of the DRT, helped to shape Anglo Texans’ memories of their state’s origins.¹

Mary’s marriage to Anson Jones in 1840 ended with his suicide in 1858, but his bitterness over what he considered unjustified political slights lingered throughout his widow’s life. Mary Jones attempted to construct a positive public image for her husband, and this drew her into public life that eventually led to statewide leadership roles. Her personal goals to craft the public memory of her husband conjoined with her work to memorialize the revolutionary period of Texas. These yielded positive personal benefits that aided her in reaching an elevated social-economic status even though widowed. Additionally, her interests and advocacy brought about both the preservation of the Alamo and the public perception of it as a sacred symbol of Texas.

A study of Mary Jones’s life reveals those key moments of agency when she chose a course of action that affected others around her. Her life included powerful regional and personal changes. Through public and personal documents, her personality, nature, and character forcefully manifest themselves as she fought for survival against adversity, for family relationships, for her version of Texas history, and for her husband’s legacy. A study of her life encompasses intentional choices mixed with the reality of unintended consequences and opportunities that resulted from her

¹ Mary Jones to Mr. Evans, 22 October 1899, Box 761, Mary Jones Papers Collection, Willis Library Archives, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, hereafter cited as MJP. In order to avoid confusion between various others named Jones, “Mary Jones” will be the preferred reference for the subject of this dissertation.
decisions and the regional changes around her. Her multifaceted life included both moments of complexity and periods of simplicity; she lived in both the public and private spheres over time, and her decisions appeared as reactive as they were at times proactive. Striving for her goals placed her in the prime position to lead the women’s group responsible for reviving interest in the Texas Republic era. None of Mary Jones’s early correspondence indicated her desire to lead any organization, but her personal interests coupled with her unique position made her the best leader for an organization focused upon respect for the Anglo-Texas past. Her conservative motives required change-oriented methodologies, which she embraced as a means to her purposes.²

History includes an essentially personal element. Whether the subject of the research involves the large movements that brought change, the rise and fall of huge empires, or even the macro studies of massive climate changes, eventually history devolves to its impact on humans. While science focuses upon the particulars, seeking general laws that govern the physical world, history generally moves from generalities to the particulars. A historian may study the individual facts to test prevailing generalities, logic, folk stories, and traditions. Biography in particular seeks to understand the individual within his or her historical context. What elements of this person’s life

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² Personal correspondence to and from Mary Jones may be accessed in a number of repositories: Mary Jones/Family Papers, Boxes 759-763, Willis Library Archives and the Texana Collection, Willis Library Rare Book Room, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas. Mary (Mrs. Anson) Jones Letters, M.D. Anderson Library, Department of Special Collections and Archives, University of Houston Libraries, Houston, Texas. Adele Briscoe Looscan Collection, Manuscript Collection MC041, Albert and Ethel Herzstein Library Manuscript Collections, San Jacinto Museum of History, San Jacinto, Texas. Anson Jones Papers, 1809-1910, The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, Texas. The Eagar Family Papers, Box 5, Daughters of the Republic Library Archives, San Antonio, Texas.
conformed to normal patterns or were unique for those times and regions in which he or she lived?

Twice widowed, Mary Jones used her status as one means to obtain both her goal to burnish Anson Jones’s reputation and to memorialize the Texas Revolution and Republic. This work yielded her a better social status than many other Texas widows of her economic standing achieved. Her second bereavement, following the death of Anson Jones, essentially commenced with the onset of the Civil War. Though the largest of the Confederate states territorially, Texas experienced the fewest total engagements and battles. Still an estimated 70,000 Texans fought for the Confederacy and close to 2,000 fought for the Union. Many of those who experienced widowhood in this period also faced a severe degradation of their economic and social status due to the death of their partner. This decline typically began with the prolonged absences of their husbands while fighting in the war and their inability to contribute at prewar levels to the economic stability of their homes. While Mary Jones also experienced a prolonged period of strained finances, her continued focus on her husband’s reputation after his death eventually yielded benefits for her. She outlived many of the principal actors in the revolutionary and republic periods and thus formed a living link for those seeking a connection to their past heroes. Many of the well-known figures of Texas’ frontier and revolutionary period died before the end of the Civil War. Those like Mary Jones who lived through the postwar years often played increasingly important roles in the preservation of the states’ past.³

³ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine, 1988), 854. McPherson provides the estimate of 260,000 total southern dead; many Confederate military records were either not maintained or preserved, thus casualty rates are based upon scholarship and estimates. Determination of the total number of widows relies upon widows applying for pensions and extrapolation.
Recent historical research, in the past forty years, has developed a growing and important body of work on the roles of women in the nineteenth-century South. Historian Anne Firor Scott in her 1970 work *The Southern Lady from Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, pointed out large discrepancies between the myths surrounding southern women and the harsher realities of their lives. Scott’s reappraisal of southern women opened doors for many new works. And in significant ways Mary Jones matched the patterns in Scott’s findings that the educated women of the antebellum South were hardworking, pious, devoted to their families, and attempted to meet the social expectations of that time. Scott argued that the Civil War flung wide the doors of opportunity for women, For Mary the offerings were more limited due to her reduced economic circumstances, yet her life underwent radical and negative changes during the Civil War era.¹⁴

In some measure, every historian studies historical events and persons within their context to understand motive, pattern, purpose, and to determine uniqueness. Mary Jones possessed no immunity from the larger forces that pushed and pulled individuals, families, and groups to the Texas frontier of the 1830s. Historian Joan Cashin established gender as her focus in understanding the planter families who

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moved to the southern frontier from the seaboard states. Much of the Deep South was no more than one generation removed from a frontier status even as Mary’s family first entered the state in 1833. In essence she moved from one backcountry to an even less developed frontier in Texas.5

Mary Jones’s family belonged to migrating farmers who arrived from Arkansas seeking land and opportunity. Economic and political realities lay behind some of the migrations of the non-elite white families of the social classes identified as “Plain Folk” by Frank Owsley in his study of the yeoman farmer class. A commonly accepted convention among historians measures elite planter status as those whites owning twenty slaves or more. Additional work to understand those groups who lived below this high status has been done, particularly for Texas. This largely understudied group has been analyzed by Randolph B. Campbell and Richard Lowe, who focused on the reality of agricultural life for both planters and plain folk in the antebellum period of Texas. Certainly diminishing opportunities and the attraction of cheap land contributed to a continued westward pattern of migration that brought many to Texas during this early pre-Republic period. Mary’s family took advantage of the generous land grants and moved to Austin’s colony.6

Cashin’s study demonstrated that males often sought to escape financial or family woes and migrated in hopes of bettering themselves economically; whereas, the women usually made the move with fear. After migrating Cashin pointed out that most just hoped to recreate what they had left behind. This suggested that many of the

pioneer women had not necessarily desired to leave a life they now yearned to recreate in their changed circumstances. Interestingly, the Smith family moved after Mary’s father died in Arkansas. Her widowed mother moved into Mexican Territory with her children. Her decision to move without a husband or grown son was unusual in the larger pattern but not atypical. Mary Jones gained valuable life experience during this move and witnessed the independent decision-making from the initiative exercised by her mother.

Mary Jones survived until the end of 1907, thereby living through three decisive periods in the American South: antebellum, Civil War, and postwar years. Her life and experiences also spanned critical Texas periods, including the frontier era, the Texas Revolution, the Republic of Texas years, early statehood, Confederate secession and rebellion, the Reconstruction era, and the Progressive era. She experienced these changes as an individual developing over time from a young teen through marriage, motherhood, and widowhood. Even her experiences as a widow included change over time. Through these shifting conditions Mary developed strong connections to Texas, particularly the Revolutionary and Republic periods from which she found her sense of purpose and mission.

Marriage shifted her social and economic life, particularly with her second husband. When she wed a successful doctor and land investor, Anson Jones, Mary Jones moved into economic and social levels well above her earlier social status. She became a slave owner and lived upon a small plantation. Mary and Anson Jones met with the leaders of the Texas Republic and entertained in their home numerous visitors including foreign diplomats. For close to a decade during her marriage Mary Jones’s life
bore a resemblance to the elite plantation mistresses described by Catherine Clinton. Clinton provided important patterns for researchers when she challenged a number of accepted myths concerning the life of the plantation elite and pointed out that women often played critical roles in the management of the household and plantation. Anson Jones’s frequent and protracted absences placed his wife in increasingly prolonged roles of management over their finances, family, and farms.⁷

Mary Jones achieved an elite status during her marriage to Anson, but most of her life she struggled economically well below that elite status. Though they purchased a number of slaves, they probably never exceeded fifteen, but due to her husband’s profession and success with real estate investments, Mary enjoyed a privileged life on a plantation. Following Anson’s death, her monetary resources dwindled sharply heralding a dramatic return to hardship and financial difficulties. Even though his death occurred prior to the Civil War, January 1858, much of the research on the life of women during the war provides important factual parallels to the events and forces Mary Jones faced during this period without Anson. Certainly her early years of widowhood overlapped the war years. George C. Rable discovered a variety of diverse scenarios that played out for women on the home front across social class lines. He pointed out that most southern women during the war years struggled to manage their households with some

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⁷ Barrington Plantation was 300 acres and was worked by five slaves and hired hands as needed. Herbert Pickens Gambrell, *Anson Jones, the Last President of Texas*, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 420. Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Clinton pointed to southern women as victims of their society and culture and asserted that patriarchic hierarchy constricted their lives. Clinton’s work agreed with Scott in that she found that elite southern women seldom led romantic lives of ease. In contrast to Clinton, Fox-Genovese found evidence that elite white women collaborated in their own domination because they found advantages in a male-dominated household that kept slaves. She pointed out that slave ownership gave white women status and the opportunity to avoid some of the more laborious household chores. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 370.
or all of their adult males missing for lengthy periods of time. Mary Jones adjusted to life without her husband along with the enlistment and consequential absence of her two oldest sons, who were serving in the Confederate Army. Predictably in the harsh realities brought on by war, Rable found numerous instances of women who experienced despair, loneliness, food shortages, dislocations, difficult slaves or farm hands, and uncontrolled inflation. For Mary Jones the Civil War era and its aftermath proved transitional; she struggled to adapt to the changing realities within Texas and within her own family.  

A number of authors examined Scott’s contention in *The Southern Lady* that the Civil War had opened doors of opportunity. Certainly, Jones eventually regained her social status, but was it the Civil War that gave her those opportunities? An important historian for this period, Drew Gilpin Faust, discovered a broad spectrum of reactions from southern women during the war. Faust found one of the most significant changes for women on the home front occurred in their relationship with slavery. Women lacked the power and often the experience to enforce strict slave obedience in the absence of their spouses. According to Faust, this resulted in the wives’ increased dependence upon the slaves to manage their own work. Thus the war led to greater independence for many slaves. Mary Jones’s private correspondence pointed to her own struggles and difficulties adjusting to the changing realities of race and slavery.

Mary Jones’s emergence upon a civic stage in the Progressive era suggests

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9 Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Faust reported that some women supported the war effort and others resisted it.
the relative importance of examining the private and public spheres of southern women. In this case the public sphere included an element of political interest and agency as well. Her movement and the citizens’ acceptance of her in what had been a domain dominated by males had its roots in her antebellum experiences as the wife of a politician. Historian Elizabeth R. Varon found a variety of examples in which elite Virginia women actively worked in their communities and openly allied with males in various political endeavors during the antebellum period. Varon focused on an elite group to find her examples, and after 1840 Mary Jones essentially belonged to a select group that had the time and access to politically involved women. Yet, to understand Jones and the women who rose to political influence, both a larger context of the South and the particular realities of Texas need inclusion for comparison.10

Laura F. Edwards declared that the public and private spheres were more ideological categories than real. Historians discovered that it was not always the case that private meant female and domestic and that public meant male and political. During Reconstruction, Mary Jones reverted to a life primarily centered on her family; however, she continued to seek ways to promote Anson’s public image. Her primary goals appeared to relate to her private or domestic agenda, yet they led her into the public sphere. Even though a move from the private to the public arena might have marked a progressive agenda for many women, Jones expressed essentially conservative motives for her move into public life. Her interests in politics focused on preserving and memorializing the past.11

Anson Jones provided a central inspiration for her life, but it was not the only one. She focused on her immediate family, nurtured a family network, and helped shape her own children’s interest and careers in Texas. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese pointed out the centrality of family for southern women in an article on family and female identity. She noted that family relationships provided many women the framework through which they understood themselves and their connections to others. Like many of her contemporaries. Mary Jones spoke of herself primarily in familial terms. She saw herself as widow, grandmother, sister, and most of all as mother. This concept translated well for her as she perceived her role as president of the DRT as a mother to her many “daughters.” This sense of self that was tied to family began early. She played a major supporting role in her family as a teenager and carried that sense of dedication and commitment to family through her objectives and within her priorities. Her reliance upon family bonds provided her continuity through each epoch of her life.\textsuperscript{12}

As the eldest in her natal family, Mary Jones aided her mother in rearing her siblings. After her mother remarried, six step-sisters and brothers entered her life, all reported to have been younger than she was. Later, after the birth of her own four children, she took in four step-sisters and a grandson to mother. Mothering provided Mary Jones with a sense of purpose. Historian Sally G. McMillen found that the experiences of motherhood crossed the social boundaries. The women of the Old South viewed their role in child rearing as a sacred occupation. Regardless of social status, many women relied upon the aid of older relatives or mid-wives to help them during pregnancy, delivery, and often afterwards. Mary Jones acquired a reputation for helping

women during and after childbirth, and her nursing skill brought her respect in her community. The idea of motherhood played a key role for Jones, who definitely took on a maternal role—first with her siblings aiding her mother, then as mother to her own, and then as “mother” to the daughter-members of the DRT.\(^\text{13}\)

Can any historian study the South without considering race? The Jones family held slaves until they were emancipated at the close of the Civil War. They operated a small plantation called Barrington at Washington on the Brazos. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese concluded that white and black female relationships were founded in a “world of mutual antagonism and frayed tempers.” Neither Mary nor Anson Jones appeared to harbor deep affection or enmity for their slaves. Research surrounding the roles of sexuality and race indicated a complex dynamic that often plagued the women of both races. These studies point to widespread miscegenation practiced by white southern men. Accusations of or allusions to infidelity play no role in the existing records of Anson and Mary’s lives; however, these would have been the type of letters a family might censor prior to handing them over to public repositories. As a family highly conscious of its image and legacy, historians should maintain an awareness of the context of anxiety some of Mary Jones’s friends endured in a white male dominated society with potential access to enslaved females who had little recourse to protection. This has led to theorization that some indications of white women’s cruelty towards their slaves might have resulted from their frustration.\(^\text{14}\)


\(^{14}\) Fox-Genovese, “Family and Female Identity in the Antebellum South,” 308. See study, which theorized that some indications of white women’s cruelty towards their slaves might have resulted from their frustration over their husband’s infidelities. Mary Musgrove and Georgia Trustees, “The Sexual Politics of Race and Gender,” in Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds., *The Devil’s Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 187-202; Also a diary from this period
Historical gender issues move past the biological framework of physiology and seek to understand the social and cultural patterns for how society circumscribes the behavior and roles for males and females. Historian, LeeAnn Whites wrote a gendered analysis of the Civil War and the years following the war as women questioned, challenged, and changed some of the gendered relationships. She argued that prior to the Civil War, elite southern white males were key to power and authority in both the public and the private spheres. In the absence of many of the men who fought, white women were faced with additional burdens managing property, businesses, and slaves. The changes did not stop with the end of the war, Whites contends that many of these women attempted to reconstruct the manhood of their husbands because of their defeat. This behavior was often exhibited in their memorialization of the Confederate dead and in their deeds through Ladies’ Memorial Associations (LMAs.) Suzanne Lebsock, in her study of Petersburg, Virginia, pointed out that women’s social and economic status changed as a result of the exigencies of daily life during the Civil War. She found that even in the antebellum South gendered conditions improved slightly as women gained a little more autonomy and some points of expanded economic opportunity, but they also lost ground in the public sphere as men continued to exclude them from political activities and co-opted their charity work.15

Historical analysis of the paths taken by many of the women who moved into public and political activism found compelling patterns that often included church and

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club membership and temperance work; however, the route that Jones took was uniquely fitted to her personal campaign to rehabilitate her husband’s legacy and image. She held church membership and was a club woman, but her involvement in ladies’ church organizations was minimal, and she was decidedly not a practitioner of temperance. She did not join any literary clubs, even though she often spoke of the books she read, borrowed, or loaned others. Her sense of personal purpose propelled her beyond the private sphere in order to reach a public audience with her message.\textsuperscript{16}

Biographies and studies of southern women often skew towards the privileged due to the availability of sources for the lives of those in the upper classes. These women tended to have more opportunity for education that often resulted in a legacy of preserved letters and journals. Jones was conscious of the fact that the potential favorable judgment of others would be dependent upon written materials. She and her family kept many of her letters and donated these to several archives in Texas. She also kept letters written to her by family members that shed light upon her relationships, activities, and opinions. The information is augmented by material from Anson Jones’s diaries, public records, and records surrounding Mary Jones’s years with the DRT.\textsuperscript{17}

The idea of a southern “elite” changed with the demise of slavery. Slavery helped to define who possessed economic and social power in the Old South. Many of the old elite lost economic status and political power with the loss of their slaves, so the doors

\textsuperscript{16} Judith N. McArthur, \textit{Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), McArthur provides a look into the development of women’s political interest and activity before they were franchised. Her work includes the period during which Jones led the DRT.

\textsuperscript{17} Neither Mary Jones nor her family apparently had the time, leisure, and in some cases literacy to leave personal sources for her formative years. Public records, allusions by others, and later personal reminiscences by Mary Jones fill those gaps. Evidently at the request of her friend Adele Looscan, Mary Jones wrote out a brief biography of a couple of pages. Her memories of those early events fifty years earlier lacked the day-to-day vividness of a journal kept during that time might have given. Her selection of important events probably reflect her own sense of values as much as they do the facts of her life.
to elite status changed in the New South. The means to “elite” remained similar. Slavery provided power and influence. Jane Turner Censer argues that the elite women of the Old South enjoyed an “education and status,” that “gave them chances denied to others.” In other words they claimed an opportunity based upon their previous privileged place in society. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler writes about political and social elites. The route to power and status was negotiated through a number of routes that included at least some financial security, probably membership in one of the exclusive clubs, or perhaps listing in a social directory like The Blue Book of Galveston. Elizabeth Hayes Turner discovered that benevolence provided a greater awareness of class differences in her study of women in Galveston, Texas. After the Civil War Mary Jones eventually reached a financial status that did not require her to work, thus giving her the time she needed to devote to club work. She also benefited from her prewar social status and continued to maintain friendships with privileged women. In addition, professional position appeared to play a growing role in what it meant to be considered elite. Turner found that the second edition of the Blue Book in Galveston depended upon professional position as much as it did upon social status. Two of Mary’s sons were professionals, Samuel became a dentist and Cromwell a district court judge.  

Prepared by the hardships of frontier life and the arduous roles she played as wife, mother, and widow; Mary Jones knowingly became a symbol for certain Texas organizations, especially the DRT. She used her role as president of this women’s

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organization to advocate her personal aims and values. Mary Jones found in the membership of the DRT those with similar goals who could aid one another in a solidarity that made their goals more achievable. One of the initial goals of the DRT sought the perpetuation of “the memory and spirit of the people who achieved and maintained the independence of Texas.” This dovetailed with Mary’s desire to emphasize Anson Jones’s contributions to Texas. The DRT played key roles in a period when women lacked the vote but were entering the public sphere of Texas politics to achieve their aims.¹⁹

Jones’s social status was fluid. She never reached full planter status, usually defined as owning twenty slaves or more. She grew to adulthood well outside the elite financial circumstances afforded the planter class, potentially giving her a different attitude than some of those elite women who served in the leadership of the DRT with her. During her formative years she moved between minimal means to the step-daughter of a land owner. She only moved up in status after she married Anson and then crashed down again to subsistence following his death. Her slow rise back to a socially elite status was not accompanied by secure financial wealth, but by a combination of family assistance and by the social acceptance by other elites. She possessed adequate income with familial assistance to devote her energies to her interests. Socially, other Houston elites continued to correspond with her and invite her to events. Through these influential friends and her position as president of the DRT she exercised influence. The newspapers reported her activities and her speeches. In the

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¹⁹ Constitution and By-Laws of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (Houston: Gray’s Printing Office, 1892): article VI, section 1 (quotation).
end neither planter research nor studies of marginalized women fully describe her life. She often enjoyed a better social status than the reality of her financial status.\

Mary Jones’s personal agency most clearly appeared in her goal to refurbish Anson’s public image. This required her entry into public life and discourse. Though she was single for a much longer period than married, her decades as a widow were essentially defined in her devotion to her living family and to Anson’s memory. Eventually, her memorialization of Anson became a step towards greater public and political access. At least publicly, right to the end of her life she appeared in the black dresses of mourning, a powerful reminder to others of her relationship to Anson. To some extent she accepted this role and chose to become a “Professional Widow.” This dissertation will research the journey Mary Jones took to reach her goals and the tools she used to affirm her beliefs and achieve her ends. In particular it will look at Mary Jones’s use of widowhood, the preservation and publication of papers favorable to her view of Anson Jones and Texas, and the DRT to affect myth and memory.

The first chapter examines both the historical context and early life of Mary Jones, which by its experiences, hardships, and losses were formative for her later values and decisions. The next chapter describes her marriage to Anson, an eighteen-year period by which she chose to define most of her next fifty years. Chapter three is devoted to her time as a widow and defines her sense of self and eventually her primary public persona. The fourth chapter examines her relationship with and use of the DRT,

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20 Jane Turner Censer, in North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), examines the highest level of society, one that only applied to Jones for a brief time and then she never reached planter status in terms of slave ownership. At the other side of the spectrum, Victoria E. Bynum, Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), opened new avenues of research on the non-elite women of the Old South; however, her research focused primarily upon the most marginalized of women who appeared in court records. The use of public records provides much needed information for lives and years that left no dairies, journals, or letters.
for which she served as president from 1891 until her death at the end of 1907. A final chapter covers her inner life during the final years and her legacy.

Mary Jones appeared to utilize the public’s acknowledgement of her loss as a widow to her ends. During this same time period there were others who emerged from the shadows cast by their more famous husbands to speak publicly on behalf of their memories. These widows serve as context for understanding what a professional widow might accomplish. Some of these included the writer and public speaker Elizabeth Bacon Custer, LaSalle Corbell Pickett, who campaigned for her husband’s honor and like Jones outlived most of his critics, as well as Helen Dortch Longstreet, who likewise outlived her husband by many decades as she defended his Civil War legacy.

Along with family, religion played a prominent role in the lives of southern women. Mary Jones was a member of the Episcopal Church in which she and her husband helped to establish a short-lived educational academy. The use of religious language and ideas became intertwined for Mary. She often incorporated sacred terms when she defended her goals as meaningful. The use of the holy provided an acceptable rationale for her as she ventured beyond her home and family life into more public work. Southern wives were considered the moral and spiritual conscience of the couple; as mothers they kept a “sacred” obligation or duty to the family to promote and defend morality, as the women at home during the war they were the purity for which many men fought, and as they stepped into public spheres, religious motive and symbol became a powerful apology for their actions.\(^{21}\)

A number of studies examine the importance of religion in the lives of southerners in general and on southern women during this period. John B. Boles’s work on the pervasive spread of individualistic religion from the Cane Ridge Revival era aids in understanding the spread of religious attitudes found in frontier Texas. Jean E. Friedman claimed that the Civil War actually strengthened traditional southern values, particularly the traditional roles for women in their families and churches. Did Mary Jones pursue conventional gendered roles through unconventional means? Elizabeth Hayes Turner’s work on Galveston provides an analysis of church involvement and community activism among Galveston women. She found definite patterns for this region that included the leadership roles taken by Episcopal women.\(^\text{22}\)

William Seale’s biography of Margaret Lea Houston published in 1970 remains the only biography of a first lady of the Republic to date. Over time the compilation entries for Texas women have given way to expanded works. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, writing on Jessie Daniel Ames, follows her leadership in the anti-lynching movement. Light T. Cummins won academic recognition for his 2009 biography of Emily Austin. These are two of the biographies on Texas women that enrich historians’ understanding of this period. Hall’s biography of Ames, a southern woman who challenged dominant cultural mores and attitudes towards lynching in conventional and unconventional ways demonstrated how she worked within and against gendered and racial norms.

Cummins’s work on Austin’s life opened the Texas Biography Series at Texas Christian University Press in what promises to be important additions to Texas history.23

In many ways Mary Jones was a product of her times, except that her times included momentous changes both personal and regional. She developed strong values that colored most of her choices. Yet in others ways these same values and choices moved her out of those gendered, regional, and era-specific roles and made her a volitional agent of change.

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The later public life and leadership exhibited by Mary Jones drew strength and interpretation from foundational experiences and forces within her early life. The timing of her entry into the state as a pioneer and her frontier experiences proved crucial in her self-understanding and the missions she adopted. During her life, she witnessed and experienced the struggles and development of Texas. The formative years of her early life included pioneer experiences in Austin’s Colony, the Texas Revolution, and the Republic of Texas. Mary Jones collated specific personal experiences with the formative experiences of Texas, as she knew them. These provided for her a personal identity. How she understood herself appeared to fundamentally derive from this foundational period.

July 24, 1819 was a warm morning and already 78 degrees by seven a.m. The mercury rose to 86 degrees by 3:00 that afternoon. On this hot day in Arkansas Territory, a young couple became parents of their first child. John and Sarah Pevehouse Smith named their daughter Mary. Neither their hopes or fears were recorded, but surely, they could not have imagined the levels to which their firstborn would eventually reach. Her first fourteen years in Arkansas were formative ones, which introduced
Smith to a manner of frontier living in the American West that helped to shape both her
adult values and provided her coping tools for later changes and losses.¹

A number of elements played roles in Mary Jones’s early development. As with
most people she was a product of her familial influences, natal, place and time, and
larger elements that played out on a national and international stage. One of those
developments opened doors of opportunity to the citizens of a relatively young America.
As the nation grew, the pattern of migration west became a part of her family history
and eventually brought her to Texas. Both of her parents participated in this human
migration, thereby setting examples replayed in her later life.

Born in Virginia near Richmond in 1796, Mary Jones’s father, John McCutcheon
Smith, was orphaned at an early age and moved west seeking opportunities. According
to Anson Jones’s diary, Smith moved to Tennessee at a young but unspecified age.
Anson’s information might have been either from his fiancé or from her mother, as he
knew both during this period.²

Smith was not alone in seeking opportunity by migrating westward. The
Wilderness Trail ran southwest along old Indian paths from Virginia toward East
Tennessee, and there travelers could continue north through the Cumberland Gap into
Kentucky, stay awhile in the counties of Upper East Tennessee, or continue further west
towards the settlements near Nashville. There were two primary routes; one barely
entered Tennessee, but the other ended in a growing settlement of Bean’s Station.

¹ Thomas Nuttal, A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory During the Year 1819, ed.
1891, Mary Jones/Family Papers Collection (Willis Library Archives, University of North Texas, Denton,
Texas); Hereafter cited as Jones Papers.
² Anson Jones, 1838 Diary (Texana Collection, Rare Book Room, Willis Library, University of
North Texas, Denton, Texas).
There were older settlements nearby along the Nolichucky River and the Holston River where the young Smith might have stayed seeking opportunities more available on the frontier than in the settled regions of Virginia.³

Tennessee became a conduit for many pioneers heading west who eventually made their way to Texas. A number of well-known men, whose personal migrations ended in Texas, traveled similar routes. David Crockett was born along the Nolichucky River in 1786, after his family emigrated from Virginia. Likewise, Samuel Houston’s family hoped to change their financial fortunes by moving west to Tennessee from Virginia. Houston’s father purchased land near Maryville, Tennessee, and died before moving. His mother moved her son Samuel and her other eight children to Tennessee in 1807. It was not only the legendary men who made their way west to Texas but also the ordinary families who fit the migration patterns during this period.⁴

A common theme in Smith’s life was moving, apparently seeking new opportunities. He moved to Missouri Territory in 1814, and only two years later he married Sarah Pevehouse. They were young; he was twenty, and she was only sixteen when they wed near the frontier town of Little Rock. Smith left no extant written records concerning the level of his education or of his personal thoughts and ideas. He left an established state for the newly admitted state of Tennessee and left again for Arkansas before it received territorial recognition under the name Arkansas. When he died in 1832, he was only thirty-six and left behind a widow and five children. Mary was barely

fourteen when her father died and did not record the reason for his death. Sadly, death frequently shadowed Mary during her entire life.\textsuperscript{5}

Mary’s mother Sarah Pevehouse shared similar migration experiences with her husband, John Smith. Sarah also came to Arkansas from Tennessee. She was born in 1800 in Claiborne County, Tennessee, near the Cumberland Gap along the Wilderness Road. Questions persist over the date and place of her parents’ birth records; however, the Grainger County, Tennessee, records place their marriage on 11 August 1800. If this date is correct, her mother was pregnant with Sarah prior to her marriage. Mary’s paternal and maternal families lived in the same area of East Tennessee, which considering these families ended up in the same part of Arkansas, it suggests that they might have known one another in Tennessee prior to their moving.\textsuperscript{6}

How much aid Sarah and John Smith received from a father with a large and growing family is unknown. Sarah Pevehouse was the eldest of ten children born to her father, Jacob, and his first wife, Rachel Kellums. At the time of Sarah’s marriage to John Smith, the 1816 Lawrence County, Arkansas, tax census indicated that five children were still living with her father and that he owned four slaves. Though Jacob Pevehouse did not appear in the 1815 tax record, he and two relations appeared on the 1816 roll. Frontier settlement and opportunity-seeking behavior did not make them unique. They

\textsuperscript{5} Anson Jones, 1838 Diary. Jones makes the error of calling it Kansas Territory in his diary entry. David Y. Thomas, ed. \textit{Arkansas and Its People: A History, 1541-1930}, 2 vols. (New York: The American Historical Society, 1930) 1:37-43. New settlers found themselves under a variety of governing bodies during the early years following the transfer from Spain to France and only a few years later to the United States. Initially, Arkansas was under the jurisdiction of the Territory of Indiana from 1804-1805 (about one year’s time), at this point the area of Arkansas was transferred to the Territory of Louisiana, by 1812 Arkansas was a part of Missouri Territory, and the Territory of Arkansas officially began on 4 July 1819. Arkansas settlement patterns are discussed in Carolyn Earle Billingsley, “Settlement Patterns in Saline County, Arkansas,” \textit{Arkansas Historical Quarterly}, 52 (Summer 1993), 107-109.

fit into a rapidly expanding pioneer community. The number of taxpayers in this part of Missouri Territory increased 68 percent between 1815 and 1816. This illustrates the rapidity of the growth on the frontier. The movement of families to Arkansas became for many like the Smiths a temporary step towards further moves west.  

Table 1.1. Arkansas Population Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>~1,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>14,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>30,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>40,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>52,241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During this period, Mary’s parents lived a nearly nomadic life as a couple. Their migration did not stop upon reaching Arkansas Territory; instead, they continued to move numerous times. Mary was born in the northern region of the Territory in 1819, her family moved when she was four to Conway, Arkansas, where they remained five years, and then they moved near Little Rock where they lived about five more years before moving to Texas. Mary either did not know the reasons they moved every four to five years or failed to consider the cause. Some frontier families exhausted their lands

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quickly and moved seeking soil fertility; other families failed to gain title to the lands and needed to move when new settlers claimed the land. Numerous factors effected the movements of new emigrants, including climate, soil-types, disease, and the relocation of other family members. For Mary Smith the frequency of moves at least indicates a strategy that, coupled with the interest of her natal family in moving to Texas, made this later move comprehensible for a widow and her family.⁸

Henry R. Schoolcraft, an early traveler, described life on the frontier in this part of Missouri Territory that would become Arkansas Territory. Encountering various pioneer families, he witnessed the adversities they endured as they attempted to settle the frontier. He noted the difficulties that came with clearing the land, finding food, and fending off dangers by women often struggling for survival. Having come upon a family who arrived at their current location only two weeks before, Schoolcraft observed,

> Nothing could present a more striking picture of the hardships encountered by the back wood’s settler, than this poor, friendless, and forlorn family. The woman and her little children were a touching groupe [sic] of human distress, and in contemplating their forlorn situation we for a while forgot our own deprivations and fatigues. They were short of provisions, the husband being out in search of game.

Schoolcraft likely overstated when he summed up his impressions of the frontier, however, some of these elements may have described the conditions experienced by Mary, especially since as she was born during the year Schoolcraft journeyed through Arkansas. “These people subsist partly by agriculture, and partly by hunting,” he opined, “consequently, a hardy, brave, independent people, rude in appearance, frank and generous, travel without baggage, and can subsist anywhere in the woods.”

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⁸ Mary Jones, biographical notes, Folder 2, Box 761, Mary Jones Papers (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas); hereafter MJP. Mary D. Farrell and Elizabeth Silverthorne, *First Ladies of Texas: The First One Hundred Years 1836-1936: A History* (Belton, Texas: Stillhouse Hollow Publishers, 1976), 46.
generalizations omit many of the particulars and unique qualities possessed by individuals, these descriptors applied well to qualities Mary Jones exemplified and prized in others throughout her life.⁹

What categories of class best described Mary’s natal family? Were they of the yeoman agriculturalists called “plain folk?” This is a term made famous by historian Frank L. Owsley, referring to livestock-herding agriculturalists who led the antebellum western migration across the southern frontier. Historian John Solomon Otto argues that these families were familiar with a “woodlands agriculture” that sought similar conditions as they migrated. Those who owned slaves or hoped to become slaveholders looked south when slavery was prohibited in the Northwestern Territories. As their lands were depleted of nutrients, they frequently moved in the antebellum period seeking more productive lands as they “substituted land for labor and capital.” Otto argues that the ready availability of land actually encouraged laborsaving and land-extensive farming techniques among the plain folk.¹⁰

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Owsley left some ambiguity on the identification of whether members of the Pevehouse and Smith families qualified as Plain Folk. Historians John B. Boles and Samuel C. Hyde Jr. addressed a need for more precision in the definition of groups. Hyde defined the Plain Folk, or yeomen of the antebellum South, as “nonslaveholding farmers with land, and farmers owning up to 100 improved acres and from 1 to 5 working slaves.” By Hyde’s definition, the landless white laborers and non-propertied farmers fell into the category of “poor whites.” Utilizing these parameters, only Jacob Pevehouse, Mary’s grandfather living in Arkansas, met the criteria for membership in the plain folk category as a small slave owner and property tax payer. The fact that both the Smith and Pevehouse families participated in multiple migrations point to their desire to improve their economic circumstances, to move up to landed farmer status, hence Plain Folk. In the case of Pevehouse, a potential addition of over 4,600 acres of land in a Texas county where cotton grew gave him the real possibility of moving up to Hyde’s next classification, Middling Farmer. Hyde identified this class as farmers owning 100 or more improved acres and utilizing six to nine slaves. Aid from a slave-owning family to its extended family provided opportunity for economic advancement. The records do not indicate that Mary’s father actually owned the land they settled upon.\footnote{Samuel C. Hyde Jr., “Plain Folk Reconsidered: Historiographical Ambiguity in Search of Definition,” \textit{Journal of Southern History}, 71 (November 2005), 808, 818-819 (quotation).}

John and Sarah Smith’s final stop in Arkansas gave Mary her only opportunity to attend a school. This last location near Little Rock, Arkansas, placed the family close to a couple of pioneer schools. The exigencies of frontier life did not always provide for the education of daughters. Another Texas pioneer, Rachel Lynn DeSpain received her land grant from the Republic of Texas in 1838; unable to sign she made an “X” on her
deed. “Us girls didn’t go to school,” she explained, “boys did during winter, our chores, cooking, cleaning, spinning went on all year.” Though Mary Smith’s missives failed to demonstrate the command of a scholarly vocabulary, her communication exhibited an easily legible clarity. She produced over a thousand pages of letters and composed numerous formal letters addressed to officials advocating her concerns. While Jones did not record the name of the school or the teachers, there were limited possibilities in 1830s Little Rock.¹²

Her school probably resembled the still standing Albert Pike School House in Van Buren, Arkansas. The historical signage identifies this one-room log building as the 1832 school for the community. There were two strong possibilities for the school Jones attended. Both were operated during the period during which she lived in or near Little Rock, 1829-1833. In the 1830, *Arkansas Advocate* H.M. Wiener advertised a school on the road from Little Rock to Batesville, with tuition set at twelve dollars per year. Jesse Brown opened a coeducational school in Little Rock in 1823. It was successful enough to add a second teacher, C.W. Graham, by 1826. According to the *Arkansas Gazette* of 7 March 1826, they charged twenty-four dollars for a year’s instruction. The school was renamed the Little Rock Academy, and it offered its pupils reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, chronology, bookkeeping, French, and elocution. Interestingly, Mary Smith’s friend and historian Adele Looscan commented that Smith

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spent a great deal of her time with her children’s studies working on their enunciation; she demanded exact pronunciation from them.\textsuperscript{13}

On the national level, Thomas Jefferson completed the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, effectively doubling the size of the United States. Jefferson expressed, “a peculiar confidence in the men from the Western side of the mountains.” This early period fell under elements of both Jeffersonian Democracy and Jacksonian Democracy. Jefferson welcomed the move into Spanish held territory as a means of gaining the land peaceably. Jeffersonian Democracy looked to the west as a repository for the principles of liberty should they be degraded or lost in the East. Mary Jones, like many Texans, expressed faith in their abilities to establish their own democracy and govern themselves. Although she doubted specific individuals, particularly politically, she believed in the Texas pioneers as a whole. In this way, she shared in the Anglo-American optimism.\textsuperscript{14}

Additionally, the United States enjoyed a projection of optimism in the period following the War of 1812. Though not militarily decisive, the perception of defeating a world power provided a boost to national pride. Andrew Jackson’s victory at New Orleans came after the end of the war; however, the size of that victory gave strength to the national mindset of superiority that fed into what would become known as Manifest Destiny. Even though the phrase “Manifest Destiny” did not appear in print until John L. O’Sullivan’s use in 1839, many who migrated west had placed it into practice for decades. Indeed, in an 1803 letter, Fisher Ames described what appeared to him as a

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\textsuperscript{13}Walter Moffatt, “Arkansas Schools, 1819-1840,” \textit{Arkansas Historical Quarterly}, 12 (Summer 1953), 91; Jones, biographical notes, Folder 2, Box 761, MJP.

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mad dash west; “we rush like a comet into infinite space.” The phrase became more a descriptor than an agenda of that period. Many citizens of the United States, along with foreign immigrants, looked west to seek their fortune or a new start, making this an age of expansion. On both her mother’s and her father’s side, Mary’s family took advantage of this opportunity by moving west.\textsuperscript{15}

How did the women express their ideas of expansion and their roles in the move west? Joan E. Cashin found that most women opposed migration, viewing it as a threat to their family and a sundering of familial relationships. On the other hand, Adrienne Caughfield asserts that, “to date historians have paid little attention to women’s perceptions of this phenomenon or their participation in it.” Caughfield convincingly argues that the opinions of women in their belief in “Manifest Destiny” and their participation in the westward expansion has been lost amid the male gendered military, political, and economic histories. Historian Amy S. Greenberg pointed out the incongruities of ignoring the role of women in the migration. Women like Mary Jones and her mother played important roles in making these migrations successful. Women not only maintained the family, but they also played key roles in food production and

preparation. Perhaps it only follows that John Gast’s choice to personify the era in his iconic painting “American Progress” was a pioneer woman. When Sarah Pevehouse Smith chose to immigrate to Texas she did so with no husband to mandate it; this was her decision.\(^\text{16}\)

Many immigrants set their eyes even further west, to Texas. Anglo-Americans came to Texas well before Stephen F. Austin gained permission from the Mexican government to establish a colony of immigrants. Squatters came over the border and took up residence often without benefit of land ownership. There had been a history of incursions into Spanish Texas by entrepreneurs like Philip Nolan and outright invaders like James Long. These unauthorized military-style incursions especially alarmed the Spanish and later Mexican governments, which made them concerned about unlimited Anglo-American immigration and anxious to control all immigration.\(^\text{17}\)

In 1820, Stephen F. Austin’s father, Moses Austin, proposed a scheme to bring immigrants to Texas. Upon the premature death of Moses, his son Stephen took leadership of the project and soon gained official permission to settle three hundred families along the lower Brazos and Colorado Rivers. By March 1821, Austin reported 150 men settled upon these two rivers. Meanwhile the Mexican government needed to confirm the empressario contract for Austin, so he made the journey to Mexico City to argue his case. He received confirmation of his grant in 1823, a grant he essentially fulfilled by the end of 1824. This took place a full nine years prior to Mary’s arrival in the


colony; thus throughout most of her young life, news of a successful colony of Anglo settlers sifted out of Texas to places like the Arkansas Territory.\textsuperscript{18}

Following the outstanding success of his first grant, the Mexican government gave Austin additional grants. Sarah Smith aimed her family towards a spot within Austin’s colony in his second grant. Eventually, Austin’s Colony included five grants. These lands along the Brazos River offered rich bottomland soils and the invaluable river transportation needed to move crops to market. By 1820, the United States set the price of public lands at one dollar and a quarter per acre -- comparatively one hundred times the cost offered by Austin in his Texas colonies. According to historian Gregg Cantrell, Austin planned to charge a twelve-and-a-half cents per acre fee to each of the colonists. Newcomers received excellent financial terms amounting to paying $184. Even these more reasonable costs received deferments, could be paid over a period of time that varied from three to as long as six years, and sometimes were forgiven entirely. The promotion even proffered a seven-year exemption from custom duties and a ten-year exemption from taxes. These financial opportunities surely appealed to a widow like Sarah Smith seeking a new start.\textsuperscript{19}

Historians estimate that Austin eventually attracted close to 1,800 families under these terms. The heads of household could expect a league (\textit{sitio}) of land for grazing and a \textit{labor} of land for farming. These fell under the Spanish system of measurements, Vara, League, and Labor. There were a number of empresarios besides Austin who

\textsuperscript{18} Gregg Cantrell, \textit{Stephen F. Austin: Empresario of Texas} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 73, 75-78, 80, 99, 162-165. Campbell, \textit{Gone to Texas}, 100-106.

gained grants before or under the 1825 law. These included Martin de Leòn, Green DeWitt, Haden Edwards, Frost Thorn, and Robert Leftwich. A number of others procured contracts and attempted to attract colonists to their grants during the years 1826-1831, though with limited success. Still the word went out and thousands heard of the nearly free lands available in Texas; some like the Pevehouse clan already had a family member settled in Texas, surely an added inducement to make the move.\textsuperscript{20}

The Smith and Pevehouse families migrated in separate but related stages to Texas. Their interest in Texas may have begun in the early 1820s, but the timing of their familial migrations was interrupted by deaths, which in turn appeared to precipitate the move of one family and to delay the moving of others. The death of Jacob Pevehouse’s wife, Mary Smith’s grandmother, that same year delayed his move until late in 1834. The death of John Smith in 1832 evidently precipitated his widow’s choice to move in October of 1833. Another event far away in Mexico City played a key role in the timing of Smith’s venture. Earlier, on April 6, 1830, the Mexican Congress passed a bill prohibiting all immigration from the United States. Following a change in government and personal efforts by Austin in Mexico City, the Mexican Congress removed the restriction on immigration from the United States in the fall of 1833. The timing of her move and the reopened opportunity to immigrate to Texas appear related. Even though the actual repeal did not take place until November, anxious immigrants may have anticipated the removal of the prohibition.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} Vará (surveying unit meaning “rod”) = 33.33 inches in Texas, League = 5,000 Varas squared, thus a square league was about 4,428.3 acres, and a Labor = 1 million square Varas or 177.1 acres 605.4 acres; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 105-108; Cantrell, Stephen F. Austin, 124.

\textsuperscript{21} The action of the Mexican Congress was taken in part due to the report given by Manuel de Mier y Terán after his 1828 inspection trip through the Mexican state of Texas, in which his second proposal was to suspend North American settlers, cf. Jack Jackson, ed., \textit{Texas by Terán: The Diary Kept}
Even though the families immigrated over a period of years, by the middle of the 1830s, Smith’s widow and children settled along with all of the large Pevehouse clan in Austin’s Colony along the Brazos River Valley. Historian Owsley noted the existence of individual pioneer families moving, but his research indicated the prevalence of communities and extended families migrating together. Extended clans appeared to settle in the same area. The obvious benefits of mutual support from families within a hostile frontier only heightened the clear benefit for a widow like Smith.22

The Smith/Pevehouse migration had started years earlier with James Pevehouse. Only a year younger than Sarah, he was the eldest son of Jacob and Rachel. James married Mary Hodge in Arkansas around 1823. Hodge’s father, Alexander, was also an early settler of some standing in Arkansas, moving there from Georgia in 1815. He served as a magistrate in Spring River Township and at some point met Stephen F. Austin, who must have spoken to him of the opportunities available in Texas. Hodge began his move to Texas in 1824. He appeared in Austin’s Register of Families in 1826, and received his land grant in 1828 along the Brazos River. His plantation achieved some notoriety as Hodge’s Bend and as a part of Austin’s famed “Old Three Hundred.” James Pevehouse and his wife arrived with his father-in-law’s group the same year. Some family reports place Jacob Pevehouse with the party, but if he traveled with them, he returned to Arkansas where he paid taxes in 1829.23

With at least one family member in Texas, who must have been sending positive reports, others from the Pevehouse family chose to move as well. The government granted Jacob Pevehouse a one-league land certificate in 1833, however, he did not immediately take this up. His wife, Mary’s grandmother, died and he remarried in October 1834 in Arkansas before he moved to Texas. Another son and his wife, David and Cynthia, arrived from Arkansas in 1834 and applied for land 7 Oct 1835. Though Jacob’s status failed to reach that of the large slaveholders, he achieved some recognition as a leader serving as a cavalry Lieutenant in Lawrence County. The move to Texas offered him and his family the opportunity to move further up in economic status. Sarah as a widow with five children left Arkansas for Texas in 1833. While notices of free land in the Brazos Valley attracted her, according to family lore she was faced with the difficulties of farming and rearing five children alone.24

Mary Jones distinctly recalled leaving her home in Arkansas on 23 October, 1833. She remembered joining up with a wagon train headed towards Texas, but none of their relatives appeared to travel with the widow and her five children. The timing of this journey according to family lore related directly to Sarah Smith’s inability to farm and care for five children. Her husband had died the previous year, which would have given her experience of at least one year of planting and harvesting on her own to judge her capacity to farm alone. Although beginning a long journey over winter inevitably included hardship, she needed to arrive in the Colony in time to clear the land and plant it for the next fall’s harvest.25

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24 “Roster of Militia Officers,” Arkansas Gazette, 14 June 1825; Banks, Daughters of the Republic, 19.
25 Mary Jones, biographical notes, Folder 2, Box 761, MJP. Banks, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, 9. The record of John Smith’s death in 1832 did not include the month, but it was possible that his
Mary’s memoir notes do not record the route they took from Arkansas to Texas. She remembered crossing the Sabine River at flood stage. Their journey down to the Sabine River crossing took them nearly four weeks. Two decades after their journey, Frederick Law Olmsted, on his legendary trip to Texas, observed the often brutal experiences of families traveling the rural backcountry roads. These families met with numerous obstacles along their journeys. Poorly maintained roads, accidents, illnesses, muddy lanes, overflowing rivers and streams all factored into making the journey slow. He determined that a good day might cover fifteen miles. Delays for bad weather commonly lasted days with no progress for the settler heading west. From Mary’s reminiscences, she took the rugged journey in stride and perhaps gained some of the characteristic fortitude and perseverance that served her in later hardships.26

One of the potential choices for their route connected Arkansas to Texas as early as 1813. Using existing Indian trails, Nicholas Trammell established a horse path, which was later in 1824 widened to enable wagons to make the trip. This 180-mile trail joined the Southwest Trail at Fulton, Arkansas. It crossed the Sabine River near a place called Tatum. The route stretched longer from Little Rock, Arkansas, to well over 200 miles. It had been a wet fall. Many rivers swelled with runoff overflowed their banks. Prior to railroads and bridges, a ferry was a basic conveyance for crossing rivers too deep to ford. The Sabine River featured a number of possible choices for ferry crossings in 1833. The filibusterer Philip Nolan used Hickman’s Ferry in 1801, later renamed Burr’s

widow, Sarah Smith might have experienced some portion of an agricultural seasonal cycle on her own that same year. She definitely waited to move until the end of the harvest season the following year, providing her with a realistic understanding of the level of her own ability to farm the Arkansas land on her own.

Ferry, when he entered Texas. Several trails merged on the Texas side near this ferry, including the Coushatta Trace. Gaines Ferry on the Sabine River, along the Old San Antonio Road, had been used for over four decades before the Smith party migrated to Texas. A host of lesser-known ferries operated along the Sabine: Elliot’s Ferry, Walling’s Ferry, Brown’s Ferry, Gourdneck Ferry, and various others in towns along the Sabine River.27

The Smiths and their wagon trail evidently found no working ferries, not an unexpected circumstance in light of the flooding that fall. Though ferries could include any number of construction techniques or styles, most were stable platforms meant to carry people with their wagons and livestock safely across. They often strung ropes across the river to assist the ferryman in their crossings. Due to the swollen nature of the river, either the ford was too deep or the ferry might have washed away. Jones reported that the men of the wagon train “hastily” constructed their own rafts made from mulberry logs held together with wooden pegs driven into auger holes. Their ingenuity and expertise in providing a way across testified to their frontier skills. Having built their own rafts, they ferried the twenty families across on that Monday, a cold day, 18 November 1833.28

According to one account, they still had almost 300 miles to go before reaching the Brazos Valley settlement. A direct line would mean closer to 235 miles, but given potential detours due to the swollen streams and rivers, their journey conceivably took

far longer. Mary Jones recalled, “Our journey from the Sabine was long tedious and attended with much suffering from cold and rains which prevented our reaching our place of destination until about the first of January 1834.”

The pace of their first leg down to the Sabine River indicated a rate of less than nine miles per day, given the distance from Little Rock, Arkansas, to the Sabine River crossing at Trammel's Trace. Dependent upon the actual distance traversed on the last section to Austin's Colony, the average rate fell to between five and seven miles per day. This would reflect the problems created by the reported flooding. Another Texas pioneer, Pleasant W. Rose and family started for Oyster Creek in the Brazos Valley that same December 1833 with a two-wheeled ox cart. They found the prairie covered in water and the bayou overflowing, so they made only six miles their first day. All pioneer travelers faced difficult conditions, but the length of this journey posed additional hardships on Sarah Pevehouse Smith, a single mother of five, who needed to provide for her family on a journey that covered over two months. Mary’s personal definition of motherhood took form when she witnessed the self-reliance and courage displayed by her own mother who never abandoned nor gave up her children. Nearly sixty years later Mary remembered very little of the work done by the men; primarily she recalled the example of her brave mother.

Why would a widow with five children move to Texas? Sarah Pevehouse Smith took a calculated but reasonable risk for potentially strong rewards. Her children at the
time of the move had been too young to aid her in staying on their Arkansas farm. Her oldest, Mary, was only fourteen years old, her two sons were twelve and seven, and her two youngest daughters were only six and one. Whatever aid she received from her extended family in Arkansas would vanish as they moved to Texas. During that first crucial year her father and extended family remained in Arkansas.  

This relocation would ultimately enable them to maintain contact with the larger family circle. Additionally, Texas governments had a history under the Spanish government of providing land grants to women; these usually went to women who were either the head of the household or whose husbands had died after the grant had been initiated. Ownership of land was possible for women in Spanish Texas; three of the top ten cattle owners at Bèxar in 1779 were women ranchers, and twenty-four women headed their own households in 1799 Nacogdoches. The government transplanted Spanish legal customs to Texas and Castilian law granted women the right to own property in their own name.  

Therefore, Smith had a reasonable expectation of gaining her own headright lands. In fact, Austin and other empresarios granted headrights to women when they were heads of households. Eugene Campbell Barker noted in *The Austin Papers*, that any head of family “male or female” could claim headrights of up to 4,605 acres. Most of them were widows at the time of the land grants. An example of this occurred in the case of Jane Hebert Wilkinson Long, a widow of early settler James Long, when Austin

gave her title to a league and a labor of land on August 24, 1824. This opportunity for women, particularly widows, to receive land grants continued through the Republic era into statehood. Other renowned women and widows, who the public connected with Texas patriotism, received land grants of their own as well. That included Sarah Ann Vouchere Walker, the widow of Jacob Walker of Alamo fame. The Republic of Texas issued her Headright Certificate Number One constituting one league and one labor.  

Though many of the widows were connected to male Texas heroes, other instances like Sarah Smith’s occurred as well. Like Smith, Jane Mason Wilkins moved as a widow to Texas in 1822 from Florence, Alabama. Though she married a doctor in Texas, he soon died and left her widowed again. She received her headright on May 26, 1827 in Fort Bend County. Interestingly, prior to widowhood or even to marriage one of Wilkins’s daughters received her own headright of a league in 1831. Additionally, Abigail Fokes arrived in Texas from Florida already widowed and received a land grant in Robertson’s Colony in 1835. Even though statistically few in numbers––enough to call these particular cases rare––Smith’s decision to attempt emigration as a widow prior to arrival proved advantageous to her. Mary Jones witnessed these examples of women taking control over their own lives during widowhood; all potentially became models for her later in both the principles and practice of personal agency and land ownership. 

The strength and resilience of widows choosing to immigrate and to acquire their own property during this early period mitigates the image of helpless women and

powerful frontiersmen. As early as 1825, Austin’s Colony contained fifty-nine male heads of household and one female head of household. Austin’s records listed Elizabeth Tumlinson as a farming widow with four children. The ages of her sons likely made a difference in her choice to stay; her oldest two sons were twenty and nineteen. Obedience Fort Smith bore ten children by 1812 when her husband died in Jackson, Mississippi. She moved as a widow with her son, daughter, and four grandchildren. She applied for and received a headright of 4,606 acres in 1838. Whereas, in the case of Sarah Smith, the overall youth of the children made this family unique, Smith arrived without any adult male to assist her in her farming. Two of her relatives were in the colony when she arrived, but there was no record of how much they supported her or if they helped her at all.  

Over time, due to death and abandonment, the widows gained company. Austin’s Register of Families listed twenty widows living in his colony. The rules and expectations included exceptions; Austin promised his widowed cousin, Mary Austin Holly, the grant of a league of land if she established residency. Holly visited Texas five times, never staying longer than one year, and still Austin granted her the land. In the case of Sarah Smith, her gamble paid off and she received two land certificates in Austin’s Colony.  

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Smith exercised the privilege of choice and gave her children the example of a strong and capable female. Even after her attempts to farm and rear five young children in Arkansas failed, she chose to forego the more obvious choices open to her and elected not to move back to her father’s home or quickly to remarry. She exercised an option not immediately dependent upon male support. Mary Jones’s biographical notes failed to indicate assistance from any family members on their journey to Texas; her mother exercised independent thinking and action to achieve her goals. Many antebellum women lived with gendered restrictions, generally subjected to the will of a father or of a husband. Though she chose eventually to remarry, initially Smith determined to be her own person and displayed a strength witnessed by her daughter during these difficult years. When Mary Jones experienced widowhood the second time as a mother, she too chose not to remarry and decided to become a female head of household.

Mary Jones described their life from 1834 until early 1836 as difficult but happy. Her mother tasked her to assist with the children, presumably so that she could attend to making a living. Mary Jones observed that they “had to endure many hardships and privations in our little log cabin home.” Her teenage years proved formative for her ability to endure difficulties and discover a brighter side. When asked about the primitive conditions, she replied, “amid privations too numerous to mention we enjoyed life quite as much as people now appear to do surrounded with their thousands, etc. comforts then unknown to us.” Harriette Andreadis in her studies of Texas women from this period pointed out that most women wrote, “Unaware of participating in a historical event,” but that later accounts might focus on the value of that to the mythology of the
West or Texas. These written memories proved useful to her work later with the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT). Mary Jones wrote these words fifty years after the events of that period, and they revealed how Mary wanted to remember that time in her life. The theme of overcoming pioneer privations fit well into a later DRT understanding of Texas history. This view provided a primarily Anglo-centric interpretation of destiny that included their endurance in the crucible of frontier life, which prepared them to take their places to lead Texas into the future.\(^{37}\)

Myriad obstacles faced the pioneer women of Texas and these only proved harsher yet for the widowed mother attempting to shelter her family and provide for it through farming. “Their graves shall yet be found, and their monuments dot here and there 'The Dark and Bloody Ground.'” The San Felipe de Austin Telegraph and Texas Register of 1837 published this eulogistic front-page poem, titled “The Mother of the West,” that praised pioneer women. Sarah Smith, born in the Tennessee backcountry and raised in the Arkansas wilderness surely found both familiar circumstances along with new challenges on the Texas frontier. The journey and the harsh realities faced upon arrival proved daunting to many, most likely to Smith as well. Once she arrived, she faced clearing the land alone. In particular, new settlers needed ready access to water, but the previous fall had seen so many floods that it went down as the “overflow of 1833.” Now Smith needed to locate land dry enough to plant but close enough to water in time to make a crop for her family.\(^{38}\)


\(^{38}\) “Mother of the West,” San Felipe de Austin, Telegraph and Texas Register, 27 January 1837, 1 (first quotation); Jones, Texas Roots: Agriculture, 20 (second quotation).
Fane Downs noted in her extensive research in Texas that women’s immigration experiences varied, but certain patterns emerge from the data. Though many appeared to move with trepidation, some journeyed with eager expectations, which changed to sober resignation, and concluded in absolute grief. If one of Smith’s motives for relocating to Texas included a failure at solo farming after the loss of her husband, beginning anew on uncleared lands must have proved daunting in reality. Yet, her previous yeoman farming existence served as experiences when moving to new lands that she owned outright to start over. Once families arrived on the frontier, initial attempts to erect shelter often resulted in hastily built huts or lean-tos. These typically inexpert shelters failed to reach true log cabin status for years. Robert Hunter’s family arrived in Texas in the mid-1820s; their description of life provides a probable window on the typical timeline for new settlers. First, they erected a primitive lean-to in which they lived for three to four years while they planted corn as quickly as possible. The priority of food trumped all but the most basic of shelters. They only built a log structure later. Widows like Sarah Smith, without grown children, might have struggled even more with the physical hardships.39

Clearing wooded lands required time and large investments of hard labor. Neither Smith nor her daughter Mary provided any details of how they accomplished this task. An early Texas emigrant family, the Rabbs, utilized the quick technique of burning off a canebrake upon their arrival in order to acquire fertile and cleared land for planting. The burning provided a fast and laborsaving solution; additionally it enhanced soil quality for planting. Smith had this option along with the possibility of hiring others

39 Downs, Tryels and Trubbles, 36, 39; Jones, Texas Roots: Agriculture, 107; Jones provides a valuable and lengthy discussion on log cabins, 107ff.
through cash or even the barter of some of her own land grant in exchange. The Smiths like the Rabbs probably did not have the luxury to consider fencing over planting food crops. Pioneers erected fences less often to keep animals in than to keep them out of their gardens and crops. The Rabb family camped out that first spring and summer with their crops; the Smith clan likely resorted to the same tactics to ensure the safety of their own crop.\textsuperscript{40}

Life changed for young Mary after her settlement in Texas. Eighteen months after arriving in Texas, Sarah Smith posted a marriage bond with John Woodruff, a widower with six children of his own. Prior to the Texas Revolution and under Mexican law, all marriages needed formalization by a Roman Catholic priest. Only one, Father Michael Muldoon served the entire Texas area and then only from 1831 to 1832. Without recourse to an ordained representative of the church who could regularize their marriage, it became the practice of Texans to post a marriage bond with the government. In one instance, Empressario Green DeWitt married John Oliver and Nancy Curtis and defended it as something done after the “custom in Austin’s colony.” The actual wording clearly notes that this civil marriage bond could be resolved by marriage before a priest later.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} Mary Crownover Rabb, “‘Trials and Troubles’ in Texas,” in Ann Fears Crawford and Crystal Sasse Ragsdale, eds., \textit{Women in Texas}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed (Austin, Texas: State House Press, 1992), 17.

\textsuperscript{41} Mary Jones, biographical notes, Folder, 3 Box 761, MJP; Helen Swenson, trans. and comp. \textit{8800 Texas Marriages}, vol. I, A-L, 1824-1850. (Round Rock, Texas: N.p., 1981) 70; Banks, \textit{Daughters of the Republic}, 298. \textit{Handbook of Texas Online}, s.v. “Muldoon, Michael,” http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/MM/fmu2.html (accessed September 7, 2010); Gonzales Co. marriage records (Book A, p. 10, #1) – “... are held and firmly bound to the other in the penal sum of ten thousand dollars, well and truly to be paid, ... there being as yet no church erected in this colony, or ecclesiastical authority established in said colony, and it being a great distance to San Antonio de Bexar, ... , as is the custom in Austin’s colony in such cases; Now, therefore, it is fully understood by and between the said parties, that if they do faithfully appear before some priest or person legally authorized to solemnize marriage as soon as circumstances will permit, and be married as the lase of this government may require, why then this bond to be forever void.” – performed by Empresario Green De Witt, 5 March 1829.
The outbreak of open battle and the prospect of ongoing conflict likely played some role in the timing of this marriage bond. The Mexican government released Austin from prison in July 1835. General Martin Perfecto de Cos landed a force of 300 men on the coast on 20 September and marched toward Goliad. Some historians point to the Battle of Gonzales on 2 October 1835 as the start of the Texas Revolution. Events rapidly moved forward as Texians occupied the presidio at Goliad on the 9th and Austin led army volunteers towards San Antonio on the 11th; perhaps Woodruff felt some urgency to complete his marriage plans before he too joined the volunteers before the old mission walls in San Antonio. His marriage gave his own children a mother in case he failed to survive the hostilities.\(^{42}\)

Woodruff’s life and influence played a determinative role in the early formation of Mary Jones and her family members. He and his wife Rhody Wade had arrived at Austin’s Colony in January 1831, exactly two years before the Smith family reached the settlement. Austin’s *Register of Families* listed Woodruff as a forty-one-year-old farmer from Tennessee along with two boys and four girls. A number of sources placed John Woodruff’s farm on Oyster Creek, near the Brazos River. A number of relatives related to Sarah Smith lived on or near Oyster Creek. These included Alexander Hodge, Smith’s future brother-in-law Leo Roark, James Pevehouse, and Smith herself. At some point, Woodruff’s wife died, leaving him with six children and a farm. Just as a widow faced daunting physical demands on a farm without a husband’s aid, so too the widower without his wife’s work discovered himself at a loss for womanpower to provide

everything from food preparation and clothing needs to child-care and educational resources.⁴³

Oyster Creek, east of the Brazos River in Austin’s Colony

The proximity of the Woodruff and Smith farms coupled with their mutual single status with multiple children provided the opportunity for both to consider marriage for a number of practical reasons. Woodruff speaking of Sarah Smith, said he “admired the widow’s spunk in doing a man’s work on the farm while capable young Mary ran the

⁴³ Williams, Stephen F. Austin’s Register, 78; Wharton, Wharton’s History, 45-46.
home.” No record of Woodruff’s length of time as a single parent remains, however, from the practical viewpoint, he found that Sarah was an able-bodied woman who had mothering skills, and she had a daughter old enough to free her for farm work. Nothing in Mary’s letters or other written material commented on whether a romantic connection existed. No conclusion may fairly exist upon silence in the records, but the match appeared to benefit Smith as well as Woodruff.44

After shelter and food concerns, pioneer families in the Austin colonies faced potential threats from the peoples they displaced from the land. Especially prior to her marriage, the new Sarah Smith Woodruff knew the constant rumor and reality of attacks from the Native American tribal groups. As a married woman in Arkansas Territory, she must have been aware of Indians, but now she lived in an area where other pioneer families experienced raids by various Native American tribal groups. These raids proved disruptive to agriculture and caused some evacuations along the upper-Brazos area during the mid-1830s. John Holland Jenkins, an early settler, detailed numerous raids and counter raids between Anglo settlers and the Caddo, Tonkawa, Cherokee, and Comanche. His recollections betrayed the pervasive fear many Texas pioneers experienced over what they saw as savage and unprovoked Indian assaults and, secondly, revealed a thorough ignorance of Native Americans. Jenkins consistently interpreted the actions of individual Native Americans in negative terms. Any idea of displacing, “savages” from their lands fell to the strength of what others eventually labeled Manifest Destiny. Mary’s recollections of this pre-Revolutionary period omit

44 Banks, Daughters of the Republic, 19: Sarah’s name becomes interchangeable with the familiar “Sally” in many of the familial documents.
specific conflicts with Indians, yet, these concerns emerged later during her years in Austin.\(^{45}\)

Not every Texas settler struggled with Native Americans. Many of the German settlements prided themselves on good relationships with those tribes living and hunting in Texas. There were circumstances in which a lone female successfully coexisted on the Texas frontier with them for neighbors. Though she apparently wished to be otherwise located, Harriet A. Ames spent an entire year with only Native Americans for near neighbors. In 1834, the Brazos Valley definitely saw its share of raids and murders. On the practical side of the balance, Sarah Smith by marrying John Woodruff stood to gain a partner to assist in protecting and rearing her children in a difficult and often violent world.\(^{46}\)

Texas pioneer life hardened and molded women in an annealing process of successive pressures and obstacles. Females were not the only ones to recognize the realities of their situation. An early settler, Noah Smithwick, observed of Texas pioneer ladies, that they “talked sadly . . . of the hardships and bitter privations they were undergoing and the dangers that surrounded them.” He quoted a woman as illustrative of a female’s lot on the frontier; she stated that Texas was “a heaven for men and dogs, but a hell for women and oxen.” Many had left friends, family, and their old homes behind. These women found much of their life centered on their children, while men had the freedom to seek excitement in their hunting and travels. Without a record of Smith’s


own thoughts, Andreadis’s research, compiled from the diaries and journals of Texas women, reveal insightful commonalities in their experiences, some of which likely applied to Smith. Though each woman was an individual, many revealed that they often felt isolated, led monotonous lives, suffered from feelings of inadequacy, found comfort in religion, and voiced discomfort with the disparity between their public and private selves. Smith could not turn to her own mother for companionship and advice; she had died in Arkansas. After a decade-and-a-half of marriage, Smith knew both the benefits and challenges that wedding another man could bring.47

More than proximity to Sarah Smith’s farm made John Woodruff an interesting marital prospect in the Brazos Valley. His role in the community could have been appealing to Smith as well. He was a Baptist minister, though no record of a regular church appointment exists; he was known to preach when occasion offered him the opportunity. He developed enough of a reputation as a religious leader in the community that others sought him for religious services. A public assembly provided a glimpse at Woodruff’s spiritual reputation in his community. An early trial in the Oyster Creek vicinity attracted a large crowd. Woodruff arrived at the gathering with Ben Fort Smith, and others called upon him to preach a sermon, perhaps covering the particular crime of the defendant on trial. Two women were inspired to sing “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand;” later some recalled that it was the first religious service in Fort Bend County. Woodruff was not the first Baptist minister to enter the state, but he was indeed one of the earliest. Baptist history does note that one of their first well-known ministers, Noah T. Byars, was ordained into the Baptist ministry on October 16, 1841 by a

presbytery composed of Z. N. Morrell and John Woodruff. Smith must have been aware of his role as a Baptist minister and the potential leadership roles that he would play in their community.\textsuperscript{48}

The vicissitudes of war soon caught up with the newly linked Woodruff and Smith households. Woodruff joined the volunteer forces with Stephen F. Austin in the siege of Bexar. This did not give the newlyweds long to be together before Woodruff felt the need to fight. He left for service two days after their marriage and served with Austin’s forces until November 23, 1835. This coincided with Austin’s abortive attempt to break the siege of Bexar with an attack. The records show that the men refused to attack under Austin; subsequently many of the volunteers abandoned the besieging army and returned to their homes. Woodruff’s thoughts on the execution and management of the war did not survive. His decision to leave the forces besieging Bexar at this time could reflect his disappointment with the leadership of Austin, some personal issues with the conditions of the camps, or he might well have considered that a month away from his bride was enough.\textsuperscript{49}

No record of his family’s attitude towards Woodruff’s military absence exists; however, women in the path of the subsequent war often expressed the desire for the added protection of their husbands at home. Even though he was a minister by calling, Woodruff was not a religious pacifist or conscientious objector. Prior to the siege of

\textsuperscript{48} Duncan W. Robinson, \textit{Judge Robert McAlpin Williamson: Texas’ Three-legged Willie} (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1948), 85-86, in this version a Mrs. Rose wanted preaching; Woodruff had no Bible so he did not preach but elected to pray instead for everyone to lead “pure lives.” William B. Travis represented the defendant, Patrick Jack the plaintiff, and David G. Burnet was the judge in this outdoor trial; Wharton, \textit{Wharton’s History}, 45-46; Benjamin Franklin Fuller, \textit{History of Texas Baptists} (Louisville, KY: Baptist Book Concern, 1900), 49.

Bexar, he volunteered for the mission to the fort at Velasco during the standoff at Anahuac in 1832. Texans proudly recalled this confrontation as a contest between 112 farmers protecting their rights and a group of trained Mexican soldiers within a fort. Their perceptions of the validity of their cause colored their interpretations of such armed conflicts. There were numerous casualties on both sides of the Velasco conflict before Lieutenant-Colonel Domingo de Ugartechea surrendered this command. In Woodruff, Mary gained a stepfather with strong religious convictions and a man prepared to fight in defense of his newly adopted region. Mary Jones admired these qualities and interpreted Texas history through the lens of courage and spiritual devotion.⁵⁰

A number of insights into Woodruff’s character arise from his actions and from his participation in this clash and willingness to volunteer again in 1835. First, as a volunteer in both conflicts, he displayed a high level of courage and loyalty to his Texian community. In spite of the disparities in casualty statistics, which was common after combat, accounts agree that a sizable portion of theTexians were killed or wounded, estimated at nearly one in three. Having experienced a military conflict and the loss of friends to the fight, he joined again following his marriage. Secondly, he was not the only preacher at the battle; an Episcopal priest, John Wurts Cloud, Sr. also fought at Velasco. Like Woodruff, his primary means of support came as a stock raiser and planter. Texas settlers did not expect their ministers to take a passive role, nor was their

⁵⁰John Henry Brown, History of Texas, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Daniell, 1893), 182-188; Brown interviewed survivors who gave him the names and numbers – 34 casualties of 112 Texians and 112 casualties of 150 Mexican troops, other sources vary on total casualties reducing the number of Mexican troops killed to around 5 with 16 wounded. For more on this battle see Henry Smith, “Reminiscences of Henry Smith,” Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 14 (July 1910), 38-44; P. E. Pearson, “Reminiscences of Judge Edwin Waller,” Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, 4 (July 1900), 33-39.
involvement in war considered exceptional enough to bring censure. His example of compatibility between war and faith found its expression in Mary Jones as well. She found a way to marry the ideas of faith and conflict in her interpretation of the rise of Texas through resistance and armed struggle.\(^{51}\)

Mary Jones recorded in detail her impressions during the Texas Revolution. She and her family experienced this period differently than the soldiers and leaders who fought. She said that they all felt “much anxiety” over “the Mexican invasion of our state.” They evidently hoped to stay on their farm as long as possible and did not leave until after the fall of the Alamo, therefore, they left after it fell on March 6, 1836. She failed to provide the actual date of their departure, though, approximate dates arise based upon known facts and exigencies around them. In context, inhabitants of communities closer to the battle areas like San Antonio, San Patricio, and Refugio began evacuating as early as January 1836. The sudden and often panicked exodus of the settlers along the river basin communities from the Guadalupe, Colorado, Brazos, and San Jacinto Rivers eastward is known as the “Runaway Scrape.”\(^{52}\)

Historians date the start of this flight on March 11, 1836, when Houston ordered a retreat for his army and the evacuation of Gonzales. Messengers went east carrying news of both the fall of the Alamo and the retreat of the Texas army. With varying degrees of preparation and in varying degrees of haste, the populace sought places of safety. The Woodruff household eventually joined this popular migration. Rumors carried real and exaggerated fears about the behavior of the oncoming Mexican troops.

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\(^{52}\) Jones, biographical notes, Folder 3, Box 761, MJP (quotation).
One journal of a Mexican officer admitted that at least some Mexican units had a reputation for pillage. José Enrique de la Peña singled out Ramirez y Sesma’s soldiers for creating bitter feelings and producing opportunities for accusations of banditry. These poorly supplied troopers often ate whatever livestock the settlers left behind in their haste to retreat, drank the alcohol, and at least sometimes demolished furniture. Other Mexican sources defended the behavior of their troops while in Texas. After the war, several Mexican generals protested these accusations of banditry to the point of proclaiming that they, in fact, protected the private property of the Texas citizens, particularly in the Colorado and Brazos river communities. These after-the-war protestations would not have soothed the fears of the settlers in the paths of their armies. Adding to the general fears was the rise of local outlaw bands; in some cases they terrorized localities with robbery, assault, and murder.  

Mary recorded a shocking admission; her family waited until the Mexican forces reached a spot only a couple of hours away from their home. Mary’s enlarged family now included eleven children and her mother who, needed to seek safety. So why did they wait for their exodus until the Mexican army came within six miles of their home? The answer to this question probably involved several elements. First, these agricultural settlers depended upon successful harvests to survive each year, which made the spring planting period essential. An awareness of first frost dates resided with farmers,

who depended upon knowing when to plant their crops, usually corn. Barring large
fluctuations in timing, modern seed companies note a 30 percent chance of a killing
frost as late as March 7 for the Oyster Creek area. William Fairfax Gray’s records of the
temperatures from near the Brazos River for this period included two “northerns” and
several days into early March when his thermometer measured close to freezing.
Planting took time, Jones’s family needed to wait as long as possible in order to avoid a
potential killing frost and to sow enough ground to see a dozen people through the next
winter.\(^{54}\)

Other potential elements that played into their apparent delay in leaving could
have included the hope that Jones’s stepfather could come and aid them. A number of
stories from this period indicated that husbands and sons left Houston’s army to help
their families escape the advancing Mexican armies. Though these stories indicated
that desertions took place, the concern these men had for their particular families often
outweighed their sense of loyalty to the whole of Texas. Could this possible hope
coupled with the belief that Houston and the army might stop them on the Colorado
River or even the nearby Brazos River, have worked into the decision to delay to the
last possible moments? According to Woodruff’s military service and pay records for this
period, his enlistment began the day prior to the fall of the Alamo. He was enrolled from
March 5 to June 5, 1836, for which his pay totaled twenty-four dollars. No records,
personal or military, indicate that Woodruff returned to assist his large clan escape.
Oyster Creek in many places flowed about six miles to the west of the Brazos River,

\(^{54}\) Jones, biographical notes, Folder 3, Box 761, MJP; Burpee Seed Co. s.v. “Freeze-frost-dates,”
September 2010); William Fairfax Gray, From Virginia to Texas, 1835: Diary of Col. Wm. F. Gray
(Houston: Fletcher Young, 1965), 119-126.
thus based upon Mary’s memory, they probably waited until the Mexican army reached
the Brazos before leaving.\(^5\)

Ultimately, the yet unborn child, Eliza Austin Woodruff, probably figured into their
belated escape from their home. Sarah was pregnant with her sixth child at the time
their neighbors packed and left. Given a normal gestational period, she was over five
months pregnant when they felt compelled to leave. Mary never stated this as a reason,
however, few women wrote in detail of pregnancy during this era. Pregnancy seldom
reached the pages of even the most personal letters and diaries kept by frontier women.
The image of a pregnant woman packing up eleven children in an attempt to elude a
hostile army during inclimate weather paints the veritable definition of “formidable.”\(^6\)

Santa Ana’s army reached San Felipe on the Brazos on 7 April and crossed over
near Fort Bend on the 12th. According to Mary’s timeline, she and her family loaded
their wagon with food and family and left heading east between the 7th and the 12th as
the Oyster Creek settlements were only a few miles from the Brazos at most. Due to
their late start, Mary explained that, “consequently, we failed of our purpose to get into
the United States.” They were fortunate and had an ox team for transportation. They
loaded bedding and ticks that they could fill will straw later. Their supplies included more
than many of the others on the run. They had some cooking utensils, clothes, coffee,
bacon, corn, and a mill for grinding corn. The roads around them filled with other

Texas, State Tax Office, Republic Claims, “Service Record: John Woodruff,” 5 June 1836. This discharge
reads: “certify that John served as a private in volunteer army of Texas 3 months.”
\(^6\) “Death of Former Alpine Citizen” *El Paso Herald* 21 March 1912; epitaph Evergreen Alameda
Cemetery, El Paso, Texas; born 12, July, 1836.
families leaving. Some of those walked, others possessed wooden sleds to drag, and a few had wagons using solid wheels fashioned from tree trunks. 57

The powerful memories of those days remained with Jones for many long years. She described the tragic circumstances of those around them as they made their escape. News came that the Texian army had crossed the Brazos River; this along with other rumors caused many to abandon what they carried and to flee. Mary described abandoned camps complete with trucks and meals left behind. At one place, a mirror remained fastened to a tree where a man appeared to have left in mid-shave. These poignant vignettes illustrated the danger the Texian settlers felt as they sought safety and further engrained in Mary a sense of the importance of this era in Texas history. 58

The Woodruff clan, like others blocked from their goal of reaching Louisiana where a United States army was waiting, sought cover off the road. Some of their group acted as scouts for them. They moved ahead to reconnoiter the route and to check for possible enemies. When they learned that Mexican troops blocked their way across the San Jacinto River, they turned aside. Mary later recalled, “We left the road and sought shelter and protection in the timber of Clear Creek where we remained until after the Battle of San Jacinto.” They were decidedly not alone, Jones remembered that their little corn mill supplied some thirty families as they sheltered in the off-road timbered area. On April 21st they heard the sounds of battle and “distinctly” heard the booming of the cannons. At some point, they determined that they were no more than eight miles from the actual battlefield. All of this made a strong impression on the sixteen-year-old

57 Campbell, Gone to Texas, 152; Jones, biographical notes, Folder 3, Box 761, MJP (quotation). Apparently Mary’s family were attempting to cross the Sabine River into Louisiana where they would enjoy the protection of United States troops.
58 Jones, biographical notes, Folder 3, Box 761, MJP.
Mary; her sense of pride in Texas as a whole and in this period grew throughout her long life.\textsuperscript{59}

Jones failed to name any of those who either traveled or sheltered with them on their bid to escape the invading Mexican troops, however, at least one of the extant stories bore apparent similarities. Jones’s aunt Cynthia Hodge Pevehouse lived near her father, Alexander Hodge, on Oyster Creek. Cynthia’s daughter Clarinda Pevehouse Kegans, recorded her experiences of the Runaway Scrape, some of which bore a likeness to those of Jones. They too failed to reach the United States and so “crouched in a clump of trees listening to the Battle of San Jacinto.” The probability of near neighbors and close relatives traveling together suggests the possibility that other descriptions might conjoin to form a more complete picture. Kegans related that under normal conditions Hodge found little time for his grandchildren, but that changed during their escape. They traveled by night, and as they walked her grandfather developed a habit of clasping a child’s hand in his own; during the night they heard him laughing and cajoling as they walked. Many stories emerged, each with its own pathos. The men may have played the primary roles in the battles, but the women shared equally in the pioneer work of settlement and this period of escape from the oncoming armies. For Mary, this period formed a basis for her sense of belonging to Texas.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid (quotation).
Stephen F. Sparks, pioneer and participant in the battles of the Texas Revolution, observed the hardships of the Runaway Scrape, particularly upon the women involved. He concluded that,

It is impossible to tell of the courage and fortitude of our women at that time. The streams were all overflowed, and the bottom lands were from a foot to waist deep in water. The younger and stouter women would take the feeble ones on their backs and shoulders and wade through the water to dry land, set them down, and then go back for another load, and continued until all were over. There is no one who can do justice to the women at that time. God bless the women of Texas!

Apparently Sparks must have realized, at least by 1908, that the heroic tales that surfaced in the history books focused on the men, but few told of the brave efforts of the women. He served as the last president of the Texas Veterans Association and died in 1908. He knew the women who belonged to the DRT set themselves up initially as the auxiliary of the Texas Veterans. As his group dwindled in number due to their age and health, these aging men needed assistance at their meetings and relied upon the ladies of the DRT. The stories these women told of their experiences became more evident in the Texas narrative. The work and stories of women like Mary Jones helped men like Sparks to recognize and to value the role of women in the story of Texas.  

The military phase of the Texas Revolution marked primarily by defeats and retreats came to a sudden and surprising end. Though full security for the newly formed Republic of Texas would prove elusive, the decisive victory of the Texian force over Santa Anna’s troops at the Battle of San Jacinto opened the door for the families who fled their homes and farms along the southeastern coastal regions to return. The capture of Santa Anna that followed the Battle of San Jacinto turned a short battle into

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61 Sparks, “Recollections,” 74; José de la Peña, With Santa Anna, 97-99. Diary entries recorded multiple violent storms, abundant rains, and rivers so full that it took great efforts for the Mexican forces to cross.
an enduring victory. The new government offered Santa Anna freedom for a treaty that ended the war and moved all Mexican armies south of the Rio Grande. Santa Anna signed this agreement, known as the Treaty of Velasco, on 14 May 1836. Unknown to Mary, only a teenager at the time, many of the men who fought in the battle, and even the location of the fight would all play prominent roles in her life.\textsuperscript{62}

The immediate concerns of those who survived the Runaway Scrape proved almost overwhelming. First, they needed to make their way home to see what destruction if any came to their homes, crops, material goods, and livestock. Upon returning, Mary discovered that essentially everything they left behind had been destroyed. Even a woman who dismissed the adversity of pioneer life admitted that these results produced “great hardships.” This devastating outcome covered more than just the Woodruff clan. Pioneer Rosa Kleberg returned home after the battle only to find everything burned--even books. The Klebergs’ loses appeared insurmountable to them as they realized they had less to start over with than they had brought the first time. The psychological impact made it difficult to begin again as they considered all the years of struggle a total loss. Some families simply left rather than start over.\textsuperscript{63}

The loses felt by those returning from the Runaway Scrape varied by location and by individual. When the members of the Rose family returned to Stafford’s Point, they passed the burned Stafford Plantation; the owners lost a sugar mill and a grist mill, but some of their corn remained. When the Roses arrived at their home they found many things overturned or broken, but some things were left intact. The floorboards of their house had been pried up, but the house was not burned. Hogs took up residence

\textsuperscript{62} Campbell, \textit{Gone to Texas}, 160.
\textsuperscript{63} Jones, biographical notes, Folder 3, Box 761, MJP; Rosa Kleberg, “Some of My Early Experiences in Texas,” \textit{Texas Historical Association Quarterly}, 1 (April 1898), 302.
in their home during their prolonged absence; the occupation was easily remedied with a rifle. Prior to leaving, they hid a trunk of clothes and their plow; both of these were where they had left them. They were rebuilding but not from scratch.\textsuperscript{64}

Not all the destruction came at the hands of the Mexican soldiers. In some cases the Texans’ own leader, Houston ordered the burning of buildings and supplies to avoid these potential resources falling into the hands of the Mexican army. Others reported the existence of Texian marauders, who raided the abandoned homesteads before the Mexican army arrived. In still other reports, families frightened by false reports left their homes only to discover that the reporters lied and looted their belongings in their absence. This unsettled period of chaos in Texas history brought out the best and the worst in those who lived through the war. Depredations caused by Texians, however, never made it into Mary’s written recollections.\textsuperscript{65}

Rather than rebuilding in the Brazos Valley, the Woodruff family decided that they would start over somewhere else. True to her nomadic existence up to that point, Mary lived on Oyster Creek just under three years before moving once again. She recorded that they camped in December 1836 where the new town of Houston would be established. She described the town site upon arrival as “then in a wild state with only a few tents for shelters for those who were building houses and camps as shelters for strangers who were flocking here daily.” With the rapid influx, she noted that Houston filled with people but few had houses. On the surface, such a move and the requisite restart after the signal victories of the Texian forces might appear unusual.\textsuperscript{66}

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\textsuperscript{64} Harris, “The Reminiscences,” 173, 177.
\textsuperscript{66} Jones, biographical notes, Folder 3, Box 761, MJP (quotation).
\end{flushright}
Mary’s stepfather apparently followed a consistent strategy in his decisions to move his family. When Woodruff first arrived in Texas in 1831, he settled in the most established colony close to the governing seat. During the “Runaway Scrape,” the Texas congressmen declared independence on 2 March 1836 and promptly fled towards Harrisburg to escape the advancing Mexican forces. When Santa Anna made them his target, the congressmen escaped Harrisburg and landed on Galveston Island. The settlement of Harrisburg, however, did not escape destruction. The Mexican forces burned the town. The first Texas Congress met at Columbia in the Brazos Valley in October that year and planned to locate to a new capital. On November 14, 1836 the congressmen accepted the town of Houston with the offer of buildings and lodgings for a temporary site to which they moved in April the next year. Woodruff moved his family to Houston the month after the government of the Republic of Texas officially made its decision. Later he would relocate them again when the congressional representatives selected a permanent capital at Waterloo, Texas, later renamed Austin.67

Woodruff made arrangements in Houston to advance his fortunes by supplying goods and services to the new government. Prior to moving to Houston and while still living in Brazoria, he evidently ran a boarding house known as the Green Bottom Inn. At least two receipts for Major John Chenoweth exist from June and July 1836 for food and housing owed to Woodruff. The cost of his July bed and board, including supper and breakfast, came to almost half of what Woodruff received for three months of military service. This business proved lucrative enough for Woodruff to build a boarding house

Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “Harrisburg, Texas”
Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “Republic of Texas.”
on his new property in Houston. Apparently, Woodruff had made valuable connections through his military service, his acquaintance with important early settlers, and his business acumen. According to various claims on the Republic, in May 1837 he supplied “beeves,” powder, and lead for the Quarter Master General. For just September 3 to November 9 the Republic commissary owed him $123.26. Later on in 1838, he acquired the government contract to supply hogs for the military hospital. All of this industry suggested an economic boost for his large and growing family. By 1837 they added two more daughters to the eleven children they already had between them. All of this only increased Mary’s responsibilities as a teenager in helping her mother with her younger brothers and sisters.68

Perhaps with his government business and with financial help from the sale of his land on Oyster Creek, Woodruff moved his family to a fifty-acre farm just east of Sam Houston’s thirty-acre ranch not far from the center of the city of Houston. Mary Jones and her family settled just south of Buffalo Bayou, where they soon built a clapboard house large enough to serve as a boarding house. During this period, Woodruff had enough money also to purchase four city lots for a cost of seven thousand dollars. Dilue Rose Harris remembered that in July of 1836, “glowing accounts” of the new city on Buffalo Bayou induced a number of families from Brazoria and Columbia to move there.

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68 Texas Republic Claims, June 16, 1836, State Tax Office, Republic Claims, Austin, Texas, The claim reads, John Woodruff, Green Bottom Inn, for board for self and company, Major John Chenoweth; July 1836, John Woodruff, supper and breakfast, $10.50, Major John Chenoweth; Quartermaster; May 19, 1837; “John Woodruff” for 2 beeves, 18 pounds of powder, and 16 of lead, $35.25; Comptroller, Republic of Texas, Audited Military Claims; “John Woodruff” for 1 Jan 1838 – April 15, 1838, “hogs and pigs killed for Military Hospital,” signed Wilson J. Copes; Accounts and Vouchers; “John Woodruff,” commissary bill, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin, Texas.
This included the Woodruff family. Harris called this catching the “Houston Fever.” The next year the Harris family joined this mini-migration.69

Mary evidently still managed the household while her mother nursed her youngest sister. Though the population was rapidly growing, males dominated among new comers and Mary was now eighteen, older than her mother had been when she first married. Mary failed to record the circumstances surrounding the meeting of her future husband, but she caught the eye of a Kentucky emigrant who came to fight in the Texas Revolution and stayed to make his fortune. Hugh McCrory joined up with Felix Huston’s volunteers but arrived after the battle of San Jacinto. McCrory still received a land grant for enlisting and parlayed that into purchasing downtown lots in Houston.70

Mary remembered meeting the twenty-seven-year-old McCrory in the spring of 1837. They wed July 23, 1837, the day before Mary turned eighteen. Theirs was the first marriage license issued in Houston. A visiting Methodist minister, H. Mathews performed the marriage. A teenaged girl marrying a man ten years or more her senior commonly took place along the frontier during the early nineteenth century. Her own mother’s second marriage eighteen months earlier provided a personal example of a ten-year age difference. Not all Texas pioneer girls married young, but one of Mary’s

69 Louis F. Aulbach, *Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston’s Wilderness Beginnings*, “Sam Houston’s Ranch…in Houston,” http://users.hal-pc.org/~lfa/BB53.html. (accessed 15 Sept. 2010), their fifty acre farm would border West Dallas Ave. near Clay Street on the east to Genesee Street on the west side, later this tract would become the Castanie Subdivision; Beth Dorman and Emily Dorman, comps., *Tax Payers of the Republic of Texas* (Grand Prairie, Texas: Beth & Emily Dorman, 1988); “Tax payers of Harrisburg Co., 1837.”

70 Herbert Pickens Gambrell, *Anson Jones, the Last President of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas, 1964), 99-100.
friends married at the age of thirteen, a young man aged twenty-two. Mary served as a bridesmaid at this wedding.  

That Mary had not asked her stepfather to perform the wedding suggests that he might have been an unlicensed speaker for the Baptists. No record of his founding a congregation or of performing a wedding exists. In her own biographical notes Mary, his own stepdaughter, did not list him as one of the early ministers that she heard preach in Houston. Though she indicated that her family hosted the first church services in Houston, she named Littleton Fowler and a “Mr. Hoes” as the preachers of this early service. Her own stepfather, Woodruff, appeared at the annual sessions of the Baptist association in Texas, but his role did not appear to include weddings. Interestingly, he later served as Justice of the Peace of Precinct 1 in Austin. However, the state did not reserve this role for ministers. 

The newlyweds initially planned to live with the Woodruffs in their large Houston home, at least until they accumulated the essentials to start their own household. Hugh was progressing and already owned a choice corner lot two blocks north of the Court House Square on San Jacinto Street. He created a business partnership with James Wright and started the firm of Wright & McCrory. Less than a month after his marriage

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71 Jones, biographical notes, Box 761; Swenson, *8800 Texas Marriages*, vol. II, 14; Harris, “Reminiscences,” 4 (January 1901), 187; 7 (January 1904), 220.  
his neighbors elected him to the position of alderman on the city council. Obviously a young man with a promising future, McCrory tragically died on September 13. Mary found herself borrowing her mother’s black mourning dress at the age of eighteen. Her mother had worn it just that spring when Mary’s younger brother, William, died at the age of nine. Mary was now a teenage widow and grief already deeply affected her life. Mary experienced the loss of a father, a brother, and now a husband. Much later, other observers praised her stamina under the pain of death, but these early bereavements and the many other family losses touched her deeply.\footnote{Harris County, Texas, Probate Records, Inventory of Hugh McCrory estate, A, 296-297; Gambrell, Anson Jones, 100 – Deed for Lot 6, Block 54, March 10, 1837; Farrell, \textit{First Ladies of Texas}, 50.}

Widows of this period and place found limited options before them. Some remarried quickly, those with adequate finances might stay unmarried, others with adult male children relied upon their aid, and many moved in with relatives. A particularly young widow like Mary often chose to move back in with her parents. Mary and her husband had yet to complete their preparations to move out, and after his death Mary remained with the Woodruffs. She continued to help with the family and the boarding house work. Itinerant preacher William Y. Allen stayed at the Woodruff boarding house and left valuable descriptions of its location and some of the occupants Mary met as she labored there. Allen described “Woodruff’s” as near the old graveyard and that, as a Baptist brother, Woodruff only charged him half-price for room and board. “It was a long walk from the Capital to Woodruff’s, near the old graveyard,” wrote Allen, “where several of us boarded, during the adjourned session of the Second Congress.” Among those who availed themselves of the boarding house, Allen listed Edward Burleson,
Anson Jones, William Wharton, Fairfax Gray, Edward Burleson, and other unnamed congressional representatives.\textsuperscript{74}

The first eighteen years of Mary's life included formative experiences, challenges, relationships, and decisions for her future. Her adult life included some of the patterns developed during her years with her parents and siblings. A good while later her public work and leadership found its purpose from her personal understanding of the importance of the events in this period. Even her sense of self as an adult widow with children had connections to this period of her life. The way she dealt with familial deaths changed over time, but the accumulated effects began in this period. Mary's experiences transcended that critical moment when Mexican Texas became the Republic of Texas, a fact she would utilize to the end of her life.

CHAPTER 3

BECOMING MRS. ANSON JONES: THE MARRIED YEARS, 1837-1858

The years 1837 to 1858 ultimately defined Mary Smith McCrory’s life, which took a decisive turn with her marriage to Anson Jones. In various ways she found a sense of significance and purpose as a wife and as a mother. She chose these family relationships as signifiers that would determine her future as a matriarch of Texas. Her choices within her marriage proved her resilience, practical skills, and adaptability. Mary demonstrated a strong loyalty towards her family and its well-being that even death did not diminish. Although Mary lived in a southern region with gendered roles and cultural expectations, she adapted these commitments to define herself first within her marriage and later as a widow.

This critical period for Mary began with a transformation that came with a name change that became emblematic of her new roles. At least publicly her personal name disappeared as others saw her defined by her relationship to her husband. She not only took her husband’s last name but also to the public she became Mrs. Anson Jones. She appeared to welcome and embrace this relational shift, and in turn she used it to define her significance and purpose. Both in her private and eventually her public life she self-identified as Anson’s wife and later as his widow. While he was alive, Mary used her role as a wife and mother to structure her daily experiences, and following Anson’s
death she continued to utilize the identity and networks formed during her married years.

This central period of Mary’s life lasted two decades, including their courtship, and ended with Anson Jones’s death in 1858. Though Anson’s actions indicated that he might have harbored early doubts about their marriage, Mary never expressed any uncertainties or regret in choosing him for her mate. This fact became significant in light of her ample opportunity to judge his character and nature prior to marriage, for she spent much of her life defending his integrity and reputation. That very defense and relationship enabled her to move into a public position of both respect and leadership as the widow of Anson Jones.

Her courtship and marriage most naturally falls into three major sub-periods. Her unusual and unexpectedly prolonged experience of courtship revealed something of the nature of both Mary and Anson. Their marriage in 1840 took place during his ascendancy to the presidency of the Republic. This early marital period included numerous obstacles, but they in turn provided Mary with her four children and many of her personal connections, upon which she relied as a widow for fifty years. The third period covered the years of marriage on the Barrington plantation, beginning early in 1846. This tumultuous and longest period of their lives enriched many of Mary’s greatest strengths and exposed some of Anson’s fatal weaknesses. The later twelve years did not constitute years of unmitigated decline. Anson experienced some of his clearest moments of contentment, but his sanguine respites were punctuated by restlessness, pain, and a brooding resentment.
Though unconventional, their courtship came with an alacrity unusual for the pensive and deliberative statesman and doctor from Brazoria. Anson was reticent, even in his personal journals, to describe the nature of his attraction to Mary. On occasion Anson could express condemnation of others in words of strong emotion; however, he appeared reluctant to admit softer emotions. His actions proved of enough interest to propel him forward in courting a recently widowed lady half his age. Anson Jones, a single congressman from Brazoria, began boarding at Woodruff’s the same September that Hugh McCrory died in 1837. As a bachelor, Jones no longer enjoyed the aid and services of his sister Mary, whom he sent home to New England in advance of the Mexican forces’ arrival early in 1836.¹

Although they became friendly in the newly formed small community of Houston, any number of previous occasions might have arisen for him to make the acquaintance of Mary McCrory earlier in Brazoria. They may have met there, though neither of them mentioned an acquaintance prior to their Houston courtship. Residence at the Woodruff Inn in Houston insured Anson’s awareness of the young widow, Mary Smith McCrory. Likewise, Mary could not help but notice Jones, who was a successful doctor and congressman. He had the added aura of one who had fought at the Battle of San Jacinto for those still excited by the victory. Though only eighteen years old and very recently widowed, Mary made the acquaintance of the distinguished representative boarding in her home. She waited on the tables for her stepfather and surely listened while her guests voiced their opinions on the political issues of the nascent Republic.

¹ Herbert Gambrell, Anson Jones: the Last President of Texas, 2 ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 55, 103-104.
Certainly, the legislative interests and tasks of the congressman from Brazoria kept him busy and passionate about the new Republic. Anson Jones appeared destined for leadership. He served as chairman of three key committees: privileges and elections, ways and means, as well as the committee on foreign relations. Though bachelors outnumbered available women, Mary’s interest in Anson possibly revealed her practical nature, even though he was ten years older than her.

Contrary to social conventions, an attraction arose between them well before the customary year of mourning was complete. They waited until the spring of 1838 to make their mutual endearment public, and with the permission of her stepfather, Mary doffed the mourning dress and accepted the much older Jones’s proposal of marriage. In spite of the apparent rush to engagement, the wedding would not take place for two more years. Their relatively precipitous engagement took a prolonged and awkward twist, exposing the priorities and characters of both Mary and Anson. The upcoming wedding almost failed to materialize after time, distance, and perhaps reflection. The Second Congress of the Republic adjourned on May 24, 1838. With his duties discharged, Anson returned to Brazoria, evidently intent on preparing for his imminent nuptials and a return to his old medical practice. Unexpectedly, he received an offer from the president, Samuel Houston.

I have resolved to appoint you the agent from this Government, for the purpose of procuring a navy in the United States. . . . In the whole matter there is nothing connected with the politics of the day. God keep me clear of the heat of the natural as well as the political season! When I see you, I will explain some things,
harmless and amusing. Meantime let me know if the situation will be agreeable to you. It will meet with the approbation of all the members of the cabinet.\(^2\)

Anson eschewed answering by letter and rode to see Houston personally. Upon arriving back at the town of Houston, Jones found the offer changed. The president wanted him to represent Texas in Washington, D.C. Jones protested that he only came to Houston to decline the original offer. Evidently, Houston wore him down by appealing to both the patriotism and possibly the “vanity” of Jones. This episode illustrates an element of Jones’s character. He frequently expressed distaste for politics and yet political leadership provided him with a sense of significance. To the end of his life he disdained campaigning for an office and therefore waited for others to seek him out based upon his merit. He criticized those who appeared publicly to seek political office. Houston’s offer of a major political appointment fed his need for recognition enough that he postponed his marriage. Mary’s reaction went unrecorded, yet his decision failed to break the engagement, Mary chose to wait out his ministerial appointment. What started as a gallop down the marital aisle turned into an exceedingly slow and at times hesitant, if not reluctant, walk down that path.\(^3\)

The one year absence unexpectedly doubled to two. During those intervening two years, Mary moved with her Woodruff family as they followed the seat of government to Austin; meanwhile Anson moved in from the frontier of Texas to the diplomatic circles of Washington, D.C. While Mary appeared committed to waiting for

her marriage, Anson apparently developed a romantic interest in another. Anson’s ministerial tasks in Washington included meals with international diplomats, local power brokers, judges, congressmen, even the president of the United States. His companions and interests took him far from a country girl living in a Texas boom town. Though anxious for the recognition and acceptance of others, the Washington social life lacked something for him. Ultimately, Anson struggled in social settings, he enjoyed his acquaintances and yet, he apparently felt lonely and fell into a state of introspection, which in turn produced a level of melancholy in him. Over time he developed the habit of visiting Buckner Thruston’s home, a federal judge, for quiet evenings of chess and discussion. In Thruston he found a congenial host and the semblance of a surrogate family. In that setting he met and, in spite of his engagement, became enamored with the judge’s young daughter Jeanette. According to his own diary, the emotionally aloof Jones judged that the young Thruston was, “the best informed Lady in this Metropolis, & the most agreeable.” It was effusive praise for a man of Jones’s temperament, not the type of declaration he ever made for Mary.  

Distance and time evidently cooled Jones’s attachment to the waiting Mary. Three pieces of evidence indicate the seriousness of Jones’s attraction to this young belle and the resultant distancing from his fiancé. First, an observant nephew visiting Washington, D.C. and the young Jeanette wrote his Texas uncle; in the letter he opined that Jones lacked discernment in matters of love. He indicated that Jones did not realize

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4 Gambrell, Anson Jones, 149-154; Anson Jones Diary, 12 March 1839, Box 2E270, Anson Jones Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, hereafter AJP.
that Jeanette felt no reciprocal attraction to the older man and of course refused him. The language and implications clearly indicate that the already engaged Jones proffered at least courtship if not marriage to the young belle. The next indication arrived in a letter from Jeannette to Jones. This came following his replacement, as the Texas minister to the United States, by a Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar appointee, Richard G. Dunlap. Jones had delayed his return to Texas until his reception of her letter. It contained a clarification of her feelings for him, for he recorded in his journal, that he “spent the evening philosophizing upon the degradation of human nature.” At this point he finally left for Texas, after what appeared to have been a rejection. The final clue to Jones’s emotional distance from Mary came in his reluctance to see her. He arrived back in Texas in June 1839, but after a full year apart he failed to go to Austin where Mary lived. After months passed without word from Anson, Mary finally dispatched her stepfather John Woodruff with a letter to Jones, evidently wondering why he avoided her. Within three days of receiving Mary’s letter, Anson again wrote to Jeannette. He continued to wait in Houston for several more weeks and finally traveled to Austin where Mary awaited him; it had been four months since he returned to Texas. He arrived in the new Texas capital on the first day of November. A courtship that began with such promise had cooled considerably.5

5 Nathaniel Amory to James Starr, 29 November 1840, James H. Starr Papers, 1796-1905, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, Texas; Jones, Diary, 9-25 May 1839; Jones, Diary, 9-12 September 1839, 1 November 1839; According to Louise Pecquet du Bellet, Edward Jaquelin, and Martha Cary Jaquelin, Some Prominent Virginia Families, 4 vols. (Lynchburg, VA: J.P. Bell, 1907), 4:289-291, Jeannette Thruston eventually married an admiral in the United States Navy. She married her cousin Levin Powell; his mother was her father’s half-sister.
Anson Jones prided himself upon making reasoned and judicious decisions, yet he had a history of misjudging the character and intentions of others. Mary spent much of her life defending his actions, which in large part lay in emphasizing his positive contributions and forgetting his personal weaknesses. To understand the man Mary chose to wed requires a summary of his life and the events that shaped him and led him to Texas. Born 20 January 1798 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, the thirteenth child of tenant farmers, Jones grew up close to poverty. He recalled constant relocations; his family moved ten times during his first eighteen years, each time seeking work. Like many sons, Jones helped his father at work, and due to a lack of funds he received his initial education at home from his sister Sarah. Life took a dramatic turn for him at his mother’s death in 1817. The cohesiveness of the family dissolved and at the age of nineteen he needed a career. Jones unsuccessfully resisted his older siblings who insisted that he train as a physician. Though he thoroughly despised medicine as a career choice and often left it seeking other careers, again and again his medical practice rescued him from debt.  

Jones’s repeated failed attempts to open a medical practice or to develop a business both exposed his character and set the stage for his journey to Texas. From the year he received his license to practice medicine, 1820, until he arrived thirteen years later in Texas, he failed in New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New Orleans. Only the two years he spent outside of the United States, practicing medicine in Venezuela, proved to be his one success. With careful savings from his work in

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Venezuela Jones returned to Pennsylvania and completed a medical degree at Jefferson College in Philadelphia. Following a period of introspection, he determined that his earlier failures were due to personal flaws, in particular his social shyness, thus he embarked upon a course to correct this perceived character flaw. Jones joined both the Masonic order and the International Order of Odd Fellows, I.O.O.F., in an attempt to gain personal confidence and fraternal friendships. Though these memberships aided him later, initially his emergence from his introversion only alienated patients and peers as he appeared to them as cold and abrasive in his new demeanor. Sensing another failure, at the age of thirty-four he abandoned the practice of medicine for a career in business and left for New Orleans. This avoidance became a pattern of response to adversity. Rather than facing and working through obstacles over time, Anson frequently left the unpleasant situations of his life.7

In New Orleans Jones erred in his choice of business partners. Upon arriving and setting up a mercantile business his partner took their remaining assets and abandoned Jones with a failed business, large debts, and the resultant lawsuits. Finding himself unable to pay his debts and in the middle of a cholera and yellow fever outbreak, Jones returned to the practice of medicine. During this low point in his life, Anson picked up what he considered to be two problematic habits—gambling and heavy drinking. At the urging of Jeremiah Brown, a Texas sea captain he met while in New Orleans, Jones determined again to leave the United States to seek a new start further west. At age thirty-five, he had $32 in cash, $50 in stock medicines, and owed $2,000. His only other

7 Anson Jones’s previous medical education encompassed a medical internship under a practicing physician.
previous success came outside the boundaries of the United States. Taking Brown’s advice, Anson found some of his greatest successes financially and politically, again as an expatriate. 8

Following a lifetime of financial difficulties, within his first year in Texas Jones developed a $5,000 per year medical practice in Brazoria. Even though their lives failed to converge for another five years, coincidentally Jones left for Brazoria on the fourteenth day of October 1833, only one week before Mary’s family left Arkansas also bound for the colony along the Brazos River. Jones struggled with understanding others and frequently condemned the flaws that he saw in people. This tendency continued upon his arrival among a rough pioneer group. Jones’s private judgment of the revolutionary leaders proved harsh and condescending, an attitude that surfaced throughout his political life. His critical observations were not a quality that endeared him to others:

My impressions of the consultation, taken as a whole, were unfavorable—it was near the close of the session. There appeared to me plenty of recklessness and selfishness, but little dignity or patriotism. . . . I was introduced to Bowie—he was dead drunk; to Houston—his appearance was anything but decent or respectable, and very much like that of a broken-down sot and debauchee. The first night after my arrival, I was kept awake nearly all night by a drunken carouse in the room over that in which I ‘camped.’ Dr. Archer and Gen. Houston appeared to be the principal persons engaged in the orgie [sic], to judge from the noise. What made the whole thing more unpleasant to me, was, that the whole

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8 Anson Jones, *Memoranda and Official Correspondence*, 8; Jones wrote of his drinking and gambling – “I found the pernicious habit of gambling, to which I always had an inclination, was growing upon me there. Before going to New Orleans, it is true, I had never indulged the inclination to any extent, but there the constant temptation thrown in my way I found was slowly overcoming my resolutions not to indulge this propensity. Whilst in this place, also, partly from having frequently little else to do and partly to overcome the feelings of disappointments I had so often endured, and more particularly about this time, I also found myself learning to imitate the fashionable practice of taking a ‘julep’ much oftener than was at all necessary. Both of these practices I most cordially despised.” This particular method of dealing with “feelings of disappointment” illuminate his later approach to physical and political disappointments in his life; Gambrell, *Anson Jones*, 7-24.
burden of the conversation, so far as it was, at times, intelligible, appeared to be abuse and denunciation of . . . Stephen F. Austin, . . . my feelings of disgust and disappointment I shall never forget. I cannot even now visit the place, though it has in the meantime been burnt and rebuilt, without the recurrence of sensations anything but pleasant. I took occasion, however, publicly to express my opinions of what I saw and heard, until my friend, Col. John A. Wharton, came to me and assured me my life was in danger from some rude attack which was threatened, and advised me, that, however true and just my remarks might be, it was not the disposition of some parties to allow the utterance of them.⁹

When the Mexican government sent troops headed by General Santa Anna to thwart the revolutionaries, or from their perspective land pirates in Texas, Jones joined the Texas army as a private in 1836. Fittingly, with medical training he eventually served as a surgeon during the Battle of San Jacinto. Impressed, Houston selected Jones to organize the medical corps for the army and to buy medical supplies for the army in New Orleans. After fulfilling these tasks, Jones returned to Brazoria intent on resuming his successful medical practice but a bout of dysentery delayed him. He stayed at the home of William H. Wharton for two months recuperating, only ten miles from Brazoria. Finally healed, he went to town only to discover two lawyers in possession of his offices. It took Jones several weeks to successfully evict them, which resulted in James Collinsworth challenging Jones to a duel. No duel took place, but the ideals of honor and respect brought many such challenges in Texas and the South. Jones accepted the challenge to duel with pistols at ten paces; however, Collinsworth’s second, Thomas

⁹ Jones, Memoranda, 12-13 (quotation). The Consultation turned into a meeting of representatives from the various communities, though not all of them, in Texas prior to the revolution. Thirty-one delegates met at San Felipe and reached a quorum on November 4, 1835. This group met to discuss their grievances against the Mexican government and to assert solutions. They worked on forming a provisional government and providing for a military solution. The general nature of Texas politics on the frontier frustrated and disgusted Anson Jones, see Paul D. Lack, “Consultation,” Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mjc08), accessed July 27, 2011.
Freeman McKinney, achieved a satisfactory settlement with Jones. Not unlike his earlier period beyond the borders of the United States. In Venezuela, Jones developed financial success and the respect of others in Mexican, Texas. He only spent a few months practicing before he was persuaded to be a candidate for Congress as a representative from Brazoria. Elected to the second Texas Congress from Brazoria, Jones traveled to Houston, where he met Mary.\textsuperscript{10}

During Anson Jones's service in Washington, Mary and the Woodruffs had followed the Republic of Texas seat of government to Austin. For John Woodruff this was the logical step for a man already making a living from military contracts and housing visitors to the government seat at Houston. Likewise, Mary reasonably could have expected her fiancé to return to the current capital in order to report upon the results of his mission to Washington, D.C. Thus Mary and her family moved in June 1839 to the decidedly undeveloped city of Austin. They arrived undaunted by the primitive circumstances, for in many ways this move resembled their venture to the newly founded Houston less than three years earlier. As late as October, the Woodruffs still lived in tents and subsisted on buffalo meat. Mary’s reminiscences did not dwell upon the harsh living conditions; instead, she remembered personally suffering great anxiety over the frequent raids by Indians, “killing and capturing someone every time

\textsuperscript{10}Jones, \textit{Memoranda}, 17-18. Anson Jones had considered James Collinsworth to be a friend prior to the challenge. This changed permanently following the challenge, Jones recalled, “He ever after, however, hated me and being in the habit of drinking to excess, threw himself away, and was finally lost in Galveston Bay the following year.” The role played by violence, honor, and duels in the South, see Betram Wyatt-Brown, \textit{Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, 2007); and Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, \textit{Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South} (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1996); Gambrell, \textit{Anson Jones}, 37-100; Anson’s election to complete William Harris Wharton’s term was due to Wharton’s death by, “accidental shot from a pistol in his own hands,” Folder 2, Box 761, MJP.
they came down from their mountain retreats.” Mary recalled that the attacks usually came every full moon and that all the raids resulted in the death of at least one adult and the capture of at least one to two children. Others remembered this tactic and called the full moon, on a clear night, a Comanche Moon. The large Woodruff clan by this time included many children; Mary probably felt a responsibility towards insuring the safety of her younger siblings and felt the danger of these attacks keenly. 11

In the absence of a journal source from Mary that explained her side of the courtship, Anson’s taciturn diary entries reveal the only outline of his final courtship and marriage. Like his nature, his diaries often appear formal and cold. They generally fail to convey emotion and omit all but the sparsest details, thus they do not reveal whether Jones loved Mary at this point. His diary entry describing their first meeting after more than one year’s absence merely said, “Attended sales of town lots. Saw Mary.” Mary did not appear again in his diary until February, when he spent a morning with her and then again two weeks later, when he spent the day with her. Mysteriously, Jones removed the next week’s page from his diary. Whatever the contents, his emotions, actions, or musings were not what he wanted others to know. The next week, he moved from Jacob and Angelina Eberle’s hotel and began boarding at Woodruff’s on March 12.

Following his arrival in Texas, Anson dallied one third of a year prior to seeing Mary and then took another four months to begin spending time with her regularly. Anson’s diary for this period recorded numerous meetings with other single women and outings with them to plays in Austin. Mary left no record of her thoughts or feelings about these lengthy delays or about his obvious interest in others. Whatever the nature of her emotions were at that time, they never interfered in her long years of faithful support in his defense. She appeared completely devoted to him. Did a woman of that time express herself as she wished, or was she expected to wait for the male to make his intentions clear? Though Mary broke with some of the gendered conventions later in life, during this period she appeared to defer to Anson regardless of her own feelings.  

Just as their courtship began anew, the infamous Council House Fight took place not far away in San Antonio during the spring of 1840. Located on the fringes of the Texas settlements, the citizens of Austin often felt the terror of these raids as the Comanche expanded their targets to include the new town. After Anson moved in with the Woodruffs, he recorded in his diary that they were close enough to hear the cries of a man killed and scalped during one of the numerous raids on Austin. In spite of this unsettled state, Anson went ahead with building a house on Pecan Street, finishing it on April 27, 1840. A few weeks later he purchased their marriage license, the second issued in Travis County. In keeping with his concise journaling, his personal entry of the day of his wedding was simply, “Married.” His summary of this time in his memoirs

12 Anson to Mary, Aug. 6, 1853, Folder 4, Box 2E270, AJP, – He addresses her with an endearment, “Dear “Minnie” subtle indications his feelings for her that developed during their marriage; Jones, Diary, November 1, 1839 (quotation); Jones, Diary, January 11, March 1, 7, 12, 1839, November 1839 – January 1, 1840.
added little to his succinct record: “I, at the close of the session of Congress commenced building myself a house on Pecan Street. On the 17th of May I was married, and spent the summer principally in making improvements on my place, or in doing nothing.” Whatever the romantic side of their marriage, it did not appear in public nor in the pages of his diaries. Like many women of this period and region, Mary may have hidden some of her own feelings. Historians discovered many indications of frustration, anger, self-doubt, even guilt contained within the pages of the personal diaries of pioneer women. Their inner life of ambitions and emotions may have been overlooked by many of the males. One anonymous Texas booster summed up his positive assessment of Texas women in 1840, “they are well versed in all that regards good housewifery, which, constitute some of the most practical virtues of a female pioneer of Texas.” This reticence appeared to be normal for this period.13

Mary Jones kept no journals or diaries that covered this period; however, the conditions she experienced during this first year of her marriage in Austin must be placed in context. Indian assaults persisted, and harrowing stories of women escaping these raids and losing livestock or family members continued to spread. In spite of the

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13 Jodye Lynn Dickson Schilz, “Council House Fight,” Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/btc01), accessed November 2, 2010; The Council House Fight ended in the deaths of fifty-five Indians after a truce and negotiations broke down. The failure of these negotiations clearly illustrated a profound failure to understand one another’s society and values. The Comanche Indians developed an intense anger and mistrust of what they perceived to be treachery on the part of the Texans. This resulted in retaliatory raids against the towns and settlements. Jones, Diary, March 12, 1839; April 27, 1839; Pecan Street, Austin, Texas was renamed and is currently known as, 6th Street; Helen Swenson, trans. and comp. 8800 Texas Marriages, vol. I, A-L, 1824-1850, (Round Rock, Texas: N.p., 1981), 77; Jones, Diary, May 17, 1840 (first quotation); Jones, Memoranda, 21; Harriette Andreadis, “True Womanhood Revisited: Women’s Private Writing in Nineteenth-Century Texas,” Journal of the Southwest 31, No. 2 (Summer 1989): 179-204; [An Emigrant], Texas in 1840, or the Emigrant’s Guide to the New Republic (New York: William W. Allen, 1840), 66, 234 (second quotation).
fears, evidently a “considerable number of Indians” regularly came to Austin engaged in trade. And in spite of the nighttime incursions, the location of Austin as the seat of government caused the town to grow quickly, with some estimates for 1840 of around one thousand inhabitants. Early in that year, the Senate chaplain attempted a census of the town, wherein he counted 856 persons. As a minister he noted that only seventy-two of them were church members. Despite the relatively low percentage of church members, the overlapping of Christianity and government still took place. Christian worship services were held in the Senate chambers; one observer witnessed a baptism and a communion ceremony in the Senate including at least one slave participating in the communion. Sometimes, Anson attended worship there on Sundays and on those occasions he kept a record of the sermon titles.\(^{14}\)

Soon after their wedding Mary became pregnant, and her first-born son Samuel Houston Jones entered the world on February 26, 1841. As Anson’s congressional term wound down and his family grew, he determined to sell his small cottage on Pecan Street and leave Austin, hoping to become a gentleman farmer. Once out of Austin, Mary and her family moved several times, all in the vicinity of Brazoria, eventually boarding on James L. Farquhar’s farm. The farm was conveniently located about three miles from Washington-on-the-Brazos and gave the Jones family an opportunity to study plantation techniques and to experience the lifestyle of a plantation owner. The coffers of the Texas government proved shallow, and the cost of boarding at the plantation exceeded Anson’s government salary. His wages as secretary of state

\(^{14}\) [An Emigrant], Texas in 1840, 56-59, 63, 62; Austin, City Gazette, January 15, 1840.
amounted to $1,500 per year, a figure that left Jones struggling financially. They were not settled, and indeed most of Mary Jones’s life included temporary quarters and frequent moves, but this series of moves eventually led to one of the most stable periods of her life. Mary remained long enough in the Farquhar rental house to welcome her second son in September 1843. The year before the couple had moved closer to their dream plantation home and purchased a quarter league of land from Moses Austin Bryan for $400 plus the release of a medical bill owed by Bryan to Jones. They stayed at Farquhar’s plantation until they finally moved to their own place in the spring of 1845.15

The Jones family’s choice to leave Austin came with multiple motives. The family experienced pressing needs, as Anson later recorded in his Memoranda:

Having passed through my term in the Senate unsatisfactorily and unprofitably enough to myself, I made another effort in good faith to escape to private life. I sold my house and improvements in Austin, and took my family and returned to Brazoria county, and recommenced the practice of my profession at Columbia, boarding with Mr. Ammon Underwood. By fall I had succeeded in establishing a business about as extensive as I could attend to. But my office-holding had impoverished me, and embarrassed my affairs just at a time when the wants and expenses of a family were beginning to be felt.

The family needed money and Anson wanted to leave politics because the corruption and political wrangling disturbed him; however, he could not long absent himself from this continuing love-hate relationship with political matters. Before the year was complete, He accepted an appointment as Houston’s Secretary of State. He professed

a reluctance to serve, but he noted in his recollections that several leaders “solicited, urged, implored, and finally persuaded him.” Mary Jones began to experience a recurring pattern in her marriage. Anson professed disgust with politicians and political dishonesty but could be coaxed away from his farm and family for long absences to attend to affairs of government. Even when official positions did not call him away, Anson found numerous interests that sometimes took him far from home over extended periods stretching many months. Sadly, Mary repeatedly watched him place political service over time with her.\textsuperscript{16}

Like many of her fellow women, Mary Jones focused her interests and life around that of her children. Indicative of her semi-nomadic existence, each of her children entered the world in a different place. Samuel Houston Jones was born February 26, 1841 in Austin just prior to their move back to Columbia. Charles Elliot Jones arrived on September 4, 1843 at Farquhar’s house near Washington-on-the-Brazos and their daughter Sarah Sophia Jones was born on January 8, 1845 in a rented farm house. Five years later on their own plantation, their fourth child Cromwell Anson Jones arrived on June 5, 1850. Each of Mary’s children played key roles in their mother’s interests then and throughout their lives.\textsuperscript{17}

The choice of their names revealed something of Mary and Anson’s hopes for their children as well as the interplay within their marriage. This was particularly true of the first two sons. This illuminating situation came to light through a letter to a foreign diplomat. In an intriguing appeal to the British attaché, Charles Elliot, Anson asked for

\textsuperscript{16} Jones, \textit{Memoranda}, 23 (quotation).
\textsuperscript{17} Dwight, \textit{History of the Descendants}, 160.
his consent to name their second son after him. Anson explained that Mary had not forgiven him for naming their first born after Houston, so in an attempt to make peace Anson offered to her the naming of their second son, thinking that she would name him Anson. “To my surprise, she absolutely and positively refused,” he wrote. Here was a rare glimpse into the private sphere of their family. Angered over what happened two years earlier, Mary demonstrated her power within the family to stand her ground and refused to name their child according to Anson’s expectations. For Mary, family played a central role in her life but she resented the failure of her husband to consider her wishes. At a later time Anson came to agree with Mary. He repented of his decision to name his first born for Houston. They dropped the Houston and changed his name to Samuel Edward Jones. Whatever the depth of his attraction to Mary during their problematic courtship, Anson appeared to have developed a renewed desire to be near her. Later he returned to his pattern of absence, but the birth of his children interested him in family during this period. While serving together upon one occasion, Houston wrote his wife that Anson anxiously sought to adjourn in order to join his wife and their son. Perhaps in a symbol of domestic tranquility and unity their last son ended up bearing his father’s name, Cromwell Anson Jones.  

18 Jones, Memoranda, 253-254; 258 (quotation), 254 “[Note, 1849—After Gen. Houston’s treachery to Texas, the South, and his friends generally, I changed the name of my first son to “Samuel Edward.”—A.J.]” – This radical decision was illustrative of both Anson’s antipathy towards Houston as well as growing bitterness over Texas politics; Sam Houston to Maggy Houston, January 27, 1842 – The Personal Correspondence of Sam Houston, vol. I, Madge Thornall Roberts, ed. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1996), 194-198, it was possible that as tired of politics as Anson professed to be during that period, he might have used Mary’s condition as a socially acceptable excuse to leave government behind.
Mary Jones’s identification as a mother and her continued focus on family demonstrated itself in many ways. Women generally found their lives as wives and as mothers circumscribed by numerous duties, expectations, and responsibilities. As Anne Firor Scott pointed out, the reality of life in the antebellum South seldom fulfilled the imagery of privilege. Along with the social status, slaves, and opportunities afforded women like Mary, her life included the work of managing a family. Mary’s mother, Sarah Woodruff, came to help her in 1843 with the birth of her second child. Her relationship with her mother provided Mary with her longest and possibly closest living human bond. Due to the gendered spheres, Mary could expect a greater understanding of her needs from another woman, particularly her own mother. Sarah at that time was only forty-three years old and had given birth to nine children. Her wisdom and experience brought a priceless resource to Mary. If not before, certainly with the loss of her husband, this widowed mother of five came to depend upon her eldest daughter to help her with the other children. Now, Sarah could give back to Mary as she needed help with her own.  

Mary had lost her father, a husband, and a brother to death, thus her bond with her mother appeared to be a strong one. Mary named her only daughter after her mother, Sarah. Tragically, only two years later Mary’s mother and her sister both sickened and died only twelve days apart. Anson’s diary entry for that period noted a trip to Houston to retrieve the four youngest children left by Sarah Woodruff’s death. Mary took charge of these four sisters and provided for their shelter, clothing, education,

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and food until they reached adulthood. Anson's diary made no reference to Mary's loss of either her mother or sister nor to Mary's grief. Again in Mary's life she found herself caring for her siblings; this mothering sense became a definite persona for her throughout her entire life. 20

Despite these losses the first five years of her second marital union provided Mary with some of the best memories of her marriage. During this time she gained experience in various leadership skills and garnered important connections with those who helped her as she pursued her goals. The early years of her marriage through 1845 included the shared dream of a plantation that began to bring fruit. Anson's career achieved amazing new heights, her first children were born, and, like many seeking economic success in southern agriculture, they owned and hired slaves.

The practice of slavery by the Anglo-American settlers began with Austin's first colony. Out of a total population of 1,800 in 1825, 443 were enslaved in Texas. The number of slaves grew rapidly during the next decade, to 5,000 slaves by 1836. By the time Mary and Anson Jones began purchasing slaves, the numbers reached some 30,000. The enslaved population totaled 1,374 in Washington County around the time the Jones's began farming there. The enslaved population of Texas increased steadily

20 “Obituary,” Texas Telegraph, July 2, 1845, “Died—On Tuesday evening, 12th inst., of congestive fever, Miss Sarah Ann Smith, daughter of Mrs. Woodruff. Died, on Sunday night 22nd inst., of congestive fever, Mrs. Sarah Woodruff, mother of the above;” Jones, Diary, July 5, 1845; An excellent resource for motherhood in the Antebellum South is: Sally G. McMillen, Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, childbirth, and Infant Rearing (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 135-164; There are no clear indicators as to why Mary’s stepfather, John Woodruff, did not keep his children and rear them. There are potential clues that indicate a possible separation between Mary’s mother and stepfather. Her mother’s move to Houston, there had been a land dispute between the Woodruffs, and Mary’s evident reticence to place him in her later reminiscences. She did not write negatively about her stepfather, perhaps out of care for her four half-sisters who saw him as their father. Finally, the other issue might have simply have been age, at sixty years of age John Woodruff might have felt incapable of raising four young daughters alone.
during their plantation period, 1845-1859, in both sheer numbers and in relation to the overall population, reaching 30 percent of the population of Washington County by 1860. The Jones family appeared to begin by hiring slaves for specific tasks and designated periods of time. At the same time they began purchasing bonds-people, as meticulously recorded in Anson’s diaries.  

The Joneses would not be the only plantation owners attempting to use slaves to work their fields. Though they lived in the thirteenth most populous county out of eighty in Texas, it had the third largest slave population of all Texas counties. According to the 1850 U.S. census, Texas was primarily a rural state with only five towns over 1,000 in population, the largest of which was Galveston at 4,177. Washington County held 5,983 persons, 3,166 whites and 2,817 slaves. The state recorded only 397 “free colored” compared with 58,161 slaves, and none of the freed slaves lived in Washington County in 1850. Only Harrison and Brazos counties held more slaves than Washington County. Mary Jones experienced a southern life surrounded by a culture deeply invested in slavery; the population was nearly even between slaves and whites, (47 percent). The Joneses hired workers as well as slaves to help them on their farm with the cotton, tobacco, corn, cattle, horses, and general gardening. Average wages for a Texas farmhand with board was twelve dollars a month or one dollar a day without board.

21 Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 19; “Texas Slavery Project”, University of Virginia, (http://www.texasslaveryproject.org/database/graphs/pop_of_slaveholders.html), accessed November 17, 2010; Jones, Diary 4, 1844-48 numerous entries appeared describing the hiring of someone’s “boy” for periods reaching “one year and a day.” They purchased Jake for $650; less than one month after daughter Sarah’s birth he “purchased Negress Mary of J.W. Scott & paid him $400 for the same,” February 1845, presumably to aid Mary in caring for the house or children. Probably in preparation for their coming plantation, they paid a man named Campbell to build stables and a “negro quarter” in March 1845.
Women received only two dollars per week with board, one-third less than their male counterparts. Texas nearly matched Louisiana’s wages, but the wages were close to 50 percent over what a farmworker in Tennessee received. Ultimately, the Joneses decided that owning slaves was more profitable and purchased eleven slaves by 1850. They continued to purchase others as opportunity and finances allowed. The average value of a slave in the Republic of Texas in 1845 was $345, yielding an investment by the Joneses of over $3,500 in slavery.²²

Table 2.1 Slaves Owned by Jones Family in 1850

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²² Gambrell, Anson Jones, 255, 256-257, 259, 288, 331, 420-421; Jones, Memoranda, 26; Seventh Census of the United States, 1:498-504, 497-504. In 1840 the six counties, which covered Austin’s old colony, contained nearly one-third of all Texas’ slaves (1,665), this included Washington County. By 1845 the number of slaves in these counties had grown to 7,621. Slaves in Washington County included 1,581 in 1846, 2,218 in 1850, 4,399 in 1855, and 6,616 in 1860, see Campbell, An Empire for Slavery, 57, 71, 115, 139,173, 265-266.
Though they appeared incompatible on some levels, labor, slavery, education, and religion interlaced in the lives of southern families like the Jones family. Mothers such as Mary sought ways to achieve higher social and economic levels for their families through the use of enslaved labor, as well as educational opportunities for their children. These were frequently connected to their moral values. As historian Adrienne Caughfield pointed out, domestic life often included a moral mission, which practically meant that women often served the role of mediating between their families and the harsher elements of society. Many were able to justify the problems of using another’s enslaved labor because it eased the lives of their own family members. Stephen F. Austin’s sister, Emily Austin Perry used slave labor when she lived in Texas until her death in 1851. Perry’s diligence in caring for her slaves at Peach Point extends the debate on the nature of slavery. Perry routinely wrote of her concern over the welfare of her slaves, but this reality existed in tension over her relationship with them as an owner with power over their lives. Southern culture did not usually acknowledge a division between morality and slavery. Some argued that slavery was a moral imperative, a
responsibility laid upon the civilized master’s shoulders to perform on behalf of the benighted African.²³

Mary benefited not only through the additional income generated from the work of the slaves on their farm but also personally. Prior to Anson’s departure from the office of the presidency, Mary began traveling with her “Servant Lucy.” Their purchase of Lucy appeared to coincide with the timing of her third pregnancy and the birth of their daughter. Anson judged himself a good man, and his diaries expressed no remorse or doubt over the morality of keeping humans in bondage. At least in one case he expressed concern over the interests of a slave and made an attempt to keep an enslaved family together. “I own a Negro man ‘William’ who is here & his wife ‘Esther’ belongs to Judge Andrews and is at Houston,” wrote Anson to M. P. Norton. “The man is anxious to have his wife here & I will thank you to inquire & let me know if Mr.

Andrews will sell or hire her & if so what would be his terms.” The pathos of a man having to plead with another for the opportunity to share his time in bondage with his wife, at least in this case, reached the attention of the owner. Historian John W. Blassingame pointed to family as, “one of the most important survival mechanisms for the slave.” Beyond this singular display of concern for this slave, no other record demonstrates a concern for the Jones slaves beyond economic issues. According to some historians, women experienced a type of gendered subordination within the plantation household that made them better able to understand the suffering of slaves. Regardless of the mutual subjection beneath white southern males, not all women chose to identify with the suffering of the enslaved or to repudiate slavery. Like many slaveholding women, Mary appeared to accept slaveholding as a part of upward social mobility.\footnote{Jones, Diary 4, May 22, 1845 (first and second quotation), in a note added later Anson recorded that he purchased “Lucy” from A.H. Wood for $300; Anson Jones to M.P. Norton, January 21, 1844, folder 275, Box 2E, MJP; John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford Press, 1972), 78 (third quotation); For scholarly sources for the economic impact of slavery, see Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: Appleton, 1918), 344-358. Though his work is racist in tone, his meticulous research methodology made his work a classic. He concluded that slavery was economically inefficient; however, he limited his research to large plantations. Over a decade later Lewis Gray challenged the conclusions of Phillips as to the economic profitability of slavery to the masters, arguing that, “Frequently slave labor was very profitable.” Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1933), 1:463. Numerous historians published monographs and articles debating the profitability of slavery on both micro and macro scales, many concluding that slavery had individual elements of profitability for an owner, but that the system retarded the overall economic progress of the region, particularly in comparison to the North. For a counter argument that slavery did not slow the industrialization of the South see, Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 414. Eugene D. Genovese applied Marxist categories to his studies on slave economy concluding that slavery proved unprofitable on both the micro and macro levels. Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Pantheon, 1965). Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman utilizing massive quantitative data from census schedules to plantation financial records, econometric research, concluded that slavery was profitable on both levels and that it was competitive with the most successful New England manufacturers. Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The*}
Mary Jones’s eventual emergence on the public stage owed a great debt to the connections she made during her husband’s political career. Although her daily concerns centered upon her family. Her marriage to a well-placed government official provided her with an unusual access to political information. Mary offered a sympathetic ear for Anson and took some pride in her interest in the public sphere. Her proximity to the founders of Texas and awareness of political events positioned her in the later decades of the nineteenth century to become a valued source for those interested in the past. “With my marriage to Doct. Anson Jones I of course became intimately acquainted with all leading events touching our country’s weal,” asserted Mary in her reminiscences, “particularly every measure in which my husband was taking an active part.”

Adroitly, Mary emphasized that her interests in the public world proved to be both in some depth and continuous throughout the period of the Republic. Mary made a point of her husband’s nearly continuous service in some governmental office from 1836 until 1846. Anson’s service included his appointment as apothecary general of the Texas Army, election to the Second Congress of the Republic, appointment as minister to the United States on behalf of Texas, election to complete William H. Wharton’s term in the Senate of Texas, president pro tem of the Senate during the Fifth Congress, secretary

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25 Jones, biographical notes, Folder 2, Box 761, MJP (quotation).
of state, and finally president of the Republic of Texas. Mary’s interest in political affairs began when she first met Anson in 1836. His personal correspondence with Mary often included political news. He wrote to her of debates and described the issues down to naming those who took the various sides of the argument; he relayed election plans and explained their outcomes, and she learned the fate of the Santa Fe Expedition before the general public learned of it. Mary’s keen interest induced Anson to make her privy to governmental orders. Clearly, they routinely spoke of his political interests and opinions. “I had promised to go by and give you all the news,” wrote Anson to Mary, after which he included political news on the order of the president to a particular officer. Undoubtedly, her awareness of the political concerns of the state and the nation continued to grow even during Anson’s period out of office, during which time he compiled his Memoranda and Official Correspondence.\textsuperscript{26}

Mary Jones broke with gendered spheres and maintained an interest in government, from which she formed a realistic, if not jaded, view of the political process. She received a political education by proxy that aided her later as she sought political and financial support for her public causes. Though women remained disenfranchised throughout her entire life, she found ways to advocate for her causes with government officials. These years of their marriage created opportunities to make valuable political connections for Mary. Some of the key figures of the Texas Republic met her, while others at least became aware of her through their associations with her husband in the

course of his governmental duties. Anson wrote Mary of their old friend Dubois de Saligny, the French Charge d’Affaires, who purchased one of their Austin lots for the French Legation in Texas. Certainly, they both considered the British attaché, Charles Elliot, a close friend for whom they named their second son. Mary later leaned heavily upon the well-connected physician Ashbel Smith after her husband’s death. Some of Mary’s friendships formed despite her husband’s political antipathies. In spite of her hostility towards Houston, Mary found a friend in his wife, Margaret Lea Houston. This friendship opened the door for correspondence between them during the Civil War.\(^\text{27}\)

Anson and Mary’s rise to the highest position in the country represented in itself an amazing journey. Anson arrived in Texas a debt-ridden failure and rose to the top in a little over ten years; however, Republic of Texas presidential elections were not for the faint of heart. An even earlier historian, H.H. Goodman, concluded that bitter personal attacks played dominant roles in the elections of 1838, 1841, and 1844. Personal bravery and deeds were questioned, particularly as they related to the Revolution itself. Another Texas historian, Dudley G. Wooten concurred, “Politics in Texas then [1836] and for many years after were personal. A man’s personal popularity in winning and

holding friends was the secret of his success.” Most of the early leadership experienced blasts of slander and scorn. Presidents Sam Houston and Mirabeau B. Lamar endured nearly continuous written and verbal accusations, innuendo, veiled, and not so veiled threats. This placed a man like Anson Jones at great disadvantage. His secretive nature and aloof public demeanor gave ammunition to his critics.  

According to law, Houston could not succeed himself as president of the Republic, thus Anson Jones had an opportunity to run for the office in 1844. Jones served as Houston’s secretary of state and they shared a similar view of foreign relations. Both worked toward securing annexation of Texas and, barring that eventuality, the recognition of Texas independence by European powers and the Mexican government. Despite their mutual interests, Jones developed a personal distrust of Houston. Houston appeared reluctant at first to publicly endorse Jones’s candidacy, but Houston’s long-term political enemy Mirabeau Lamar was backing the candidacy of Houston’s vice president, Edward Burleson. In many ways the election became a contest between the surrogates of Houston and Lamar. Houston realized that Jones would continue his twin-pronged policy towards annexation and independence. His endorsement and encouragement proved valuable to Jones, particularly the support of Houston’s friends. “I can see no reason why my friends cannot rally upon you, as you will most directly represent the principles which they advocate,” explained Houston in a

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letter to Anson. Burleson actively campaigned, canvassing numerous communities in an effort to win votes.²⁹

Jones disdained personal electioneering, leaving campaigning up to his friends and newspaper endorsements. He had friends who believed that he would make a good president. Attorney General, George Whitefield Terrell wrote Jones urging him to run for the office, “Your name is constantly mentioned,” and “there is no man in the Republic I would sooner see President [sic] than yourself.” Through the last half of 1843 Jones received a number of letters encouraging him to campaign, including Robert M. Williamson, John G. Tod, John P. Coles, Oran. M. Roberts, and James Burke. Eventually he acquired what he wanted, and two committees met to nominate him for the office of president. Calling itself the committees for correspondence from Independence, Texas, and San Augustine, Texas, both groups firmly nominated him. In response, Jones wanted the circumstances to be clear:

My nomination and election to Presidency was the spontaneous act of the people of Texas, and without any agency on my part. Party had nothing to do with it, unless those who wished to see the great measures of Peace, Independence, and Annexation, and an economical administration of the Government, measures with which I was fully identified, carried out, might be called a party. The speculators and “war-dogs,” and some in the West who misunderstood my position on the seat of Government question, opposed me, as well as the personal enemies of Gen. Houston generally. I probably lost more than I gained by my association with him.³⁰

Jones won at the ballot box on September 2, 1844 garnering 6,443 votes to Burleson’s 5,054. Essentially, Burleson dominated in the western portions of the state.

²⁹ Jones, Memoranda, 241-245 (quotation).
³⁰ Jones, Memoranda, 241-266, 267 (quotation).
and Jones won the eastern sections. Though he did not value Houston’s association, that was probably what made the difference in the election. Houston’s popularity was strong.\textsuperscript{31}

While the question of annexation would dominate the months of Anson’s presidency, he did manage other elements of the government. He generally pursued that course pioneered by Houston. He sought to maintain peace with the Native Americans and, deeply aware of the debts of Texas he attempted to keep a fiscally conservative model for government. Because he wanted to both keep pressure on the United States and to open alternate possibilities to annexation, he pursued aggressive negotiations with Britain, France, the United States, and indirectly with Mexico through the influence of Britain and France.\textsuperscript{32}

Mary Jones remained at Barrington during the period of the presidency. She had a new baby, Charles Elliot, and a toddler at home to care for. It was evident from Anson’s correspondence that many knew Mary because they frequently asked him to pass on their greetings to her. Her duties as first lady did not appear to include hosting many visitors, other than Anson. He utilized his home as a sanctuary to escape political pressure. As the timeline of the annexation played out, he used his escapes to Mary as a delaying tactic to buy time. Mary did not maintain a diary nor comment on how she felt about Anson’s election. Like Varina Davis, It was likely that she dreaded what she anticipated would be Anson’s long absences in light of his political duties and must have

\textsuperscript{32} Gambrell, Anson Jones, 365-415.
enjoyed the unexpected time she had with him as he stayed home and away from Austin for weeks at a time.  

Several challenges to duels were given or received by Jones due to his political stands. Newspaper attacks were often vehement and personal in character. Newspapers openly took a side and utilized the print medium to promote their candidates and to undermine their opponents. The Houston Morning Star and the Galveston News both questioned Anson’s role at San Jacinto, implying that he was far from the actual battle. For a man who waited to be asked to serve his country, counting upon the respect of others for his abilities, he took these attacks personally. This political era was not a time during which politics was based on party principles as Anson expected but upon personalities. The proponents of the various candidates did not hesitate to utilize slander to undermine the opposition. Jones was woefully unprepared for Texas Republic politics. His biographer wrote of his political acumen during his presidency,

Anson Jones, throughout his life, was a singularly isolated man. In the annexation matter his isolation was almost complete. He could (but did not) say, as Houston had on another occasion: ‘I consulted none; held no councils. . . . If I err, the blame is mine.’ He did not attempt to influence a single member of the Congress, or the convention, or even of his Cabinet—nor did he disclose to his closest political associates his own preference. . . . Jones failed to observe how fundamentally the situation had changed. Long after it was clear to everyone else that the Texans did not desire an alternative to annexation, even though it would get better terms from the United States, Jones—with the stubbornness of a solitary man—persisted on the course he had started. . . . He was oblivious of the frenzy against him.  

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33 Joan E. Cashin, First Lady of the Confederacy: Varina Davis’s Civil War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 84.
34 Gambrell, Anson Jones, 295-296, 400 (quotation).
Jones doggedly pursued a course he believed would preserve the best interests of Texas in delaying annexation, but he counted upon the trust of the people in his wisdom. The voters and their representatives only knew of his actions and were not privy to his inner thoughts nor did they display confidence in him. Angered over Anson's apparent delays to execute the will of the people, the Texas Congress proposed censure of Jones and later effectively stripped him of nearly all his political power over annexation. The legislature essentially took over control of the process and ordered him to follow their directives.  

Based in part upon his multiple attempts over the years to gain annexation to the United States for Texas, Jones became convinced that he had to pursue the aid of the European countries. He hoped to apply pressure upon the reluctant congressmen of the United States by causing them to fear that England or France might align with Texas and thus establish a major power influence in the American Southwest. As Jones grew discouraged with the slow pace of annexation to the United States he also believed that they needed to blunt the danger posed by Mexico's continued claims on Texas. He sought the aid of European connections to negotiate recognition of Texas independence from Mexico. Additionally, he believed that this would place Texas in a better bargaining position when and if annexation to the United States came over the details of the assumption of outstanding debt and territorial claims. The nature of these negotiations necessitated secrecy, and Jones did not explain himself to the congressmen of Texas. 

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35 Jones, *Memoranda*, 542, 640-641, Jones also practiced political mud-slinging, when wounded Jones could reproduce salacious and angry attacks upon political figures; Gambrell, *Anson Jones*, 400-402, 404, 410-411. They ordered him to submit the question of annexation to a vote, hold elections for state offices on the third Monday in December, and deliver all the public records and properties to the new Governor.
Even when the United States offered annexation, Jones held out for a better deal and wanted to place a choice before the people of an independent Texas with European recognition and peace with Mexico against annexation to the United States. Jones failed to gauge the public interpretation of his policies, and when Texas learned of the joint annexation resolution of the United States Congress they overwhelmingly sought annexation and viewed Jones as obstructing their will.\textsuperscript{36}

When news of the joint resolution by the United States Congress to annex Texas arrived in Texas, Jones wanted to have a Mexican treaty to lay side-by-side with the annexation proposal. He hoped to provide Texans with a choice between two options and thereby to provide some leverage towards better terms with either choice. So he called for a Convention to meet on July 4, 1845 when he planned to lay before the delegates two options. The Texas Senate met in secret and rejected any treaty with Mexico, rather than leaving it an open question for negotiation. When they assembled on July 4, by a vote of fifty-one to one the Convention approved the offer of annexation. Jones had isolated himself too far from the legislature and they became suspicious of his motives. In the House, Hugh McLeod publicly called for the Convention to end Jones’s presidency for his unpatriotic course. In the Senate, James K. McCreary made the motion to censure Jones for actions unworthy of his office. Neither passed, but they

revealed the frustration and anger present among those Texas political leaders against Jones.\textsuperscript{37}

As one of her husband’s few steady confidants, Mary had the task of listening to and supporting him during the cruel final months of his presidency, from the attempts to censure him until the official handover of Texas to the United States in February 1846. Anson’s presidency ended with the dissolution of the Republic of Texas. Unlike the general population, Mary knew Anson’s intentions and his hard work to secure the future of Texas. Her frustration over what she perceived as unjust treatment guided not only her next twelve years living with Anson, but also the fifty years following his death. Anson wrote his \textit{Memoranda and Official Correspondence} in hopes of vindicating his course of action and thought about annexation. He believed that his contributions were wise and worthy of commendation. Years before Anson’s final official act as president, the passing of authority to the new governor of the state of Texas, Mary and Anson had vacated Austin in 1841. The family finally moved on to the Barrington estate on March 5, 1845, after a four-year sojourn in rented homes. Mary remained there while Anson served out his presidency, staying in Austin as little as possible. Thus she already had their post-presidential residence ready when the decisive moment came on February 19, 1846 as Anson “surrendered” the Republic of Texas to the United States. Anson announced his intent to avoid the political arena and opt for the settled life. Mary anticipated an established home life complete with the presence of her husband.

During this period of their lives, Mary and Anson sought to meet the educational needs of their sons by aiding in the founding of a school. The South boasted many colleges and academies, though many of them were closer to preparatory schools than colleges. Some were associated with churches. Mary and Anson Jones aided Charles Gillette in opening St. Paul’s College at Anderson in Grimes County. Gillette was an Episcopal clergyman and principal of St. Paul’s. Anson served as one of the college trustees, donated monies, helped to write the school’s charter, and sent his two oldest sons there for an education. When the school opened in 1852 its principal goal was to educate and prepare young men for the ministry, but it opened a companion girls’ institution in 1854. Due to inadequate financial support from the Episcopal Church and
the competition of a nearby academy supported by the Baptists, St. Paul’s dwindled in
both enrollment and finances until it closed in 1856 at which point Samuel and Charles
returned home.

To aid with their continued education, Anson’s sister, Mary, moved in with the
family and daily reviewed the children’s lessons in a room set aside in the home as a
school room. Anson’s daughter, Sarah, evidently received no formal training beyond this
“home school.” Home schooling was a common means for education, but there were
other avenues for female education they might have chosen. The formal education of
females in Texas, began as early as 1840 in “dame” schools, “French” schools,
boarding schools, subscription schools, or religiously sponsored schools like the
Ursuline Convent in Galveston (1847). By 1850 ninety-seven academies appeared in
Texas and at least some of these were schools for girls. The economic status enjoyed
by the Joneses made formal education a viable option. One study demonstrated that
most of those who chose to send their daughters to school had over $1,000 in taxable
income, thus education was more available to the wealthier citizens, or they had more
interest in it. The more prosperous a family, the more opportunity it had to replace a
daughter’s labor at home and to afford the cost of education. Two of Mary Jones’s
children used their strong educational foundations to achieve solid professional careers,
one as a lawyer and judge and the other as a dentist.38

38 Dan Ferguson, “St. Paul’s College”, Handbook of Texas Online,
(http://www.tshallonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kbs49), accessed November 06, 2010; Charles
Gillette (1813-1869) published a valuable explanation of his time in Texas, he was primarily a unionist
Episcopal clergyman and was dismissed for his political position. In defense of his ministry in Texas, he
wrote an apologetic for his ministry that contained many of the details of his work with the school. See
Gillette, A Few Historic Records of the Church in the Diocese of Texas, During the Rebellion (New York:
Religion played a greater role in Mary’s life than it appeared to play in Anson’s. Faith and religion permeated much of the South. Never did all Texans join a church; however, for those who did, religion often became a definitive force in their lives and in their values. Many Texans migrated from other regions of the South and at least some knew personally of the revivals spreading throughout the frontier beginning around 1800. The influences of the Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky, 1801, and the many subsequent “camp meetings” continued to spread throughout the South during this century. Religion became intertwined with proslavery validations expressed particularly in the decades prior to the Civil War. Anson prided himself on his analytical approach to life, but he attended worship services, donated to the Church, and he “was a warden of St. Paul’s but not a communicant.” Mary’s expressions and use of faith and religion appeared throughout her letters as an expression of daily life. She had her children baptized in the Episcopal Church and was herself confirmed. Anson seldom departed from formal address even in personal correspondence to his wife; thus, it was notable that not long after her confirmation in the Episcopal Church that he made an appeal to her as “Churchwoman” when he implored her to name and baptize their next child Cromwell Anson Jones. Mary did not explain her faith so much as chose to accept God as a reality in their lives.³⁹

³⁹ Randy J. Sparks, On Jordan’s Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876 (Athens: University of Georgia Press), 2-201. Sparks explores the impact of evangelicalism’s emphasis on egalitarianism upon racial equality among believers in the South. He found evidence that biracial congregations existed at a greater frequency than had been previously reported, but that real equality did not exist within or outside the church. See Sparks, “Religion in the Pre-Civil War South,” in Blackwell
Multiple factors directed Mary Jones's choice of a non-evangelical church, in this case an Episcopal congregation in a heavily evangelical southern state. The earliest religious influences in Anson’s life came with some of his first formal education with an Episcopal priest in Massachusetts. Silence in the records surround Mary’s early religious experiences; however, a frontier family frequently on the move might not have settled on any particular denomination or sect. These families may well have attended the most available congregation; many frontier posts lacked regular preachers and might only meet monthly. “Union” or unity churches commonly functioned in a pre-denominational frontier setting, and they were typically non-denominational, or more probably inter-denominational as they often lacked a regular or singular preacher. They met in a convenient public building on Sundays for Sunday School weekly and for preaching when ministers traveled through. Frontier revivals and camp meetings were well attended as both religious opportunities and social events. It was likely that Mary witnessed at least one or more of these growing up on the moving frontier.  

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Additionally, location and availability may have played a role in their choice of an Episcopal Church. By 1850, Texas reported 341 churches with nearly half the adult white population as members. The two most numerous denominations were Methodist and Baptist together comprising 258 of the total, or three-quarters of all the known congregations. Out of 341 churches there were only five Episcopal congregations in the entire state (1.1 percent), and two of them were near Washington County. Most denominations in the United States split over the issue of slavery, the Episcopal Church in the South announced a split, but the northern Episcopal Church refused to recognize a split. Prizing their unity and eschewing schisms, the northern church took no official stand on slavery in the South. The church was reunited by 1866. This did not mean that individuals could not take personal stands; members like Charles Gillette spoke out against secession while Bishop Leonidas Polk, ordained in 1830, defended slavery and served as a Confederate general. The Joneses lived in a county with a high percentage of slaves and a high percentage of the Episcopal churches in Texas; and the church would not interfere with their use of slaves. There was one additional and very personal reason for choosing the Episcopal Church. Mary was too well acquainted with death in her family. The ever-present possibility of losing a family member might have played a role in choosing one of the two denominations in the county willing to baptize infants. The Methodists also practiced infant baptism and the Baptists reserved baptism for adults only. Perhaps as a reassurance of spiritual safety, Mary kept and never gave her children their baptismal certificates. Furthermore, membership in the Episcopal Church provided a network, one which appeared to aid her later when the Daughters of the
Republic of Texas formed; in fact, most of its leadership also belonged to the Episcopal Church. Elizabeth Turner Hayes discovered that the majority of elite women in Galveston belonged to the Episcopal denomination, which thus was attractive to those who sought acceptance in this class. Episcopal membership enabled women to achieve or maintain their class status in respect to their communities, a valuable resource for women like Mary engaging others in a public sphere. She would need all the resources she had as her husband’s life took a drastic turn.  

A fateful fall from his horse in 1849 left Anson Jones permanently disabled. This accident rendered Jones temporarily unconscious, but brought lasting changes to his life that deeply affected his family, his mood, and his mental state. The injury occurred to his left arm, which failed to heal and subsequently withered. Anson lost use of his hand, which discolored to the point that he chose to appear in public only with gloves to cover its appearance. This began Jones’s search for a cure or some relief, a journey that took him far from home in an elusive chase for healing. Jones traveled extensively throughout the Northeast, searching out medical cures and respected physicians for

41 Seventh Census, 1:522-523; David Lynn Holmes, A Brief History of the Episcopal Church: With a Chapter on the Anglican Reformation and an Appendix on the Quest for an Annulment of Henry VIII (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1993), 80; Lockert B. Mason, “Separation and Reunion of the Episcopal Church, 1860-1865: The Role of Bishop Thomas Atkinson,” Anglican and Episcopal History, 59 (Sept. 1990), 345-347, 364-365. Seventh Census, 522-525 – Washington County, Texas reported seven churches in the 1850 census, three Baptist, two Methodist, and two Episcopal. This meant that Washington County had 40 percent of all Episcopal Churches out of eighty counties. Washington County also had the third highest population of slaves, or 47 percent of their total population was enslaved. Catherine Prelinger, ed. Episcopal Women: Gender, Spirituality and Commitment in an American Mainline Denomination (New York: Oxford Press, 1992), 39, 75-85, 99-103, 299. Elizabeth Hayes Turner pointed out that in women’s community work in Galveston, Texas around the turn of the last century that status, ideas of noblesse oblige, and civic-mindedness were key motivators for social work. And the primary groups included Episcopal, Jewish, and Presbyterian women. See Turner’s, Women, Culture, and Community, 270; Elizabeth Turner Hayes, “Episcopal Women as Community Leaders: Galveston, 1900-1989,” in Catherine M. Prelinger, ed. Episcopal Women: Gender, Spirituality, and Commitment in an American Mainline Denomination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 75-79.
advice or treatment. Eventually, even morphine failed to control his pain. His dream of transforming into a country gentleman with a successful plantation evaded him as the injury made farming more difficult and a search for medical relief kept him away from farm and family, often for several months at a time. Ultimately, his absences placed more responsibility upon Mary to manage their children and the workers on the plantation.⁴²

Beginning in 1850 Anson often spent many months away from his family. Unlooked for and unexpected, these absences laid crucial responsibilities upon Mary. Her characteristic perseverance enabled her to meet these challenges and to gain valuable confidence and skill in managing others. Letters with detailed instructions arrived on how Mary should sell the cotton and corn crops. Yet, in the end Anson left some of the decisions to her discretion. Mary chose both the location and timing of the sales. Mary also began to work with notes of credit and payments on outstanding notes. Perhaps recognizing her abilities, he eventually wrote, “Manage matters at home as you think for the best and all will be right.” By the end of 1850 Anson wanted to sail for Europe, but he asked Mary’s permission to do so and awaited her decision on extending his “vagabondism.” Mary granted her permission grudgingly, “Go to London if you must, but I do not want to say no to your desire nor do I want you gone much longer.” He had already been gone six months. These trips continued to take him away for at least a few months each year. Mary often found herself functioning as sole parent for her children, and her husband’s absences occasionally overlapped the critical

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⁴² Ashbel Smith to Jones, July 9, 1850, AJP; Jones to Mary Jones, July 7, Nov. 12, 28, 1850, AJP; Gambrell, Anson Jones, 428.
agricultural summer and fall months. These labor-intensive periods placed Mary in the forefront on their farm. Though they never acquired a total of twenty slaves, they continued to call Barrington a plantation. In Anson’s absences, Mary governed enough family members and slaves to total more than twenty individuals. While this could indicate Anson’s confidence in her abilities, his interests appeared to turn him away from the farm and towards investments in railroads, and conversely his plantation no longer held the same level of interest.43

Similar to the wives left to manage plantations during the absences of their husbands in the coming Civil War, Mary Jones learned to cope without Anson. By 1847 the Barrington cotton crops required the work of six slaves. The yield per field hand varied widely due to the time, place, and skill of both managers and workers, but estimates suggested around three bales to as high as eight bales per worker. Catherine Clinton pointed out that plantation mistresses filled “essential and complex” roles in southern life and that the slaves recognized gendered lines of authority that required women to struggle harder than their husbands to assert control. Learning to manage a large farm and workforce was not necessarily rare; Clinton pointed out that the men often left their plantations for extended periods prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, leaving their wives in charge of their plantations. Ira Berlin argued that slavery required either violence or the threat of violence to maintain bondage. Whether Mary attempted to use violence herself, threatened punishments, or utilized a manager in her stead is not clear. That she benefited from a system that relied upon forced labor was patently

43 Anson, Diary, 1850; Anson to Mary, Nov. 28, 1850 (first quotation), Dec. 14, 1850, Folder 3, Box 2E270, AJP; Mary to Anson, Dec. 21, 1850, Folder 3, Box 2E270, AJP (second quotation).
evident. Her sons were not old enough to aid her. So Mary utilized the slaves and wrote
to Anson that she wanted to purchase “two good Negroes,” and that “Old Charity” sent
her compliments. Mary developed a reputation as an excellent manager. Mary’s friend
and fellow DRT member, Adele Looscan, added in a gloss to Mary’s reminiscences that
she was, “an early riser, a keen observer, everything about house, garden, diary, and
farm show the result of her untiring industry.” Mary’s letters betrayed no complaint over
the added responsibility placed upon her by Anson’s lengthy absences; she simply
emphasized her general desire for his return.44

Ostensibly Anson sought a cure for his withered arm while he was away from
Mary; additionally, he pursued a number of personal interests. Some of these interests
were solely for Anson’s entertainment and social life, but he also hunted commercial
investments and renewed leadership in fraternal organizations. Anson spent the fall of
1853 in Philadelphia and New York, where he attended plays and visited friends and
relatives as well as various businessmen. Signaling a potential move from Texas,
Anson purchased a “summer home” outside of New York City. At the minimum, this
indicated that he planned to return to the North during the coming summer and probably
continue to spend lengthy periods away from Texas. Had her husband’s investments
and interest in bringing railroads to Texas proven fruitful, Mary’s life might well have

44 Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Women’s World in the Old South (New York:
Pantheon Books, 1982), xv (quotation), 30-31; Jones, Diary 4, 1847; Mary to Anson, Oct. 19, 1850,
Folder 1, Box 2E270, AJP, (second quotation); Jones, Biographical Notes, Folder 3, Box 761, MJP, (third
quotation); Edward Saraydar, Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina (Columbia:
University of South Carolina, 1985), 133; William J. Cooper Jr., Jefferson Davis, American (New York:
and the Roots of Regional Identity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 10; Ira Berlin, Generations
of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2003), 2-4, 9, 12,
33, 60-61, 73-74.
changed drastically. However, Anson decided that business was just as corrupt as politics, so he eventually divested himself of his investments and severed his partnerships. In one arena Anson found a renewed interest. During this 1853 trip, he met with Masons, fellow members of the International Order of Odd Fellows, and the Episcopal Church conference. These connections served to add to his networks as well as to Mary’s. Decades later, recognition by the Masons helped to keep Mary and her work before the public. The Odd Fellows debated the recognition of women as members during their September conference in Philadelphia that year. Like many fraternal organizations they were hesitant to include females in their membership. Anson actively worked to gain this privilege for women in the Odd Fellows. Mary received regular letters from her husband describing the motion’s progress and the voting, “So the degree of ‘Rebecca’ survives the present danger I voted for her all the time.” As the first Grand Master of the I.O.O.F. in Texas and supporter of the inclusion of women in the order, by inference Mary might have been the first female “Rebecca” in the state.  

Anson returned from his New England travels to Barrington and to Mary in the fall of 1853, His meticulous diary notes evidence that he picked up his authority over the workings of their farm. Mary Jones might have had her husband home during the next few years, but his mind turned in bitterness back to politics and his enemies. Mary watched in some anguish while he wrote numerous articles to Texas papers attacking

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45 Gambrell, Anson Jones, 427, 428; Anson to Mary, Sept. 9, 1853 (quotation), Folder 4, Box 2E270, AJP; In a letter two days later on I.O.O.F. stationary, Anson wrote Mary, “The Degree of Rebecca, though threatened, came safely through the ordeal to which it was subjected but it has many opponents.”
Houston’s political stands. She witnessed his increasingly strident diatribes and his decision to gather his personal and political notes in order to prove the correctness of his course while in office and just as much to prove the failures of Houston. Some of his frustration likely resulted from his unhealed injury; Anson used morphine to dull the pain until it no longer worked for him. His past included bouts of melancholy and resentment. Prolonged morphine abuse can produce paranoia, depression, mood swings, anxiety, insomnia, forgetfulness, and a variety of psychological disorders. Many of these symptoms appeared to afflict him during his final years. Anson’s own family observed increasingly erratic thinking and behavior from him. A 100-page, handwritten biographical sketch of Anson’s life by his son, Cromwell, drew a painful but telling description of his last years.

Dr. Jones was subject to occasional paroxysms of mental gloom and deep despondency which he could not overcome or control, and which often well-nigh destroyed his balance of mind. During the latter years of his life this unhappy temperament had gradually assumed more and more the character of a disease under the influence of a physical derangement, to which he was subject. Those who have any knowledge of this painful mental depression, will need no further explanation, and those who best understand the intensity of suffering from this cause, to which the most sensitive and noble minds are chiefly subject, will be the last to cast reproach upon the memory of the unhappy victim.46

Written by a son who was not ten when his father died, some of this interpretive analysis probably came from Mary Jones herself, who prodded Cromwell to write the sketch. She believed that her husband suffered neglect and abuse from his fellow Texans, but she could not miss the signs of depression. During the final years of her

46 Cromwell Anson Jones, “Biographical Sketch of Anson Jones,” 1880, Folder 7, Box 2E270, AJP (quotation), prepared for, but not used in the, Biographical Encyclopedia of the New West.
husband’s life, Mary increasingly shouldered the responsibility of her family and of a husband unable to deal with his world.  

Anson’s final chapter began with a hopeful charge back into politics that ended in utter despair for him. Both of the United States senatorial positions from Texas opened at the same time, and a few friends suggested that Anson should run for one of those positions. From 1854 until November 1857 Anson increasingly thought this was possible. In line with his previous actions, he chose not to campaign or to announce his intentions to become a senator. He went to Austin, rented a room and waited for others to come and ask him to accept a nomination. He waited alone in his hotel room, but no one came by his room to ask him to represent Texas. After the choices were made, Anson left Austin and disingenuously said, “I was not in the least disappointed.” His sudden decision to sell his once beloved farm “Barrington” and subsequent suicide betrayed the true depth of this blow to him. He arrived home to Mary on November 6 and made the deed for his plantation to James P. Flewellen by the 11th. With little warning Mary needed to gather her children and their belongings in preparation for another move. Anson determined that they should leave the country and live in Galveston.  

47 Jones, Diary No. 11, 1854, Jones judged Houston’s motives as generally evil and used pseudonyms in his letters to the newspapers to attack Houston and his political stands. Jones particularly saw Houston’s attachment to the Know Nothing Party as poorly thought out; Gambrell, Anson Jones, 428; “Morphine”, The Watershed Addiction Treatment Programs, http://www.addiction-treatment-central.com/Drug-Information/Drug-Information/Morphine.html, (accessed November 22, 2010);  
48 Anson Jones, Memoranda, 574-580, Anson Jones to William B. Stout, Dec. 6, 1856; Jones, Memoranda, 642-643, excerpted from a letter from Anson to John Grant Tod, Nov. 16, 1857 (quotation); Jones, Diary 12, Nov. 6, 11.
Anson’s actions and words gave Mary much to be concerned about. She acquiesced to his choice earlier to reenter politics, and now she again submitted to a patriarchal decision to uproot them all. Anson revealed his bitter feelings to a friend when he commented candidly upon his emotional state of mind:

> Public opinion will yet do you (me) justice in Texas, but it will probably be—after I am dead, and, partially expressed in a sentence, it will engrave on my tombstone, in the following plain words: “Murdered by a Country He Served and Saved.”

Mary’s concern for Anson’s well-being as he left her to prepare for their coming move to Galveston manifested itself in her final correspondence to him: “I would like to hear from you every day until I hear your health has improved. I beg of you take care of it, try to recover your health . . .” Mary attempted to support and to encourage a shattered husband, broken in body and in spirit, not unlike the southern women who only seven years later would receive their returning husbands shattered by their losses in the Civil War.

A melancholic intellectual even in the best of times, Anson Jones, once president of the Republic of Texas, sat alone in a Houston hotel with letter in hand. Having recently sold his dream farm on the Brazos River and suffering from political rejection,

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49 Jones, Memoranda, 640 (quotation).
50 Mary to Dear Husband, Jan. 3, 1858, Mary to Anson, Dec. 31, 1857, Folder 1, Box 2E270, AJP (first quotation); Mary Jones’s experience with a seriously impaired husband can be understood in part by the work of women’s historians and the return of defeated southern soldiers. Though the soldiers coming home took place a decade later, certain applications of the willingness of women to subordinate themselves to bolster the morale of their spouses could apply to Mary’s situation. Like many of the Civil War wives, Mary Jones successfully managed the household, finances, and agricultural business in her husband’s absence. Upon his return she apparently stepped aside and supported him. For more on this topic of during the Reconstruction era see, LeeAnn Whites, The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 132-159; Laura Edwards, Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 107-144.
he broke open the seal on a letter from his wife, Mary. Concerned by his mood she had penned her missive with obvious apprehension,

I trust we will soon be together again. . . Blot out the past, forget you were ever engaged in the promotion of the best interests of Texas & above all, try to forget her ingratitude toward you—I pray god you will do this. . . Do let me hear . . . I feel so anxious.  

Ailing from chronic pain in his arm and disheartened over his latest political rebuff, Mary Jones clearly saw possible trouble for her distraught husband. A friend found Anson in his hotel room with a pistol in his hand and a hole in his head.

Mary was again widowed. Anson’s body was discovered on a Saturday morning, January 9, 1858 in the Old Capital Hotel in Houston. According to the testimony of a friend, W. D. Smith, Anson had been depressed and had been drinking that night. He retired to his room and a hotel servant was tasked to keep an eye out for him, but thinking that Anson was asleep he left. Anson died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Mary received no suicide note, but she thought that she knew where to place the blame for her loss. On his memorial stone she engraved her grief and her curse:

In Memory of Anson Jones, Last President of the late Republic of Texas: Projector and Consummator of her Annexation to the Confederacy of North American States: First Grand Master and Implanter of Ancient York Masonry in Texas: The Revered of Senates and the Light of Cabins! The echo of his words lingers in the Councils of his country, alone unheard by ears deaf to the claims of merit, dull to the voice of Honor, and dead to the calls of Justice; To them the sand – To Thee the Marble! 

Anson’s friend and fellow physician, Ashbel Smith, gave the eulogy and he was buried in the Masonic cemetery. Mary believed that her husband had indeed been misjudged.

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51 Mary Jones to Anson Jones, December 31, 1857, MJP (quotation).
52 Glenwood Cemetery, Houston, Texas.
and underappreciated for his work. These experiences gave focus to what became for her a mission in life. She began by seeking a publisher for his final work, his Memoranda – which had been in all practicality an extended suicide note.53

The lowering of the Republic’s flag and the formal annexation of Texas into the United States had marked the start of a third tumultuous period in Mary’s marriage. The last dozen years of her marriage, from 1846 to early 1858, brought Mary Jones many of the highest and lowest experiences of her life. She became mistress of her own plantation, named “Barrington” after Anson’s birthplace. Mary often managed family and farm during these years. She provided for the educational and the spiritual needs of herself and her children. Mary and Anson helped to establish and support a small “college” where they sent two of their sons. They continued to purchase slaves, whom they used to achieve and maintain their level of economic security. For the first time in her life Mary Jones stayed in one place for more than three or four years. At this point several pivotal and negative events took place in the life of her husband; these milestones challenged her private sphere, but became stumbling blocks for Anson.

53 The Old Capital Hotel is currently the site of the Rice Hotel, 909 Texas St and Main St, Houston, Texas; Twenty years earlier Anson Jones had recorded the following about Peter Grayson’s suicide, July 28, 1838, an insight with striking parallels to his own suicide. Memoranda, 28. “I shall be surprised at no one’s committing suicide after hearing of Col. Grayson’s doing so. It is the first time in my life that anyone in the circle of my acquaintance has done such an act; and it has shocked me more than the death of a dozen others would have done in the usual course. I believe party abuse has been the cause, acting upon some predisposition to morbid melancholy. Col. Collinsworth’s drowning himself was a thing in course. I had expected it, as I knew him to be deranged, and, when excited by liquor, almost mad. In all the annals of suicide, perhaps no parallel to these two cases can be found. Two years ago they were in this house, and on their way to Washington together, as Commissioners on the part of Texas to procure recognition, &c.; and, at the time of their deaths, both candidates for the highest office in the republic. Both committed suicide about the same time, and at the distance of 2,000 miles from each other; both at the time holding high and responsible offices in the Republic of Texas;” Anson Jones memorial slab, Glenwood Cemetery, Houston, Texas; His body was later removed to a cemetery on Galveston Island and moved a final time to Glenwood Cemetery, Houston, Texas.
Where Anson grew angry and erratic, Mary gained new skills and surmounted each hurdle. Mary met most of these critical trials with the same fortitude and practicality she learned during her formative years. These years also gave her a front row seat to Anson’s attempts to explain what was in his mind, his underappreciated contributions to Texas. Watching her husband endure what was in her judgment a great injustice provoked a familial protective response strong enough to provide her a cause to protect his reputation long after Anson’s death.

Mary Jones experienced her married life like many other antebellum southern women. She supported her husband and found meaning in her familial relationships. Her frontier roots prepared her with a practical approach to problems. Whereas her husband developed a habit of avoidance to obstacles, Mary found ways to manage them. Like some of the antebellum plantation wives she found herself managing slaves and business in the absence of her husband. In ways similar to the elite, the presence of slaves gave Mary Jones some assistance in the care of her household. Mary Jones’s interest outside her private sphere in the larger public world was encouraged by her uncommon access through her husband’s position in government. Her economic status reached its pinnacle during her marriage, but her formative years prepared her for widowhood, and her elite years equipped her both to move into a public sphere and to improve upon her status.
Widowed at thirty-nine with four small children on the eve of the Civil War, Mary Jones spent the remaining of the years of her life navigating the changing times of the nineteenth century. Without a husband for more than half her life, she followed many of the routes used by other single women but forged unique trails for herself. Left to fend on her own, she proved able to transcend the period between the Old South and the postwar years. She struggled along with many others to adapt to the new realities brought to the South by the loss of slavery and the economic developments wrought during the Reconstruction Era. The Civil War brought vast changes as new people immigrated to Texas with new ideas, methods, and values. The post-Reconstruction South became more urban and industrialized, though at much lower levels than in the North, and these advances opened new opportunities, particularly for freedpeople, immigrants, and women. Along with these economic and cultural trends came readjustments in social and regional values. These alterations affected southern women; some found that they could now reach for employment opportunities and membership in public organizations, and others discovered that they could no longer rely upon the old traditions of their antebellum lives. In addition, the Texas frontier was undergoing a transformation as the cattle industry took over the grasslands and cotton farmers discovered the riches of the Blackland Prairies. Texas cities, which had not
been badly harmed by the Civil War, experienced an influx of newcomers, becoming vibrant urban centers with new transportation networks within and between growing cities.

Women who had been left widowed by the war or by other tragedies found that they had to navigate through one set of pre-war patriarchal circumstances in frontier Texas only to adapt to the realities of a new era with different skills. Living in a time of shifting cultural and social values, Mary Jones purposed to reclaim her husband’s honor and provide for her children. Despite periods of intense financial distress, she utilized her resources in a way that helped her to achieve a measure of social and economic stability not experienced by many widows of the New South. In some measure, the adaptive and creative use of her widowed status enabled her to achieve higher levels of influence and activity than she experienced while married. Providentially, her efforts to improve the public and historical perception of Anson Jones’s career and life served to develop her resources, skills, connections, and organizational memberships enabling her to maintain her social and economic connections. Mary Jones succeeded in a way that promoted her status as a widow; in fact, she made something of a profession of her widowhood.¹

Serious studies on the history of American widows from the colonial times to the present remain fewer than the subject deserves. Early scholarship focused upon widows in the Northeast, like that of Glenna Matthews in *The Rise of Public Woman.*

¹ Drew Gilpin Faust studied the changes in civilian mourning brought on by the massive losses of life experienced during the Civil War in *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (NewYork: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 211-248.
Certain brief pages speak to southern women, but less often to widows in particular.

Edward L. Ayers, in his comprehensive study, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*, tells his readers that this period of change gave men as well as women new opportunities, responses, and public roles. He did not address the particular and changing status of widows in the New South. Though Anne Firor Scott did not specifically address the journey of widows in *The Southern Lady*, still she made numerous connections to the varying perceptions of women towards marriage and remarriage. Scott illuminated the changing employment opportunities for women that particularly worked for widows as well as married and never-married women. Certainly, Drew Gilpin Faust’s *Mothers of Invention* provided historical research on women as a whole during the American Civil War and addressed widows as well. In particular, Faust noted that widows gained a degree of autonomy not always available to women under the control of husbands or fathers. This expanded agency revealed their priorities and goals previously subsumed beneath patriarchy.²

Studies of the American colonial period identified the ease with which many widows sought and successfully made new marriages until they reached a level of economic independence. Evidently, a disparity existed between the formal legal status and the actual conditions experienced by many widows. Some fared better than the

laws appeared to indicate. The economic wellbeing of widows frequently played
significant roles in their ability to achieve independence. According to historian Kirsten
Wood, early American laws moved widows from women under submission to legally
free and independent persons. This was an improvement over the general status
women experienced in Europe, which had seen a long deterioration in women’s rights
since the fourteenth century.\(^3\)

Widows received short shrift in much of the scholarship for this period, but
generally historical research finds that the conditions widows experienced and the
status they held varied throughout the country and even within regions. The current
research clearly indicates that widows were less likely to hold political office in the
nineteenth century and were often poor. They commonly found themselves dependent
upon others to sustain themselves and frequently decreased in social status along with
their loss in financial status.\(^4\)


Mary Jones spent most of her life defined by her status as a widow, which in turn was shaped by the frontier realities of the early nineteenth century. Her family settled in Brazoria County in January 1834. As the eldest daughter in the family, Mary witnessed the decisions her own mother, Sarah, made following the loss of Mary’s father. Mary’s mother chose not to remarry soon after her husband died. Instead she elected to emigrate and start a new life as a single mother; however, after several years she decided to remarry a widower and join their households of eleven children, to which they added four more. Mary witnessed a model of female independence in her own mother. She observed how a widow might delay remarriage and choose independence. Mary also spent eighteen years of her life single before marrying Hugh McCrory the day before her nineteenth birthday, July 23, 1837. McCrory died after only seven weeks of marriage, leaving his young wife a teenaged widow.5

Mary’s adjustments to her first widowhood were common for women in the 1830s. When married, the young couple lived with the family of her stepfather, John Woodruff. Following McCrory’s sudden death, Mary stayed with her family and resumed her old roles, though she wore the “widow’s weeds” that her mother had put aside only two years earlier. Historian Herbert Gambrell noted that she was the schoolmistress for the Smith/Woodruff children. Though she did not teach outside the home, education was certainly an acceptable role for a southern lady. Living with family members proved one option for widows. Boswell pointed out that, “A woman who lost her husband no

5 Gambrell, Anson Jones, 45.
longer had protection—neither physical protection from predators nor the accustomed shelter from the distressing public world and its troubles." This option was chosen more often by younger widows who like Mary had not been gone from the family home for very many years. Boswell points out the potential benefit for a young widowed or abandoned woman to move in with her parents was that it restored the male component for her. In a male dominated public culture, this was a valuable strategy, but his was not always possible for those who immigrated to Texas without their extended family or for those women who lived in isolated locations along the frontier.  

On the other hand, “a shortage of women on the frontiers added to their skills, and occasional property made widows attractive marriage partners.” During those pioneer days of Texas, Mary would see fewer women to vie with her for potential new marriage partners. Anson Jones began boarding with the Woodruff family twelve days after Hugh McCrory’s death. Though this young widow evidently spoke with him at the dinner table and mended his clothes on occasion, his biographer says that he respected her “year of mourning.” When the spring came, Mary set aside her mourning (in the end less than the customary twelve months). Evidently Anson asked for and received permission from her stepfather, Woodruff, to marry the young widow in June. Thus, the days of widowhood for the childless young woman were shortened by her engagement. Mary and Anson wed 1840.  

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Mary Jones had the example of her mother; Sarah forged a new life following her own husband’s death and subsequent remarriage. But she failed to gain the independence found by some older widows. Sarah relocated, moving on her own further from settled areas, but she relied heavily upon her eldest daughter. Older widows with grown children and personal economic resources could often choose independence as an option. Mary’s youth, lack of experience, and the reality of living at home during her marriage made remaining with that family her most obvious choice. Her own mother took notice of the widowed Woodruff and accepted his marriage proposal. Mary as the widow McCrory accepted the marriage proposal of a young physician, Anson Jones. At least on some level she felt that she still needed to seek “permission” from her step-father to remarry. Some Texas women, however, sought, found, and maintained successful alternatives to remarriage during this early period. Stephen F. Austin’s cousin, Mary Austin Holley, experienced widowhood at the age of forty-two. While moving between friends and family, she found that as a tutor and author she could supply the needs of her two children. One early Texas widow, Jane Long, also chose not to remarry and invested in real estate, ranching, cotton, and slaves prior to the Civil War. But these intrepid women were the exception to the norms practiced by many women who chose remarriage.  

A frontier setting contested by Indians, fraught with violence, and beset by disease increased the chances that an individual woman might experience widowhood

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more than once and at different stages of her life and various cultural conditions. Mary Jones experienced widowhood twice, but others like Sarah Creath McSherry Hibbens Stinnett Howard lost three husbands by the time she was twenty-five years old. Emily Austin was also a young widow when she married James Franklin Perry; her biographer noted that during her second marriage, “she never surrendered the personal resolve and self-direction she had acquired as a young widow.” Mary’s marriages and widowhood appeared unexceptional as her choices and roles fit the patterns expected of southern women. Like many other southern women of the antebellum period, she appeared in domestic venues with her children or with her husband at his social events. Marriage statistics portray only the general patterns and averages, each marriage bore distinct and individual characteristics. Mary’s first marriage was the first wedding in Houston, but due to McCrory’s early death it only lasted seven weeks. Mary’s second marriage to Anson Jones proved to be the second marriage license issued in Travis County, Texas, and after only seventeen years she was widowed by her husband’s death.  

Gambrell, Anson Jones, 194. Susan Orr and H. D. Orr, “Howard, Sarah Creath,” Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fhoat), accessed November 20, 2010, Sarah Creath, born 1812, first married John McSherry as a teen and immigrated to DeWitt’s Colony in 1828. McSherry was killed by Indians in 1829. She married John Hibbens, who was killed by Indians in 1836. She was taken captive and her baby was killed. Later she escaped and married Claiborne Stinnett, who was killed by escaping slaves in 1837. Not one to give up on marriage, she married a fourth time. She and Phillip Howard wed in 1840; she died before he did after thirty-six years of marriage. Clyde Richard King, Susanna Dickinson: Messenger of the Alamo (Austin, TX: Shoal Creek, 1976) lists the marriages of Susana Dickinson, famously widowed when her husband, Almaron Dickinson, died during the Mexican assault on the Alamo. She chose to remarry, repeatedly. In 1837 she married John Williams and divorced him the following year. In 1838 she married Francis Herring who died in 1843. She then married Peter Bellows in 1847 and, following a divorce from Bellows, married Joseph Hannig in 1857. There were periods in her life when she lived as unmarried or apart from her husbands, but she overwhelmingly chose marriage as her means of navigating life. Cummins, Emily Austin of Texas, 4 (quotation).
Historian Helena Lopata developed a number of categories to explain the lives and behaviors of the widows that she studied. She identified a number of categories that explained the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the individual widows within their circumstances. Though her “Middle-class socialite: satisfied” profile sounds like it might explain a woman like Jones, these women remarried and maintained their social and economic status through the financial support of their new husbands. Jones created a new category of widowhood for herself. Her life embodied a devotion to her husband’s memory that highlighted rather than diminished her widow status. Rather than casting off the “widow’s weeds,” she embraced her status as a widow and turned it into one of her greatest assets. In so doing, she became a professional widow, a status defined as a woman who successfully navigated life using her widowhood to maintain relationships from her matrimonial state, to understand her purpose in life, and to open new doors of opportunity. Instead of hindering her development, she reached new levels of activity and success that she had not experienced even when married to a president of the Republic of Texas.10

Following Anson’s death in 1858, Mary was determined to see his final autobiography and papers published. She negotiated the printing with Appleton & Co. of New York and offered to pay for one thousand copies. Although the Civil War interrupted the delivery of her books and a dispute arose over the cost of publication, Mary Jones succeeded in getting her husband’s view of the Republic into print by 1859. These papers represented the only complete state papers kept by any of the Republic’s

10 Helena Lopata, Women as Widows, 358-378.
presidents and thus played a vital role in the historical research of that period of Texas history. The political rejection of her husband altered his life on every level and permeated his memoirs. And it provided her with a cause that drew her increasingly out into a public sphere.  

On one level she was suspicious of both politicians and the press; however, it was in the court of public opinion that she hoped to present her case for her husband’s contributions to Texas. Mary Jones might have rejected any hope of informing the people of Texas; her wounds ran deep on his behalf. Yet, this pioneer woman found an inner commitment to his memory. The New York publishers rejected her personally penned preface to her husband’s manuscript, yet it reflected the grief of 1858. Later, the words still reflected an inner pain she had not forgotten, she hand-wrote in the margin of her copy some forty-six years later that it had not been used, thus she would leave it to another hand to burn her unused preface, which she could not do.

As these pages will pass through the press, so too will mingled feelings of pain, pleasure, and regret, pass through my heart. Who shall speak the regret it has caused. That upon me has devolved the melancholy duty of publishing and giving to the world the ‘Writing and other Manuscript’ of my lamented husband, Dr. Anson Jones. I give them just as they were left by him, without note or comment. In the high minded author of the fore going ‘Memoirs’ etc. etc. may be traced the resignation of a heart too sensitive to battle successfully with the bitter sorrows, with which his eventful and varied life was strewn. Wounded, deeply wounded, yet amidst accumulated sorrows, forbearing trustful and uncomplaining to the last. How far the merits of this ‘Work’ may be perceived or appreciated becomes not me to judge. I only deem it, my most sacred duty—one I owe to his

memory, to his orphan children, to myself, and the truth of history, to submit those ‘Records’ to the public. They must judge.\footnote{Anson Jones, \textit{Memoranda}, p. viii. Note: The complete text of her proposed preface, Mary Jones, Tuesday evening, Galveston the 7\textsuperscript{th} of September 1858 (quotation). Note: In Mary Jones hand [“Endorsed, Preface, Sept. 7\textsuperscript{th} 1858. Was not used. Someone will be able to burn this—I can’t. 1904”]}

She noted in this early inscription that she considered this a “sacred duty,” an obligation to his memory. This conjoining of sacred obligations and memory reappears throughout her life and later in the annuals of the DRT.

The publication of Anson’s \textit{Memoranda} proved costly and challenging. Mary began the process of seeking a publisher and negotiating business terms for the printing by enlisting the help of two well-connected men, Ebenezer Allen and Ashbel Smith. The New York publisher Appleton & Co. agreed to take on the project with a deposit of one thousand dollars. Following receipt of the unedited manuscript, the printers refused to add Mary’s preface and wanted additional funds for cost overruns. Mary and then Appleton filed lawsuits. Eventually, the company shipped the books, but upon the advice of Ebenezer Allen and Ashbel Smith, Mary refused to accept the shipment until the lawsuits and costs were settled. Also, the boxes had been broken open and many of the books were missing. The books languished in a warehouse for nearly seventy years, at which point the owners of the warehouse offered the books to Herbert Herrick Fletcher, who operated his own bookstore. He purchased the lot of 585 remaining copies for five hundred dollars in 1929. Because of the financial difficulties, only the few copies of Anson’s book that had been sent directly to Mary in advance circulated prior to 1929. Thus Anson’s \textit{Memoranda} was preserved, but it remained nearly inaccessible to the public at large, Mary utilized the information and her own
persuasion to advance Anson’s reputation. During these prolonged negotiations, Mary became more forceful, demanding what she believed were her rights. Eventually, she bypassed her male agents and wrote Appleton & Co. directly with a firm tone.\(^\text{13}\)

Before the Civil War, Mary Jones was moving into the arena of business and the law. This first venture into a more public sphere was fueled by her passion on behalf of what she saw as a wrong done to her family. This goal of a better state-wide understanding of her deceased husband drew her into that same world. Unlike so many who began their paths that led them outside of their household life through their church groups and ladies clubs, Mary Jones had a personal mission that propelled her out of her private sphere. Throughout the remaining three years prior to the Civil War, she continued to explore avenues to give the public a “faithful biography” of Anson and promised to send Willard Richardson, editor of the *Galveston News*, information on Anson’s prominent acts in Texas.\(^\text{14}\)

Anson Jones had sold his farm with plans to raise his family in Galveston, but Mary remained only six months in that port. Instead, she purchased a farm north of Houston. This new estate of 425 acres, known as “Headquarters,” had the advantage of being near an old friend, Ashbel Smith. He and Anson served together during the battle of San Jacinto and through much of the years of the Republic of Texas. Throughout her life Mary depended on her networks of friends to aid her. Census records for 1880 demonstrate that middle-aged widows were more likely to identify themselves as

\(^{13}\) Gambrell, *Anson Jones*, 502-503.

\(^{14}\) Mary Jones to Col. Allen, Oct. 15, 25, 1859, Box 761; Mary Jones to Appleton & Co., Nov. 9, 1860, Box 761; Mary Jones to W. Richardson, July, 13, 1858, Box 761, MJP (quotation).
farmers than in other occupations. Mary Jones was not alone in believing that a woman could manage a family, farm, and business. Women’s labor was probably undercounted; the exchange of labor for room and board may not have made the public records any more than their assistance in the fields or housework. The mythos of the Old South did not always apply to women like Mary Jones. Additionally, women like Jane Long, Mary Goodnight, and Martha Gaffney personally provided for their business goals. For instance, in spite of a southern masculine dominated society, between 1856 and 1861 Gaffney dealt with credit merchants and commission houses, secured loans, mortgaged future crops, and increased her property values to almost forty-five thousand dollars. Independently minded widows like Mary Jones utilized a variety of strategies to care for their families, in these traditionally masculine spheres Mary appeared confident and adept.15

Texas widows benefited from some slight but significant deviations from the version of English common law practiced in other American states. Mary entered her second marriage in possession of the property left by her first husband. In an 1840 Texas Supreme Court ruling, a wife’s right to her separate property was sustained in Texas law. After 1856 widows were released from the mandate of reporting their management of the estate to the court. This freed women like Mary to succeed or fail on their own financial skills based upon their own financial decisions. Managing a farm and

raising a family proved challenging, but Mary’s property and livestock by 1860 was substantial. Her farm ledger for 1860 evidenced a detailed record of her daily expenses, work hired, and comments on the quality of the work and of the workers. She owned slaves during the war and evidently hired an overseer to help her manage them. She managed to increase the farm to 600 acres along with the crops and livestock valued at over eight thousand dollars according to the agricultural census of 1860. These valuations exceeded the average acreage and value of that of her nearest neighbors by nearly one third, and these averages included the large plantation of Ashbel Smith. With the subtraction of the one nearby plantation, the assessed value of Mary Jones’s Lynchburg farm and livestock more than doubled the average of the next thirty-seven farmers. Nearly all of these were managed by men.¹⁶

A significant number of antebellum Texas female heads of household lived near Mary Jones, and, as she did, identified themselves as farmers. According to the 1860 population census, 11 percent of the next one hundred heads of household were women. Of those women, 7 percent, including Mary Jones, listed their occupation as farming. The youngest woman was thirty-six and the eldest was sixty years old. Mary at forty-one fell near the average age of forty-five for the group. With the exception of the smallest, all the rest of the seven farms included at least one adult male in the

¹⁶ Horace G. Platt, The Law as to the Property Rights of Married Women: As Contained in the Statues and Decisions of California, Texas, and Nevada (San Francisco: Sumner Whitney, 1885), 13, 23. The January 20, 1840 Supreme Court ruling on Edrington v. Mayfield 5 Texas 366, “The principles and rules of the common law as to the effect of coverture, so far as they affect the capacity of the wife to hold property in her separate right, are totally expunged from the Texas code of jurisprudence. . . .” see Platt, The Law, 10, 120. 1860 Daily Ledger, Box 761, MJP; Mary Jones to Charles Jones, Sept., 18, 1861, Folder 1, Box 761, MJP; Texas Agriculture 1860 Census, Roll 5, Lynchburg, Texas 11th July, 1860. See Appendix B for chart of Mary Jones’s land, livestock, equipment, and livestock. The number of slaves Mary owned during the Civil War is unclear at least three are alluded to in letters, though there may have been others who passed without mention in her correspondence.
household. Several of the farms operated by women included males listed as assistant farmers or laborers. These women maintained head of household status and either utilized a relative or hired hands. In comparative terms Mary Jones successfully started a farm with only two teenage sons and by 1860 reached an assessed worth valued several times more than the next highest female farmer in her area. Mary appeared to demonstrate competency in farming and managing an above-average estate for women of her place and time.\textsuperscript{17}

The Civil War brought change for Mary Jones and her family. She experienced the war years in most ways similar to other Texans and in particular much as other women did in the absence of their husbands and sons. Early historical studies of women during this period used the diaries and letters of elite southern women, many of them from the slave-holding class. Later research has sifted through the public records in order to find evidence of the thoughts and lives of non-elite women. In spite of the fact that more books have been written about the Civil War than any other event in American history, most of those histories focus upon the blood and guts of the war. While the military historians often overlooked the social historical evidence, the social historians, through the 1980s, often ignored the effect of war on the people who lived through them. Gerda Lerner’s 1988 analysis of 603 books and doctoral dissertations in the 1980s clearly demonstrated that only 2 percent of these published works on women’s historical issues of this period actually mentioned the war. Since that time new

research has included this once sparsely studied area. Published diaries and letters reveal some of the effects on women during and after the war. Drew Gilpin Faust pointed out that a variety of issues changed for white southern women. Many historical topics still await the historian who seeks to understand the Civil War and women in Texas.\(^\text{18}\)

From the domestic front to public appearances, the war brought numerous changes in the types of activities for many women. They learned new skills and adapted old domestic abilities to aid the war effort. Glowing reports in the papers made the application of these once purely domestic endeavors an acceptable part of public life. During the months leading up to the war several articles appeared lauding the presentation of flags and banners by women. A growing swell of state pride brought the ladies out to political rallies and fund-raisers. These 1860 stories as a rule made a point

of connecting the public presence of these women either to the patriotism of the revolutionary mothers or to the revolutionary period of Texas. ¹⁹

The war gave many Texas women the opportunity to participate in public life for the first time. Texas editors chose to report stories of women active in public life, and the move from private life to public view constituted a dramatic shift. Fifty years earlier the stigma of public exposure for the antebellum woman was clear in Caroline Gilman’s lament when she learned of the publication of her poetry in 1810. “I wept bitterly, and was as alarmed as if I had been detected in a man’s apparel.” The Civil War-era press regularly contained praise from males for public displays of feminine patriotism. They made this shift more palatable often by connecting what the women did in groups and in public with their home lives. Supporting their men, feeding them, making clothing, and sending encouragement became extensions of the domestic sphere. Their husbands and sons at war wrote home and expressed the importance of receiving letters and the supplies. ²⁰

The soldiers enjoyed the patriotic speeches and banners, but needed practical aid as well. Before the declaration of war, newspapers carried announcements of church fund-raisers. Though evidently novel for 1860, these “Ladies Fairs” soon appeared in the service of Confederate troops. They hosted dinners and dances, donation sales, and direct cash offerings. The details in the news make it clear that the

women donated most of the monies directly to the companies, bypassing the
government. The female family members wanted their aid to benefit their own
husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers directly. These fairs met with varying degrees of
success, raising amounts less than one hundred dollars to sums in the thousands. As
the war progressed, the newspapers reported that the fund-raisers turned from direct
troop support to relief for their families. By means of these fairs the women on the home
front helped bear the economic load of both the government and the individual
soldiers—no small feat as the value of Confederate currency sunk.21

Her letters during the Civil War to her children did not reveal any groups or fairs
that Mary Jones supported. She appeared to have adequate personal resources to
send supplies harvested, handmade, or purchased to her sons at training camps and on
the battlefield. Mary shared a typical southern attitude towards the election of Abraham
Lincoln, continued to work her farm with slaves, prayed more often, and sent personal
articles to support her sons during the war. Based upon the timing of her search for a
farm overseer, March 1860, it was probable that her two oldest sons had filled that role
prior to their enlistment in the army.

Both Charles and Samuel enlisted in the 2nd Texas Volunteer Infantry. The fact
that one of their commanders was Mary Jones’s friend and neighbor, Colonel Ashbel

21 Mary Jones to Son [probably Charles], March 26, 1860, Folder 1, Box 761, MJP. Marshall
Harrison Flag, December 8, 1860, p. 3, col. 3; Corpus Christi The Ranchero, September 8, 1860, p. 2,
col. 3; Austin State Gazette, November 2, 1861, p. 2, col. 3, Calico Ball; LaGrange True Issue, Nov. 12,
1864, p. 2, col. 1, $362 given to Terry’s regiment of Texas Rangers; Galveston Weekly News, April 29,
1863, p. 2, col. 1, reports “upwards of ten thousand” for Waller’s Battalion; Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph,
April 4, 1862, p. 2, col. 1, a concert for the relief of the families; Houston Daily Telegraph, March 3, 1864,
raised $3,000 to benefit families of soldiers in Columbus, TX. Vicki Betts, “A Sacred Charge upon Our
Hands: Assisting the Families of confederate Soldiers in Texas” in Kenneth W. Howell, ed., The Seventh
Smith surely comforted her. This regiment first organized in September 1861. Because their mission included the protection of the coast they spent several months on the island of Galveston, Texas. Later they moved to a camp near Houston, where they trained during the winter of 1861-1862. During this period Mary Jones was easily able to send supplies and gain information from multiple sources as neighbors and friends traveled to Galveston and Houston. One constant in Mary’s letters to her sons was concern for their health; stories of the illnesses prevalent in camp worried her. Their regiment moved to Corinth, Mississippi, following the Union success at Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862. The regiment was strategically placed to aid in either preventing further penetration of the Union along the Tennessee River or to prepare to move forward in an effort to dislodge Union troops in Tennessee.22

Early in April, 1862 Union general Ulysses S. Grant concentrated his army near Pittsburg Landing, along the Tennessee River approximately twenty miles above Corinth, Mississippi. Confederate general Albert Sidney Johnston accumulated nearly 55,000 troops near Corinth; among these were Mary Jones’s sons in the 2nd Texas Infantry. Johnston launched a surprise attack on Grant’s army on the morning of April 6th. Following heavy fighting the Confederate troops pushed the Union forces back and appeared to win a significant victory that day. On the second day of battle, the Union army, reinforced with fresh troops from General Don Carlos Buell, launched a counterattack, which surprised the Confederates and pushed them back. The losses on

both sides were horrific. Union casualties reached 13,047 and Confederate casualties were 10,699, easily making this the bloodiest battle of the Civil War to that date.²³

Like many other mothers, Mary’s Civil War era letters betrayed her personal concern over the welfare of her two enlisted sons, Samuel and Charles. “You say Southern blood is up to boiling heat,” responded Mary’s sister-in-law in Massachusetts, “well I do not blame them for standing up for their rights, they have been trampled upon long enough, by the rabid abolitionist.” Mary expressed concern over her sons’ health, morals, and meals. She gave them news of home and sent care packages filled with medicines, clothing items, and even a mattress upon one occasion.²⁴

Her references to prayer, church services, and sermons dramatically increased during her correspondence with her sons during the early years of the war. She approved of preaching that agreed with her political views, “Mr. Storking preached one of his very violent sermons. The first prayer was very good particularly the part in which he spoke of the unholy war that is waged against us.” Like most slave owners, Mary did not make the connection between what she conceived as oppression and her own use of other humans in an oppressive slave system. In the same letter that she prayed to God to remember them, “as an oppressed nation as well as individuals,” she included a


²⁴ Mary Jones to Mary Jones, March 11, 1861, MJP (quotation). Mary Jones to Charles, Sept. 18, Oct. 7, 12, 28, Nov. 17, 1861, MJP. This Mary was Anson’s unmarried sister who lived in Massachusetts but had strong sympathies for the southern states. Mary preserved no correspondence from her own extended family during this period. Her correspondence with her own relatives increased as the four half-sisters became adults. In her letters Mary specifically mentioned sending: Quinine, castor oil, ipecac, paregoric, a mattress, a piece [quilt], a comfort, a pillow, shirts, meal, potatoes, turnips, popcorn, gloves, and often “care packages” without description. See Mary Jones to Charles, Sept. 18, Oct. 7, Nov., 17, Dec., 9, 1861, Folder 1, Box 761, MJP.
message from her slaves, “the Negroes all send love to you both.” The irony of this failed to register for Mary Jones, at least as she expressed herself in her letters.25

The 2nd Texas Volunteer Infantry served at the battle of Shiloh in the Second Corp, Second Division, Third Brigade, and was commanded by Colonel John C. Moore. The Third Brigade experienced heavy casualties of 86 killed, 364 wounded, and 194 missing. As the Union forces swept over the field, many Confederate soldiers were unable to retreat and were captured. During the battle the brigade was forced to retreat, experiencing the highest number of missing soldiers of any of the sixteen Confederate brigades engaged at Shiloh. This one brigade accounted for 20 percent of all Confederate missing soldiers for this battle, and Charles Eliott Jones was one of the missing.26

Over 70,000 Texans fought for the Confederate forces during the Civil War. Not only their absence but also their deaths deeply affected their wives and mothers. Mary Jones’s two oldest sons served together in Company “C.” This meant that they were usually close together and could report to her about each other. All Mary knew was what her son Samuel reported to her -- that Charles fell wounded at the battle of Shiloh, Tennessee, in the spring of 1862. She clung to rumors and reports that he had been taken captive by the Union troops, promising not to surrender her hope. Indeed, news and rumors reached her that he had been only wounded and that some thought he

25 Mary Jones to Charles, Nov. 17, 1861, Box 761, MJP (first, second, and third quotation). For additional information on southern religion during the Civil War period see Randy J. Sparks, Religion in Mississippi (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 127-148 and On Jordan’s Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 203.
26 Ibid. Colonel Ashbel Smith survived the war and wrote Mary Jones with his concern for her missing son.
might be in a Union hospital. During this period of uncertainty, waiting for word of his fate, she clipped, copied, and saved several sentimental poems including, “Oh! Breathe Not His Name.” In the margins of another poem about a son left dead on an unknown battlefield titled, “Out in the Snow” she penned “Oh God!”

Mary Jones waited throughout the war years without word from her missing son, Charles. Eventually, she accepted that he had perished either on the field that day or soon after from his wounds. Apparently, no official word came concerning the death of her son. She only had the personal reports from his fellow soldiers that he had been wounded and either died on the field or was perhaps captured. Though her son Samuel survived the war and returned home, losing Charles promoted her thoughts about her past and ultimately the Texas past. Her later progress and success in focusing public attention upon that past in part lay upon her personal experiences and in the passions that arose from the deaths of her family members. Mary developed a habit of looking to the past to understand the world in which she lived.

This period of violent upheaval left the social and cultural systems of the South in shambles. Though the death of Anson took place prior to the Civil War, Mary’s experience of widowhood during the war years appeared to mirror that of those widowed by the war. To some extent, the entire South shared the mourning and loss

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27 Mary Jones to Sarah Jones, Aug. 2, 1862, Box 761, MJP. Anson Jones Family Notes and Writings, UNT, Texan Collection. The poem was written by Thomas Moore in memory of Robert Emmet’s death, the sentiment was replete with sad imagery and grief, “Oh, breathe not his name, let is sloop in the shade, where cold and work on his relics are laid. Lord silent, and dark, be the tears that we shed, as the night dew that falls on the grape oe’r his head!” Ibid., Mollie E. Moore, “Out in the Snow,” clipped from the *Tyler Reporter* Feb. 18, 1863 (quotation).

28 C. Vann Woodward pointed out a tendency to historical consciousness as a means southerners used to find their place in the present by interpreting it through their past in The Burden of Southern History, 3rd Ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 27-39.
experienced by the individual widow. Young mothers with children often took on the role of the missing father in addition to their own role as parent. At the same time, women whose husbands returned from war often found themselves propping up their spouses and allowing them to resume control in their homes following the war. Widows discovered that they were in a particularly disorienting situation, which was exacerbated by the southern patriarchal system with its restrictive gender roles, ideologies, and spheres. LeeAnn Whites argues that elite white men served in a primary position of authority in public and private life prior to the Civil War. Yet, widows often discovered that they needed to interact with the world outside their home, filling the vacuum left by the absence of their husbands. Anne Firor Scott declared that “door after door had been flung open” for women following the Civil War, but it was not true for all women. In Jones’s case she found herself moving in public spheres not always by choice but necessitated first by her economic needs and secondarily by her personal desires to rehabilitate the reputation and public memory of her dead husband.  

The war losses of the 1860s swelled the number of widows, who found themselves in changed personal circumstances as they experienced this postwar period of flux. Historian, Helena Lopata, argued that widows and their support systems were deeply affected: “Industrialization, mobility and increased societal complexity have changed the basic family unit and the relation of each member to other members and to the community at large.” In some cases widows, forced to sell their lands to satisfy debts upon the death of their husbands, may have lost something from the full value of

29 Whites, The Civil War, 5, 13; Scott, The Southern Lady, 105-133.
the properties. A number of factors resulting from the war severely changed the economic circumstances for a southern widow like Mary Jones. Her slaves were freed without economic recompense; with the death of her son she lost his labor, and the Reconstruction era taxes placed on her unexpected financial hardships. Her reported wealth, $2,500 in real estate and $500 in personal property in the 1870 census, illustrated a drastic drop of over 90 percent from 1860.30

Mary’s was not the only household that experienced a significant shift in the postwar years. Elizabeth and William Neblett experienced a drop in overall wealth, leaving them with about 5 percent of their prewar financial values. In 1860 the women farmers, once 7 percent of Mary Jones’s neighboring heads of household, disappeared as a category. In 1870, no woman appeared as a farmer and head of household, yet 7 percent of households were headed by white women listed as “keeping house.” In a sampling of 100, the total number of households headed by women fell from 11 percent to 7 percent. Only two of the previous seven female farmers reappeared in the 1870 census for the area, and both suffered seriously reduced circumstances. In the same population around Lynchburg, Texas, many of the men also experienced serious reductions in the value of their farm real estate. Ashbel Smith’s 1870 real estate valuation of 3,000 dollars equaled a fraction of 1 percent of his worth prior to the war. A comparative study of total property holdings of women heading households between 1860 and 1870 in Red River, Texas, revealed that Harris County women were not alone

30 Lopata, Women as Widows, 6 (quotation). Data collected from Seventh and Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 and 1870, Harris County, Texas, Schedule 1, Population, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
in their losses. In 1860 only one in ten female heads of households reported no property value, this jumped to one in four by 1870. At the top end, 30.7 percent reported property values over $5,000 in 1860, ten years later that number dropped to 9.1 percent in that category.  

Table 3.1 Occupational Comparisons 1860 to 1870 Harris County, Texas

*By Percentage based upon 100 nearest heads of household to Mary Jones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heads of Household</th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1870</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Female Non-Farmers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Male Farmers</td>
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<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Male Non-Farmers</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black &amp; Mulatto Female Farmers</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black &amp; Mulatto Female Non-Farmers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black &amp; Mulatto Male Farmers</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black &amp; Mulatto Male Non-Farmers</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected from Seventh and Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 and 1870, Harris County, Texas, Schedule 1, Population, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

As a Reconstruction Era widow, Mary Jones faced numerous general problems common to women in similar situations. Emerging from a southern social system that relied heavily upon patriarchs, women needed to develop their own sense of  

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31 Murr, *A Rebel Wife in Texas*, 457; Data collected from *Seventh and Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 and 1870, Harris County, Texas, Schedule 1, Population*, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. One hundred heads of household is not a large statistical analysis; however, this does present a picture of the changes most immediate to Mary Jones’s community. Rable, *Civil Wars*, 249.
appropriate employment when no male remained to aid them in the traditional ways.
The exigencies of war forced southerners to redefine some aspects of the culture of the Old South. For women this meant a reevaluation of the restrictive gender roles, spheres, and ideologies that limited them to home and hearth. One historian discovered that regardless of the times, widows generally experienced a disorganization of their prior social support systems.\(^{32}\)

Over the ten years of the Reconstruction period, 1867 to 1877, Mary Jones’s life continued to reflect or seek to cope with the powerful changes around her. The era in her life included harsh economic realities, which made her rethink continuing farm life. Texas experienced dynamic population growth and urbanization. This was also a time when social and cultural norms were undergoing the counterforces of change and conservation of values. Not everyone made the same choices. Mary resisted some new changes and appeared to embrace others.

Mary Jones’s economic fortunes radically changed. For a time, she experienced downward economic mobility although her political connections assured her a cultural status worthy of the wife of a Texas Republic president. Like other southern whites, Mary experienced crucial transitions in racial relationships. Many saw their loss of slavery in terms of economic disaster and of personal betrayal. It became apparent that many sincerely believed their own defense of slavery as more familial relationship than owner and laborer. Thus, when their ex-slaves left them, they struggled with emotions

over what they perceived as ingratitude. No evidence remains about Mary’s thoughts on emancipation.

As southern life and culture changed during Reconstruction a number of women turned to religion for comfort and guidance. Mary found solace during this period in her faith just as Drew Gilpin Faust noted a general increase in religious practice in her work on women in the South during the Civil War. The role of spiritual belief in Mary’s life would become pivotal throughout the remainder of her life. Unlike some, Mary took control over her resources and negotiated numerous land deals during this period. Her knowledge of the political issues remained current. She expressed strong sentiments on the Reconstruction government and encouraged her family, particularly her son Cromwell and her son-in-law Richard Gaston Ashe, as they sought public office.³³

In a time when pensions and life insurance were rare, widows needed to find income. The Civil War years had provided a transitional period for women to experience a measure of public life and economic realities without masculine company. In addition to the war widows there were many women who managed farms and businesses in the absence of their soldier husbands. In the Reconstruction era widows needed to find means of employment, which in the case of Mary Jones meant employment appropriate for a “lady.” How did a woman once accustomed to the idea of women working in the home step out of the domestic sphere to make a living? Throughout the South, many sought the growing cities and with them factories or industries that began to attract women. “Ladies” would not resort to factory work unless they were severely reduced in

³³ Faust, Mothers of Invention, 172-195.
income. In Houston and Galveston, Texas, ten of seventeen industries employed women by 1887. Though some 17,000 worked in these industries, only 372 were female and nearly half worked in the woolen mills.\textsuperscript{34}

The private letters of Mary Jones show no indication that she considered working in a public industry. She had the examples of strong women in Texas creatively employed towards supporting their families, even though widowed and often with children. Mary Austin Holley reared five children in addition to her own and plagued, by finances, turned to writing and teaching. From the earliest years of the Republic through the end of the century, Texas women like Mary Adams Maverick, Mollie Goodnight, Elisabet Ney, Lizzie Johnson Williams, and Arrie Ella Elgar Dumont tried everything from ranching and writing to sculpting and business. Mary Jones was renowned for her nursing skills, perhaps gained from assisting her physician husband before his death. Frequently, others called on her for help with child birth, a persistent fever, or simply prolonged illnesses. Though payment for these services was never mentioned, her nursing skills were often rendered for family, friends, or neighbors.\textsuperscript{35}

Confusing and overlapping land surveys continued to complicate the lives of land owners in Texas from the period of the Republic through the end of the nineteenth century. In spite of the obstacles, her friend and writer, Adèle Briscoe Looscan declared that Mary Jones “managed her little farm with a skill born of practical knowledge, which


made it a model for the neighborhood.” Still, profitable farming proved difficult. Other than family and health, land and taxes dominated her correspondence during this period. By 1870 Mary complained of “consumption,” by which she meant that taxes were consuming her, a play on words for her, but a serious problem. She found herself short on money and with plenty of land, but she could not “eat it, drink it, wear it, or sell it.”

Reconstruction reforms proved expensive and that in turn brought higher property taxes to pay for improvements. Mary discovered that holding unproductive land became financially difficult. Prior to his death Anson liquidated much, but not all, of his land investments. Some were city lots, but other properties were scattered around the state. The farm she lived on included woods and uncultivated land, still subject to taxes. One of her low points came in 1869. Their resources reached the place where she tried selling some of their clothes. Having searched the house for money, she declared that not even a dime remained in their possession.

After the Civil War, Mary counted upon the economic support of her grown children, particularly her son Cromwell. Soon she found herself counting on her son’s paychecks. Cromwell found work as a teenager in a dry goods store located in Lynchburg, Texas. He agreed to work for a John Barret Sydnor and live with the family. He worked his first month without knowing the amount he would be paid. From his first paycheck Cromwell dutifully sent his mother half his monthly pay of $20. He must have

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36 Draft notes of Adèle Looscan for Mary Jones’s biography, Box 761, MJP (first quotation); Mary Jones to Cromwell Jones, Jan. 11, 1870, MJL (second quotation).
37 Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Jan., 17, May 6, May 9, 1870, Box 761, MJP.
grown weary of supporting his mother who thought that she could entertain visitors and
overnight guests as if she still lived in the pre-war period. He laid out their financial
circumstance in stark terms in a letter, “we are getting too poor to support any more
trifling persons . . . when we do not know where our next days [sic] bread is coming
from.”  

Mary found herself navigating the difficult waters of an economy in flux. Her
letters to and from family members maintained a constant theme through the 1870s of
frustration over the taxes on the land, penalties for non-payment, possible swindles,
embezzlement, and opportunities. She released all her servants and washed her own
laundry. Mary no longer kept a financial ledger with expenses, but it appears that she
employed at least two of her now ex-slaves until 1869, when she was unable to pay
them. Many of her letters revealed her angst at the need to sell land to satisfy debts and
living expenses until 1877, at which time she made her first large land sale of property
held in Goliad. Evidently, Mary still owned lands that had been granted to her first
husband, Hugh McCrory, in the Bexar District.

Cromwell’s new position as a Galveston attorney appeared to give them the
knowledge and connections successfully to avoid losing their lands to taxes and also to
discover additional land grants belonging to her mother. Most of her financial assistance
came from her youngest son. Starting with his first job in 1869, Cromwell sent Mary
regular cash payments beginning as a teenager. This generosity and sense of family

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38 Mary Jones to Cromwell Jones, Sept. 5, 1869, MJP; Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, July 29,
1869, Box 761, MJP (quotation).
39 Mary Jones to Cromwell Jones, Feb., 25, 1870; Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Jan., 25, 1877;
Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Aug., 9, 1877, all in Box 761, MJP.
duty enabled Mary to survive and adapt to the realities of life during Reconstruction. Prior to the successful sale of some of her lands, her son’s support provided the $10 per month rent money she needed for housing and for food. Cromwell’s leap from store clerk to lawyer correspondingly increased his ability to support his mother. Like many other jurists in a pre-professional era he studied law with an established and recognized lawyer, in this case with Major Michael Looscan. Mary’s pioneer friendships provided the necessary introductions for Cromwell through the Andrew Briscoe family. She knew the Briscoe and Harris families from her pioneer days in Texas and her early years in Houston. In this case Mary’s friend, Adele Briscoe Looscan, helped Mary’s son find employment with her husband, Michael.40

Mary Jones also counted upon the help of friends and family. Her voluminous correspondence for this period revealed a woman interested and involved in her world. Like most southern women she continued to find much of her life’s work and meaning focused upon her family. She sought the counsel and connections of her deceased husband’s old friends in her attempts to publish his papers. She continued to count upon their aid when she fell into negotiations with the publishers over money. The power of connections helped women like Jones to maintain something of the lives they knew prior to their husband’s death. These friendships could prove valuable when it came to financial troubles, as when one old friend and visitor, “Mr. Rottenstein” of New York, offered to underwrite the publication of her husband’s autobiography. This was an

40 Mary Jones to Cromwell, Oct. 7, 1875, MJL. Major Looscan married Adele Briscoe, the daughter of Mary Jane Harris and Andrew Briscoe. Mary Jones knew this family from her early years in Houston. Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Oct., 29, 1871, Box 761, MJP.
offer she did not accept. Jones also relied upon her family as she often wrote various members and occasionally stayed with them for extended visits. The most dependable source of familial support proved to be her son Cromwell and her daughter Sallie. Mary had to provide more aid to her other son, Samuel, than he returned to her.

Sallie Jones, Mary’s only daughter, was only a teen during the Civil War when she became engaged to Richard Gaston Ashe, a local youth. No specific information survives about how they met, but the population was small and they might have met in more than one place from school to church. Ashe was two years older than Sallie and may have been a friend of one or both of her older brothers. He served with the 8th Texas Cavalry Regiment, mustering in September 7, 1861 and discharged at Corinth, Mississippi, on April 17, 1862. Richard and Sallie approached Mary Jones for her permission to marry through a letter in the fall of 1863. He must have already known her answer for he volunteered to wait until after the war so that he could have her blessing. They married on August 10, 1865, the details of the wedding were not recorded. Mary periodically lived with her daughter and family after she sold the farm she lived on in Harris County, Texas. Richard tried a number of different jobs from farming to managing a cotton gin. He also worked as a sheriff, a job that involved political issues during Reconstruction. And by 1877 Mary regained some financial security with $1,500 in savings. 41

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41 Jones, Memoranda, Introductory notes, i-xii. Josephine Whiteside to Mary Jones, Feb. 10, 1870, Box 761, MJP; Paul R. Scott, “Eighth Texas Cavalry, CSA” (MA Thesis: University of Texas at Arlington, 1977); Mary Jones to Cromwell, Oct. 5, 1877, MJL.
Mary’s oldest son Sam married Laura Virginia Childress in November 1869. Her family had migrated to Texas from Arkansas. Much of Sam’s early life appeared to be restless. During this time period he and his wife lived at home with his mother and assisted with her farm until she sold it. In addition to their help, Mary also employed a ten year old boy as a domestic servant during some of this time. Sam bought an interest in a boat that he used as a ferry, but it was often grounded and eventually wrecked. His wife gave birth to a son they named Elliot in 1872 after which Laura apparently died, possibly from the complications of childbirth. Mary took the baby in and became his primary care-giver while her son mourned and sought employment. This arrangement essentially continued through Elliot’s adolescent years. Like many southern women of this period, family defined Mary’s existence, particularly her willingness to either rear or care for the children of others. “I could die in peace,” wrote Mary, “if I could see all my family settled and doing well.” By the 1870s, Mary was in her 50s and had already helped her mother rear at least four children, cared for her own four, and took in four half-sisters, as well as two young relatives. This sense of family also sufficed to obligate her children to lend her financial aid. Mary’s world-view formed a familial foundation that aided her to eventually to extend her private sphere of domestic order into a public domestic agenda.42

Cromwell’s entry into the legal profession furnished a widow like Mary Jones with numerous advantages. He provided her with the necessary legal knowledge to unravel

42 Mary Jones to Cromwell, Nov. 7, 1869, MJL. She was commonly called Jennie in Mary’s letters. 1870 Census listed Coleman Rueben as a ten year old black domestic servant living with Mary, Samuel, and Virginia Jones. Cromwell Jones to Mary, Nov., 20, 1873, Box 761, MJP. Mary Jones to Cromwell, Nov. 19, 1871, M JL (quotation).
the tangled land claims and taxes in order to sell some of her lands. He often acted as her agent, traveling to distant counties and making the deed and title searches required to make the sales. No longer the teenager who weathered the Civil War years with his mother, Cromwell was an adult who gave her valuable real estate advice. He provided his counsel based upon a candid assessment of their previous farming accounts and the potential for agricultural life in Texas. At one point he firmly advised against buying another farm. According to his recollection, their farm finances had been dismal and the outlook bleak. Cromwell wrote to his mother that he could not remember since moving to their farm near Lynchburg, Harris County,

> that with our entire force at work [slaves and four children] we ever came out ahead, even if we made ends meet. Since the war, with both your sons & son-in-law on the place mostly or all the time, it has even been worse and each succeeding year has witnessed with the utmost exertions our place steadily going to decay & ruin & we in spite of sales of land and other property going in debt and becoming poorer day-by-day and exhausting our resources. I state this in no spirit of complaint (for certainly you & all of us did the best we could) but simply as facts & past experience which may serve as a guide for future action. I cannot see now how you with many years added to your life and poor in health & all of us away from you, . . . can do better on a place containing five acres of land. . . . Very few farmers with full ability to labor & give close attention to all details of business are more than keeping even (and many not doing that) except on large farms in rich sections of country and with the aid of stock.\(^{43}\)

Mary appeared to wish for an agricultural endeavor; however, Cromwell’s blunt assessment of their previous operations and the current agricultural prospects effectively ended her attempts to buy another farm.\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\) Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Oct., 7, 1877, Box 761, MJP (quotation). Later Mary Jones added the following note to his letter, “advice killed my plan to purchase and few short years proved to my satisfaction that I would have failed in my plans and hopes which were to do something to help myself and not to be a burden upon any one.”

\(^{44}\) Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, June 19, Nov. 3, 1876, Jan. 19, Jan. 25, 1877, MJP.
Even though Mary Jones lived at close to survival level during the postwar era, she maintained a keen interest in the political events of Reconstruction. Like so many others, she believed that her reduced circumstances and land woes related directly to politics. An assessment of the political events in the Lone Star State seldom merited a line in the private letters and journals of many of the women on the Texas frontier. Both Mary and Cromwell expressed anger over what they considered inflated tax assessments. Mary commonly expressed mistrust over what she perceived as the corruption prevalent in the Reconstruction government, calling the officials carpet baggers and radicals. These sentiments appeared reflective of both her declining financial circumstances and of the general discontent of those around her. Mary’s brother, Squire Smith, complained of hard labor and little returns from his farm. He blamed it on bad Texas land and weather. Mary told him that it had nothing to do with the weather; it was all due to the “long Radical misrule” under which everyone was suffering.45

Mary’s multiple streams of information maintained her awareness of regional politics. She attended political rallies sponsored by Republicans and more often by Democrats. She digested the speeches that she heard and expressed her interpretations, generally applauding Democratic platforms. Mary also encouraged both Cromwell’s canvassing for the Democratic Party and his running for Harris County judge on that ticket, as well as her son-in-law, Richard Ashe, who ran for county sheriff. Both won their respective elections. Additionally, Mary stayed current with her larger world by

45 Cromwell Jones to Mary, Oct., 16, 1869; Mary Jones to Cromwell Jones, Jan., 11, 1870. Mary Jones to Cromwell, Nov. 7, 1869, Jan. 25, 1873, Aug. 20, 1874 (quotation), MJL.
reading historical books such as Edward Gibbon’s *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* and James Morphis’s *History of Texas from Its Discovery and Settlement*. From these books and the newspapers, she expressed opinions on issues as broad as the “shame” involved in electing Rutherford B. Hayes to the effect of a war in Europe on national monetary policy. Though clearly focused upon her family, Mary Jones maintained an ongoing awareness of the political realities around her. This interest in the public sphere aided her in her continuing campaign to restore a positive public image for her husband.\(^{46}\)

Mary’s one-woman crusade to rehabilitate Anson’s public image expanded beyond the publishing of his memoirs. Other groups interested in Texas historical events began to seek her assistance. In 1873 the influential Galveston Artillery Club initiated a correspondence with Mary with the hope of obtaining a portrait of Anson Jones for display at their Anniversary Ball. Along with this request came an invitation for Mary to attend their gala. The Galveston Artillery Club was known for lavish balls and as a club for the socially elite. The next year the Odd Fellows Lodge in Austin, made a similar request for a portrait of Anson for their lodge; Anson had been a Grand Master. Mary’s son Cromwell supported her efforts and quest to affect the public’s view of Anson. The one-woman struggle thus gained a valued coworker. The following year an artist came to Cromwell’s home to complete an India ink drawing of Anson from an engraving in his possession. And the next year’s 1876 “Centennial” celebration in Harris

\(^{46}\) Mary Jones to Cromwell, Feb., 9, 1876, MJP. Thomas B. Gaillard to Mary Jones, Feb., 26, 1876, MJP, Gaillard congratulated Mary Jones on the election of Cromwell to the position of Harris County Judge; Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Dec., 13, 1874, MJP. Mary’s son-in-law, Richard Gaston Ashe was elected president of the State Convention of Sheriffs. Mary Jones to Cromwell Jones, May 19, 1870, Feb., 9, 1876; Mar., 12, 1877, Sept., 29, 1870, MJP.
County provided a public forum for Anson’s case to be heard. The organizers selected Cromwell as the official historian for the festivities. This proved an excellent opportunity for which he “got up a passable sketch” of Harris County history including Anson Jones’s role, which he read publicly at the Centennial celebration. By the end of the Reconstruction period Mary’s interest in a positive public perception of her husband’s work had begun to pay dividends in her quest for a public life.  

Mary Jones’s campaign on Anson’s behalf led her to an interest in the newly forming women’s organizations focused on the Texas past. Her membership in these groups aided in her adjustment to postwar Texas. Not all widows found adequate support through the aid of family or friends. The changes of the New South era included the rise of a variety of organizations that focused the work of women and served the needs of women in need. These organizations often provided the social and cultural relationships for middle- and upper-class women affected by the war. A wide variety of clubs and organizations arose during the 1880s. The literary clubs met intellectual needs but also provided a social outlet and support system of sisters. The egalitarian nature of the frontier began to disappear as the population grew and urban centers enlarged, leading to a more defined class structure. The restrictive membership policy of some enabled women to display their social status as well. The patriotic and memorial societies and clubs provided service outlets and additional social support. A number of women’s organizations arose in the New South period meant to serve the

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47 H. N. Duble to Mary Jones, Apr., 11, 1873, MJP. Diana Elizabeth Kendall, *Members Only: elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowaman & Littlefield, 2008), 13. The Galveston Artillery Club considered themselves more exclusive than other local clubs due to their strict membership requirements and limitations. Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Apr., 26, 1874; Feb. 25, 1875; July 14, 1876 (quotation), MJP.
needs of others. These included those helping with orphanages, elderly, the poor, and the ill. Other organizations focused upon cultural and civic projects. Some demonstrated a desire to expand their knowledge in intellectual pursuits that included history or travel.  

Jane Cunningham Croly, an early female newswoman, wrote that the women’s clubs were the “school of the middle-aged woman.” Isadore Miner, another newspaper columnist, said that women’s clubs encouraged women to think and to arouse them to action. Croly’s 1898 History of the Woman’s Club Movement listed thirteen of the Texas clubs in detail and named numerous others. These clubs began working together in a federated club system and thus became a conduit for the cross pollination of ideas, organizational systems, and mutual assistance in shared projects. The topics and subjects of these clubs ranged broadly from aid to children in foreign lands, women’s posture, the legal status of women, and Chaucer. The clubs provided women with needed experience in both organization and the power they had when they worked together towards their mutual goals. The Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs, founded in 1897, focused on encouraging clubs to assist in the projects of other clubs or to make actual donations. These public endorsements were valuable for the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in their various patriotic, classroom, and historic property projects.  

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These women’s organizations filled a gap left by the absence of political provisions in the New South and were particularly helpful to widows. The government was slow to recognize the needs of widows, both on the national and state levels. Not until 1882, after the assassination of James Garfield, did the United States Congress provide annual pensions to the widows of United States presidents. Citizens of Denver, Colorado, saw the expansion of relief organizations, from which widows benefited, between 1879 and 1900. The Denver groups utilized specific relief boards to assist widows and included the Masons, International Order of Odd Fellows, Woodmen of the World, Knights of Columbus, and several ethnically specific groups of immigrants. Most of these fraternal and service organizations existed previously, but evidently in the postwar period members saw the need to help widows. Joyce D. Goodfriend’s research on Denver of this period found that widows needed financial employment for their support. The men’s organizations opened shops to sell the women’s handcrafted goods to make money and raise support for indigent widows. She also discovered evidence of street children begging because their widowed mothers could not feed them. As the old social and cultural norms changed in the Southwest, the methods for dealing with the needs of widows changed as well.  

The largest memberships across the South for women in the 1870s and 1880s came first in church groups and second in Ladies Memorial Associations. Jones attended some of the first worship services held in Houston. Later she aided in

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establishing an Episcopal church at St. Paul’s College, where her husband served as one of the trustees. Many of her fellow leaders in the DRT came from the ranks of the Episcopal Church and her personal letters frequently mentioned her church attendance and spiritual concerns. Undoubtedly, Jones found some comfort in her religious connections, though no evidence in her letters indicate belonging to any of the church organizations during the latter part of her widowhood. She maintained avid sacred and otherworldly interests; however, she did not appear to rely upon church organizations to advance her agendas.  

Although Mary chose not to invest her time and energy in Christian women’s organizations, she did seek out those groups that would advance her program to restore Anson’s reputation. The era of clubs, which arose in the postwar years, appeared to aid her cause, and she sought ways to use organizations and social connections to her advantage. Most of the organizations she chose to join dealt in some fashion with her connection to family, particularly to the memory of her husband. These associations supplied her with social support systems and with avenues to promote her plans to publish favorable accounts of her husband’s work. These included the Texas Veterans Association, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT), the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), and the many informal social networks that she maintained over her years in Texas. Her access to these networks helped her oldest son, Samuel, enroll in a Baltimore dental college in 1878. One of his letters described in detail the city-wide celebration of Confederate

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51 Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community*, 151-169. Biographical draft material by Adèle Looscan from Mary Jones, Box 761, MJP.
Memorial Day. He was amazed by the amounts of money given for headstones, wreaths, and the production of honorific engravings. He vividly recounted the speeches and tributes that he heard; perhaps these images helped to plant the seeds in her mind for a battlefield tribute at San Jacinto. The Confederate Memorials preserved a memory that the veterans of the Texas War for Independence lacked at that point.  

Mary’s husband fought in the battle of San Jacinto, and she in turn supported the Texas veterans. She attended their annual meetings; in fact one letter from a veteran promised her that she would be “lionized” for her service to them. These aging patriots were asking for Mary’s attendance at their meetings and barbeques as early as 1878. During the late 1870s and 1880s, and with the assistance of her son Cromwell, Mary continued to promote her husband as a Texas hero and statesman. Cromwell aided in the organization of the General Consultation for the Society of the Sons of Texas and was elected as their secretary. At her request, Cromwell prepared a biographical sketch of Anson for the *Biographical Encyclopedia of Texas* in 1879. Despite the constant moves and hardships of the war years and her financial struggles, she was able to hand her son the information he needed. “I have been saving everything related to the early settlers of Texas,” she promised him. Mary maintained a sense of the value of recording history and cultivated her sources. Even as her world changed, she found continuity with the past by preserving her perspective of history.

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52 Sam Jones to Mary Jones, Jan. 9, 1878, May 26, 1878, Box 761, MJP.
53 A. Underwood to Mary Jones, Apr., 7, 18, 1884 (first quotation). Underwood expressed confidence that she would, “find many kind and warm hearted greetings duly recognizing your historical relationship.” Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, July 9, 1878. The first of these meetings took place in 1874, possibly influenced by the Civil War reunions taking place around the country. Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, July 13, 1879; Mary Jones to Cromwell Jones, May 5, 1879 (second quotation), all in MJP.
As time passed, other requests for Anson’s portrait continued to suggest that Mary’s campaign had done something to ease what had been a strong public aversion to him. As late as 1889 Mary was corresponding with Hubert Howe Bancroft about his request for a biography of Anson. Her words indicated the depth of her passion thirty years after his death. She called her biographical sketch a “vindicature [sic] of truth.” She informed Bancroft that her husband had been “grossly misrepresented particularly in his connection with the subject of the great measure of Annexation.” The years had not diminished her passion for promoting history as she knew it, a version which she believed vindicated her husband’s course and vicariously her own life choices.  

By all accounts, except for his faithful wife, Anson Jones alienated and angered far more people than he kept as friends during his political career. As noted previously, even his wife grew concerned for him after he sold his dream farm, Barrington, on the Brazos River. She wrote to editors and writers hoping to publish her version of his life and prominent acts, which she described in glowing terms. Lopata’s eight-year study identified a strong tendency for some widows to “idealize” their late husbands in a process that she called “sanctification.” In the case of a woman like Mary Jones, who came to adulthood in the Old South and carried some of her sense of southern paternalism with her into the New South, transference of a patriarchal blessing may have occurred. This linking of the dead with the sacred endowed her mission with a blessing, which replaced what had been lost in the death of her husband. Women

\footnote{Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Dec. 2, 1880; Mary Jones to Bancroft, Mar., 28, 1889, Box 761, MJP (first and second quotation).}
looking for an acceptable rationale for their public missions could find it in the idea of honoring a continuity with their past marriage partner.  

Mary’s position and networks had begun to open doors for her project to validate her husband’s work and memory; however, many of the connections were becoming more hers than his. The name that she used with others habitually was “Mrs. Anson Jones” or the “widow of President Jones.” Self-identifiers tied her existence to a marital status, but as time passed people began seek her out for her own history of which Anson was only one part. Mary’s economic penury did not preclude her invitations to some of the prestigious weddings or family gatherings held in Texas. Health troubles filled Mary’s private correspondence and, in a state that boasted many places for those ailing with any number of complaints, she began visiting the Sour Lake resort in Hardin County. Among the possible benefits of the sulfuric water was the reestablishment of Mary’s network from her pioneer days with friends like Mary Goodnight. Upon learning that Mary was an old “Texian” visiting the Sour Lake spa, there were some who wanted an introduction. Mary’s role as widow and aged pioneer provided her with a reason to be in public; in her plans she was vindicating her husband, but she was also making a place for herself in the public mind.

In addition, other organizations and clubs sought her involvement or name recognition in the 1880s and 1890s. The San Jacinto chapter of the Masons took the extraordinary step of inviting Jones to the new member installation service and

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55 Mary Jones to Mr. W. Richardson, 13 July 1858, MJP. Lopata, Women as Widows, 124.
56 Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, Nov., 25, 1880, Samuel Jones to Mary Jones, Aug., 1882, A. Underwood to Mary Jones, Apr., 7, 1884, ___(?) to Mary Jones, Sept., 5, 1886; Cromwell Jones to Mary Jones, July 10, 1881; Mary Jones to Cromwell Jones, July 7, 1881, Box 761, MJP.
presenting her with a Master Mason’s Jewel. The UDC placed her name in their membership rolls, and she belonged to the founding members of the Texas State Historical Association. These clubs and organizations provided her social outlets, but they also gave her a means to reach other significant goals in the public world around her. Her membership with the UDC did not include active participation or even attendance on her part. The name Mary Jones on the membership list became valuable to the clubs and organizations. As her own name grew in public recognition, her potential influence over the historical record grew as well.57

Historian Lopata opined that, “Americans tend to view widows as problem-ridden and the societies that gave birth to this view have tended to shy away from widowed women.” Widows in search of new personal support systems may appear needy. The historic patriotic societies provided a respectable, even patriotic, mantle for their losses. These groups gave them opportunities for more than communication; women like Mary Jones found ways to grow and achieve. Caroline E. Janney argues that it was the Ladies’ Memorial Associations, LMAs, who more than the men kept alive the memories of the Civil War, in the absence of an LMA in Texas the women organized much later in the 1890s. They became interested in both the Civil War and kept the memory of the history of the Republic of Texas before the populace. This process of remembering the past not only defined their view of the world, but it was a form of women’s activism. In the absence of a married life, these associations provided Mary skills and experiences

57 “A Jewel Presentation,” The Houston Chronicle, n.d.; Box 276, AJP.
that in turn gave her a valuable platform to achieve lasting results in preservation of historic sites.\textsuperscript{58}

More than membership, memorializing organizations aided in recovery from the loss of a loved one by assigning value and meaning to that life. This took place indirectly through their work, as they praised the value of their loved ones’ lives, their own sacrifice and loss found meaning as well. In her correspondence and notes, Mary Jones never revealed a plan to utilize her campaign to restore her husband’s reputation as a means to aid her in sustaining her family, but as she pursued her course it led her into a more public life. From the time of her marriage Mary maintained close ties to powerful friends whose aid she sought in her mission to publish Anson’s papers. Mary’s life mission gave her a common cause with others interested in the past. In addition, she gained a growing social network, maintained personal connections with powerful people, and rather than lose status like other widows, she actually gained in influence and reputation.

Mary Jones entered into a long process of secular sanctification that included publishing Anson’s memoirs, publishing an additional biography by her son Cromwell, and agreeing to rebury her husband’s body beside that of accepted Texas heroes. This progression may have served to aid her in her grief. This prolonged focus on her dead husband became a part of her mourning process in the form of an extended eulogy. Because life had been often better economically, socially, and even physically during

\textsuperscript{58} Helena Lopata, \textit{Women as Widows}, 7; Caroline E. Janney, \textit{Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2, 4.
the marriage, that period may truly have felt like an ideal time to Mary Jones. Mary’s roots back into the Old South, may well have maintained something of the “Lost Cause Myth” for their own marriages as well as culture in general. Evidence of southern women moving beyond conventions over time abound; in this case Mary utilized convention to advance her cause and her personal life. Historian Kirsten Wood argues that the slaveholding widows of the antebellum period often acted “decisively to protect their own and their children’s interests,” and they “manipulated ideals of familial relationships in order to demand help, justify their conduct, and critique their kin.” Mary Jones used southern conventions for her own benefit. 59

Interestingly, Mary found her way forward in spite of her focus upon the past. In order to explain the importance of her husband to future generations, she found new methods to preserve the past as she wanted it remembered. The sanctification process redacted Jones’s memories. Lopata points out that, “Memory tends to reconstruct the reality of the past from the perspective of the present.” There are a number of benefits to a widow like Jones to idealize her late husband. It obviously helped her morale and her grief; however, it also helped her to maintain or improve her social status. The idea that she made a good choice in a mate potentially gave others the opportunity to admire her as a worthy person who was chosen by an admirable husband. In the case of Jones, she also could deflect criticism of her husband due to her status as a widow. In

public photographs, Jones always wore black clothes. She was still wearing a black
dress at the age of eighty-six. Her husband’s old enemies had roots in the Old South,
how could a “southern gentleman” demean the late husband of a widow?  

Indeed, Jones created for herself a persona by embracing widowhood. Others
accepted Mary’s widowhood as evidence of her dedication to the past. She became a
symbol for how they wanted to view their past. Nettie Houston Bringhurst, the daughter
of her husband’s vehement opponent Sam Houston, penned a poem dedicated to
Jones calling her that “priceless link” with the past. She exalted Jones as “so pure,”
“brave,” “a type of womanhood,” and that she was a flame from “Chivalry’s own time.” At
some point in the minds of the public, Anson Jones faded with time and Mary Jones
became the focus of attention. This in turn gave Mary’s vision of the past greater weight
as she argued for her view of Anson and of events surrounding the Republic of Texas.
Eventually, those who met with Jones in her home came away describing the room itself
as a “sacred” shrine to Anson Jones.

Mary’s power and influence at least in part derived from her self-developed
identity as a widow. Typically introduced as Anson’s wife, she made a successful
profession out of her status. She never put aside the black mourning dress, wearing the
evidence of her grief in public fifty years after the death of her husband. She was not the
only elite white widow of this era who exhibited an ability to parlay their status into a
better life, thus establishing the life they wanted. Elizabeth Bacon Custer during her

Birthday” n.d. *Houston Chronicle*, Box 762, MJP.
61  Nettie Houston Bringhurst, poem in honor of Mary Jones, April 1907, Box 761, MJP (quotation).
Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (Houston: Gray’s
Printing Office, 1901), 59, 61.
marriage to Armstrong Custer constantly portrayed herself in her own books as weak, subject to fainting at the least provocation, and in constant need of a man’s strength. Yet, following his death she lectured across the country to many large audiences and wrote in support of her husband’s reputation. Her status as widow apparently elicited sympathy and the complicit silence by some of his would-be critics. The directed reimagining of her late husband’s career, coupled with sympathetic audiences, allowed her to polish his tarnished image and make a living for herself.\(^\text{62}\)

LaSalle Corbell Pickett survived her husband George Edward Pickett by fifty-six years. Like Custer, she also took up both the pen and the lectern to defend her late husband’s Civil War ventures and wrote a laudatory biography of his military career. Similar to Mary Jones’s mission, LaSalle Pickett spent her life focused on her deceased husband, “to him alone, to whom my life has been dedicated.”\(^\text{63}\) Additionally, LaSalle Pickett published *The Heart of a Soldier: As Revealed in the Intimate Letters of Genl. George E. Pickett, C.S.A.* which was evidently plagiarized and fabricated. She utilized her book to advocate for the reputation of her husband and for speeches at UDC meetings. Left a widow without adequate financial means, this forgery of letters also provided needed money. Her critics were circumspect in their public and written doubts, perhaps because she bore the widow’s mantel. These women found a profession that


\(^{63}\) LaSalle Corbell Pickett, *Pickett and His Men* (Atlanta: Foote & Davies, 1899), v (quotation).
supported them, the memory of their husbands which required them to maintain their identities as widows.\(^\text{64}\)

Other periods of American history included additional women who spent so much time defending their dead husbands that they remained identified as their widows. Some of these dedicated ladies included women like Alexander Hamilton’s wife Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton. Her husband’s death left her in debt with children to raise. Hamilton’s staunch and fierce defense of her husband’s deeds and reputation, who like Mary Jones, drove her to collect and preserve her husband’s letters and papers for posterity. Elizabeth Hamilton’s efforts to retrieve those papers led to years of correspondence with leading political figures from the founding of the nation. Alexander Hamilton’s biographer said of Elizabeth’s success at placing the spotlight on Alexander that she, “has been depicted as a broken, weeping, neurasthenic creature, clinging to her Bible and lacking any identity other than that of Hamilton’s widow.” Her success as Hamilton’s widow enabled her to reach other public goals, however, including work with widows and orphans in New York City. Likewise, Helen Dortch Longstreet devoted her life to defending the military career of her husband also publishing a book that documented his work, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide*. A generation later Edith Wilson

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toured the world following the death of her husband Woodrow Wilson in an effort to promote his causes and to restore his good name.65

These women embodied the familial emphasis that so many mothers of that era appeared to have. They maintained that family devotion in the light of their husbands’ deaths. What they had in common was a perceived public attack on the character and work of their spouses. In seeking to memorialize their individual husbands, they moved into public spheres. Their status to some degree gained them sympathy and perhaps entry into arenas not normally opened to them. While Jones did not overtly seek the attention that she received as she sought to sustain herself and her children. Her agency may well have included a degree of personal ambition. In both marriages she found successful men who appeared able to improve her life and offer opportunity for growth. Mary did not admit to a self-serving agenda in writing, but her choices and efforts did serve her well. It was through her identity as a widow on a mission that she found her stride into society. As others saw her work and values, they came to admire this woman as someone who symbolized the qualities of a Texas that they believed.

65 Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 727-728. Helen Dortch Longstreet, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in the Light of the Official Records* (Gainesville, Georgia: Author, 1904), 9 (quotation). In her preface, Longstreet wrote, “I was writing for love of him whose dear name and fame had been attacked; to place before his fading vision enduring appreciation of his valiant deeds as a soldier and high qualities as a gentleman.”
CHAPTER 5
MARY JONES AND THE DAUGHTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS, 1891-1907

Although the wife and widow of a public figure, Mary Jones did not move in her own public and political circles until the final seventeen years of her life. In her seventies, she became the president of one of the most important women's organizations in Texas. In the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT), she found a perfect venue to promote her aims and to achieve her goals. In addition, the public recognition she received in the DRT made her membership more desirable for other organizations. Through her leadership role in the DRT, Mary Jones was also able to influence a number of key events in the preservation of the past and guide the public's memory of Anson Jones.

Mary's personal journey into a public world of women's organizations and political activities carried her along a course unique to her character, experiences, relationships, and goals. Other women found different roads to their public lives. Some joined organizations, which gave them the experience and skills to advocate for their own objectives. The movement of middle-class women from private to public activities accelerated in the postbellum era, but it began in the antebellum period. As early as the 1840s there were Texas women willing to agitate publicly for their beliefs. For example when the Sons and Daughters of Temperance, who made their appearance in Texas in 1842; the newspapers reported their public protest in Rockwall over the opening of a
store that sold alcohol. The Civil War induced many women to create patriotic organizations in support of the Confederate war effort. Texas women also advocated for the relief of families suffering from the absence of their male family members during the war. Local relief committees raised support and supplies to assist the families of soldiers. Women excluded from actual battle found ways to support their family members at war. Later, after the war Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAs) organized often to provide for the burial of war dead. This included the organization of cemeteries and the raising of funds to provide monuments and plaques in their honor. These women’s groups provided them valuable experiences in organization, leadership, financial matters, and political influence.¹

By the 1880s women in Texas were joining the public work force in growing numbers. Their numbers remained a small portion of the growing manufacturing industry, only 372 of the nearly seventeen thousand Texas workers were women in 1887, but this represented more than a thousand percent growth over the number of

¹Adrienne Caughfield, True Women & Westward Expansion (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 65-67; Vicki Betts, “A Sacred Charge upon Our Hands” In The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War, edited by Kenneth W. Howell (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2009), 247-248; Caroline E. Janney, Burying the Dead but not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 39-68. Kate Stone recorded her reluctance at first to help with the soldier’s needs and then her sewing and mending of uniforms for the soldier’s home near Tyler, Texas in Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone: 1861-1868, edited by John Q. Anderson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), xxxvi, 162. After the Civil War one Texan, Elizabeth Neblett struggled for seven years alongside her husband to adapt to free labor farming. Widowed at the age of thirty-eight she gained her public experience as a columnist for the temperance movement in the 1880s in Drew Gilpin Faust, Mothers of Invention (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 248-249; Neblett also served as the secretary for the Red Ribbon Temperance Society which led to her position on a committee to draft a temperance petition to present to the state congress in Erika L. Murr, ed., A Rebel Wife in Texas: The Diary and Letters of Elizabeth Scott Neblett: 1852-1864 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 457. Drew Gilpin Faust argues that the removal of so many men by the Civil War left women like Elizabeth Neblett willing, but unprepared to deal with the family agricultural business and the violence needed to maintain slavery in Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 174-192.
women holding manufacturing jobs in 1850 Texas. Likewise, Angela Boswell found that only 6 percent of the women listed occupations in the 1860 census of Colorado County, Texas. This necessarily changed as more women found themselves managing families without husbands after the Civil War. In 1880 Denver, Colorado listed 11 percent of their workforce as women. Middle-class and upper-class women like Mary Jones perceived that limited employment opportunities existed for them. Mary spoke primarily of farming, teaching, and sewing as acceptable forms of financial opportunity. The ability to earn money aided some to exert more financial control over their own lives and exercise choices based upon their own values.

A survey of Houston’s precinct number one 1880 census indicates most white women saw themselves as a homemaker. 81 percent of these women identified their occupation as keeping house. The second largest category described a type of farm-work, probably on their farm, which covered another 12 percent. Most of those identified as keeping house were married to farmers and likely also aided with their farms. Only 7 percent appeared to participate in bringing money from outside the home. These work descriptions included sewing, hiring-out, servant, and teaching. Though the initial real numbers of women entering the working place were small the doors were opening for

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women. Motivated by economic interests and needs more women were entering the public sphere.  

This was truer for women listed in the census as Mulatto or Black in the 1880 census for Houston’s precinct one. Of these women, 52 percent were listed as keeping house, another 11 percent described tasks relevant to working on a farm, and 37 percent worked at jobs that could bring in money to their families. This included “hired out,” washing and ironing, cooking, sewing, nursing, servant, and midwife. While few of the white children under the age of eighteen were listed with occupations, many black and mulatto girls were working by their teen years and many as young as ten and eleven. Though Mary Jones did not seek gainful employment, those who did were bringing change and opportunity for others. Perhaps motivated out of necessity, these black and mulatto women entered employment earlier than white women in significant numbers.

Public perceptions of women outside home were changing. In 1880 Texas women could join large organizations like the State Grange. This was an agricultural group with 10,000 – 15,000 members, which required the governance of thirteen officers, four of whom were women. Simply put, women held almost one-third of the leadership positions in a state-wide organization. Even if these opportunities in the public sector were initially limited in scope, these openings provided women like Mary Jones a growing variety of prospects. Through the financial management of her son,

3 This survey of white, black, and mulatto women was compiled from the 1880 census, Series T9, Roll 1309, pages 279-297, District 4, Houston Precinct #1, Harris County, Heritage Quest Online (http://www.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/index) accessed July 19, 2011.
4 Ibid.
Cromwell, Mary escaped the necessity of employment. Because of his judicious land sales, investments, and personal generosity she enjoyed some discretion over her own life and could devote herself to her causes and organizations.⁵

The decade of the 1880s also saw numerous social changes. Among these was the movement of thousands of young employed women taking unchaperoned vacations throughout the West along the train routes served by the Harvey Houses. The Harvey Houses supplied dependable food served by clean and well-dressed young ladies. The Harvey Houses worked in conjunction with the railroads and subsequently provided discounted rail service for these women when they traveled on their vacations. The general populace became accustomed to seeing women working in public places, spending their own money, and often joining women’s organizations. These young women grew up with the railroads, their own money, and a greater sense of freedom than many had in the previous generation.⁶

One early step for middle- and upper-class women who moved from home to the public space often started with membership in a LMA. Texas lacks evidence of LMAs developing as early as other southern states, perhaps because Texas did not have

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⁵ L.L. Foster, *Forgotten Texas Census: First Annual Report of the Agricultural Bureau of the Department of Agriculture, Insurance, Statistics, and History: 1887-1888* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001), xxxv, 287. The Manufacturing report indicated that 10 of 17 industries employed women. The number of women working in manufacturing increased by over 1,100 percent between the years 1850 and 1887. Half of these women worked in the woolen mills where they earned the same wage as the men. Women received higher wages than the men in breweries and in the “miscellaneous” columns, but earned significantly less in 7 of the manufacturing jobs with those working in the carriage factory earning one third what the men earned.

large numbers of slain soldiers within the state. Many of the ladies groups that sewed, raised funds, and sent supplies remained local throughout the war. After the Civil War these groups sought to memorialize the Civil War dead. They often organized cemeteries and the requisite recovery of bodies scattered throughout the battlefields. They raised funds and learned the process of public organizations. They not only raised funds, they submitted requests and petitions to their local and state governments for additional monetary aid to purchase lands and erect monuments to the war dead. No evidence remains of Mary Jones’s membership in a cooperative organization to memorialize the Civil War dead during the war. However, their work and success became examples of what could be done by women when they wished to ensure that the sacrifices of their sons, husbands, and fathers would not be forgotten. It is very likely that Mary Jones was aware of these groups and their significant contribution to southern memory. No doubt this paralleled her thoughts about the revolutionary past of Texas before and during the period of the Texas Republic.

Anne Firor Scott points out that many women received valuable experience within women’s clubs and societies. These often included a literary or reading club, a group based upon social concerns, and perhaps a civic or education group. According

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7 Caroline Janney, does not identify any LMAs in Texas only donors to LMAs elsewhere. The growth of the United Daughters of the Confederacy did not take place until the 1890s and did make its appearance in Texas only a few years after the 1891 birth of the DRT in Burying the Dead, 23, 167-191.
to Scott, southern women usually began their journey into club life through a church-based woman’s group. Scott focused upon the work of evangelical women and opined that they comprised the bulk of civic activists. Elizabeth Hayes Turner’s work discovered that civic activism was more class-based among the women of Galveston, Texas. Their port city was a key entry point for Texas and the leaders of the civic work tended to be those from elite churches and synagogues. The women from Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Jewish synagogues led the civic activism in Galveston.\(^9\)

Though the church-based organizations and groups like the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) could generally be classified as conservative in outlook, they often provided a progressive step toward non-conservative activism, activities, and goals. As the nation entered the Progressive era, some groups focused upon relief for those in need around them. This might include orphans, widows, disabled, the aged, or the poor. Turner pointed to a pattern for involved women in Galveston, who moved from domestic concerns to organizations sponsored by their churches, from there to relief organizations, to benevolent work, to women’s clubs, to civic activism, and eventually to suffrage work. The churches experienced a growing interest in overseas missionary work, sparked at the opening of the nineteenth century by the work of men like William Carey. Henry Stanley’s well publicized search for David Livingstone in central Africa captured public attention in 1871. Most denominations formed a foreign mission society by the 1880s and they all needed funding. Many women created or joined mission

organizations within their churches. With their aid and support, Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission was able to place one hundred missionaries in China in 1887 alone. Not only did this provide women an outlet for their talents outside their homes, but they also learned the stories of women at work on the mission field. For instance, a female physician, Fanny Butler, left in 1880 for a mission station in India. The Baptist women in Texas organized their foreign missionary work around Anne Luther Bagby. The Baptist State Convention organized the Woman’s Missionary Union in October 1880 primarily to support Bagby’s work. Clearly, even the most conservative of organizations understood the valuable contributions possible from women’s organizations.¹⁰

The temperance leagues found strong support within many of these women’s church organizations. While the church groups provided experience with finances and organizational skills, they were not politically involved nor did they need to appear in public advocating change. Later, when women sought sobriety in their communities, they discovered that they needed political solutions to create public awareness. The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union counted upon churches dropping their objections to women marching in public for causes as this one was couched in spiritual terms. They denounced drunkenness as a sin. Although many women followed the

temperance path to public activism, Mary Jones enjoyed drinking alcohol and did not join a temperance organization; rather, she was known to make her own alcohol at times.  

A woman like Mary Jones realized that women were able to seek remedies for their issues more effectively in a public arena. Yet she did not seek public opportunity as much as it sought her. Before the Daughters of the American Revolution opened its first Texas chapter in 1895, and before the United Daughters of the Confederacy recruited its first Texas members, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas organized to honor Texas heroes. According to official DRT reports, first cousins Betty Ballinger and Hally Bryan were both inspired while reading Henderson Yoakum’s *History of Texas* in 1891. Their shared ancestors included at least three Texas veterans; their grandfather William Houston Jack, Hally’s father Guy Morrison Bryan, and their uncle Moses Austin Bryan. After conferring, they determined, “that the ideals of the pioneers must be perpetuated by their descendants in another organization, which would honor their memories.” These women, both of Galveston, shared more than blood. They met the definition of elite white women. Their families had owned slaves; their fathers were prominent professional men who could afford to give their daughters educations outside of Texas. Betty’s father, William Pitt Ballinger, sent her to a “French School” in New Orleans and later to a school in Baltimore, Maryland. Hally’s father, Guy Morrison Bryan, enrolled her in the Hollis Institute of Virginia. Both girls loved to travel, had

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similar reading patterns, and were wealthy. These two ladies represented the norm for the eventual leadership of the DRT; whereas, Mary’s roots were humble.\textsuperscript{12}

The president of the Texas Veterans Association, Guy M. Bryan, Hally’s father, persuaded her and Betty Ballinger that they needed the aid of influential ladies in order to form their patriotic club. He took them to enlist Mrs. Anson Jones and Mrs. Andrew Briscoe, both Houstonians. Guy Bryan personally asked Mary Jones to assume the presidency of this new auxiliary to the Veterans. Jones was the sole surviving wife of a Republic president and Briscoe, nee Mary Jane Harris, was the widow of a celebrated hero and descendant of the Harris family. Harris County, the site of Houston, was named for its surveyor and early settler John R. Harris.\textsuperscript{13}

Furthermore, Andrew Briscoe’s Texas fame included an impressive list of accomplishments and heroics. He precipitated William Travis’ prison bravado when he was arrested at Anahuac, served as Chief Justice of Harrisburg in 1836, and signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. Well connected to the decade of the Texas Republic, their names and presence would lend prestige and legitimacy to the nascent organization. Both Mary Jones and Mary Harris were born in 1819 and arrived in Texas early enough to know most of the key figures in the Texas revolution and the Texas Republic. Mary Jones met many of the early leaders through her time in Houston,


\textsuperscript{13} Turner, \textit{Women, Culture, and Community}, 13; Adèle Looscan, “Mrs. Mary Jane Briscoe,” \textit{Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association}, 7 (1903): 65. Mary Jane Harris Briscoe was the daughter of John Richardson Harris and Jane Harris. Along with her three siblings she became a share holder in the Harrisburg Town Company. Harris County was initially formed as Harrisburg County in 1836 in recognition of the town founded by the Harris family. She moved to Houston in 1874 and hosted the first meeting of the group destined to become the DRT in 1891.
serving at her father-in-law’s boarding house. Because Anson served in the Republic
government virtually its entire existence, she met others through her political and social
responsibilities as a senator’s wife or as first lady of the Republic. The idea for the DRT
belonged to Betty Ballinger and Hally Bryan, but both were born after the events of the
revolution and needed these women who had lived during that period.14

Mary Jones and Mary Briscoe also shared close ties through their children. Mary
Jones’s son, Cromwell, had gone into a law practice with Briscoe’s son-in-law Michael
Looscan in Galveston twenty years earlier. This close relationship further cemented
Mary’s relationship with Briscoe’s daughter Adèle Briscoe Looscan, who would figure
prominently in the leadership of the DRT from its inception. Looscan served as the
organization’s historian and recorded her biographical notes on Mary Jones’s life.

Why did they form the DRT in 1891? What external influences factored into the
timing of the birth of the DRT? Turner noted that at least some of these organizations
appeared as an Anglo-Saxon nativist backlash against massive immigration. Clearly this
period witnessed an upsurge in women’s clubs with exclusive memberships. This was
especially true for Texas. The foreign born population was particularly high in the North,
22 percent of the population in 1890. The South Central region, which included Texas,
averaged only 2.93 percent of its population as foreign born. Texas, though, had the
highest percentage of foreign born in that region, 6.84 percent. Texas in fact had the
highest percentage of foreign born of all of the old Confederate states. Of the cities in
Texas, Houston and Galveston held the highest population of foreign born citizens at

14 Adèle Looscan, “Mrs. Mary Jane Briscoe,” 68. Dilue Harris, “Reminiscences of Mrs. Dilue
Harris,” 220.
11.30 and 20.18 percent respectively. The women who founded an organization that sought to preserve their vision of the past probably did so in part due to the sheer number of newcomers who did not know the Texas Republic at all. Not all immigrants were foreigners, many arrived from other states, which meant that they too did not know the stories behind the founding of the Republic of Texas.\footnote{Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community*, 166. *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890*, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), lxxxii, 80. In 1890 Galveston recorded: 9,226 Americans, 5,586 Colored, 1,115 English, 6,135 German, 872 French, 128 Danes, 130 Hebrew, 1,438 Irish, 378 Italian, 42 Mexican, 89 Spanish, 332 Swedish, 140 Norwegian, 9 Polish, 49 Russian, 179 Scotch, 34 Chinese, and 493 Others.}

Even Mary Jones felt the immigration inflow from the United States in Harris County, Texas. There were only 9,070 inhabitants in the 1860 census. Twenty years later the 1880 census recorded 27,985 in Harris County. According to the 1880 census, less than 10 percent of the women aged 41 to 50 were born in Texas. The lack of Texas roots also meant they did not have an attachment to the Lone Star State’s past, which Mary Jones and her friends treasured most. By 1891 the number of residents old enough to have been alive during the Texas Revolution was dwindling. This fact supported a need for women like Mary to provide her understanding of the importance of the history of Texas and to promote further the work of Anson Jones. The DRT gave her the perfect venue to educate the new arrivals on the past and to authenticate the elements she believed to be key for the future of Texas.\footnote{*Eighth Census of the United States. Taken in the Year 1860. Vol. IV, Population*, Washington, D.C., 1863. *Tenth Census of the United States. Taken in the Year 1880. Vol. IV, Population*, Washington, D.C., 1863.}

Additionally, Mary Jones had witnessed the growth of the Civil War memorializing associations. She saw the fund raising efforts for cemeteries and memorials to the dead
from that war. She drew an obvious parallel with the Texas Revolutionary experience and the need for memorials and lands set aside to honor the dead from that earlier war. In an interview with Adèle Looscan, Mary made the connection, comparing the San Jacinto battlefield of the Texas Revolution to “more recent battles” as laying the “cornerstone” of an empire. Though both of her older sons fought in the Civil War and she lost one in battle, she appeared more interested in the Texas Revolution and Republic than in that later war. Mary and her friends saw their version of the past slipping away and sought to recover it. In a thank you card for donated funds, Looscan wrote, that theirs was a time, “when patriotic fervor for a later period of Texas seems to have swept aside, except in the eyes of a few, all recollection of the heroism which marked its glorious beginnings sixty years ago.” Mary focused her historical work on those events and periods in which her husband Anson played a role. Historian Gregg Cantrell noted an early eighteenth century shift as Texans became willing to discard their Confederate past for one that reached back to the heroes of the Texas Revolution and Republic.17

The first meeting of this new organization took place on November 6, 1891 at the home of Mary Briscoe, where they chose the new club’s officers. They kept the initial name Daughters of the Lone Star Republic for a year before they changed it to the now familiar Daughters of the Republic of Texas. One of the stated objectives fostered the ideal of an undivided Texas, thus the initial emphasis on the single star for the group.

According To Betty Ballinger, there could have been no other choice for president than Mary Jones. Her remarkable life, interests in preserving the memory of the past, and personal influence made her the perfect candidate in their eyes. They outlined three primary objectives for their club, historical, educational, and patriotic:

Its objects shall be, (1) To perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved and maintained the Independence of Texas. (2) To encourage historical research into the earliest records of Texas, especially those relating to the revolution of 1835 and the events which followed; to foster the preservation of documents and relics; and to encourage the publication of records of individual service of soldiers and patriots of the Republic. (3) To promote the celebration of March 2d (Independence Day) and April 21st (San Jacinto Day); to secure and hallow historic spots, by erecting monuments thereon; and to cherish and preserve the unity of Texas, as achieved and established by the fathers and mothers of the Texas Revolution.18

Each of these goals melded with those Mary personally had worked for since the death of Anson.

As the number of members in the Texas Veterans Association diminished with time, these women sought to keep faith with the men who had “bequeathed” their “holy memories” specifically to the women. Their address to the women attending their meeting resembled a religious ordination, a passing on of responsibility. During the initial years, the DRT functioned as an auxiliary to the veterans. In order to “commemorate the early days of the Republic,” the veterans’ first reunion had taken place in May 1873 at Houston, Texas. The DRT later utilized the objectives of the Texas veterans as they formulated their own. The objectives of the Texas Veterans were:

To keep and record for preservation and future reference the full name, nativity, age, and present residence of every surviving soldier and seaman of the

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Republic; to bring about a more intimate acquaintance; to assist such of the veterans – soldier and seaman – as misfortune may have overtaken in their declining years, and bring their claims before the country; to bring about meeting from time to time for mutual pleasure, and to perpetuate deeds of early times keeping them and their actors alive in mind, to hand down to posterity fresh and green.¹⁹

These veterans recognized the contributions made by the women during their first 1873 meeting. They anticipated that the women deserved honor and they resolved, “that the surviving pioneer women of the period we commemorate who were joint sharers in the trials and privations of that period, and whose patriotism was equal to the occasion, we tender our kindest regards and remembrances.”²⁰

A certain pattern developed during the initial formation of the DRT. An elite, small group of women was eligible for membership. Although their pioneer ancestry was more likely to be egalitarian than other women’s organizations, in practice the leadership of the DRT focused upon a few elite women and their daughters. Mary Jane Briscoe brought her two daughters, Adèle Looscan, and J.W. Howe to the initial organizational meeting. Mary Jones brought her daughter, Sallie Jones Ashe, who in turn brought her daughter Mary Ashe. The early leadership of the DRT appeared heavily weighted towards a few influential friends, who with their female relatives numbered only thirteen members at the second meeting at Lampasas in 1892. After their first meeting they sent letters to potential members, all of whom were “prominent” women. This appeal and the timing evidently worked as the organization grew to 108

¹⁹ *Fifty Years of Achievement*, viii, ix. *90 Years of the Daughters*, 1 (first quotation and second quotation).
²⁰ Ibid., 2
members by 1893. Membership was limited to those who proved lineal descent from a
man or woman who aided Texas prior to annexation in 1846.  

The organization was subdivided into chapters for the convenience of the
individual members and for the purpose of taking on local projects. By the second
meeting there were two chapters, The “Sidney Sherman” chapter in Galveston and the
“San Jacinto” chapter in Houston. The Galveston chapter focused upon relocating the
graves of the first president of the Republic David G. Burnet and that of a veteran of the
battle at San Jacinto, Sidney Sherman. Their graves were in the old abandoned
Magnolia Cemetery on Galveston Island, which represented to the chapter members
the general neglect of their patriotic past. “We wish to secure a lot and move these
bodies at once,” explained Betty Ballinger to Mary Jones, “and in time, erect a
monument in some degree appropriate to the merit of the spirits which once animated
them.” Clearly, Ballinger and the DRT, though at that time she still referred to it as “The
Daughters of the Lone Star Republic,” saw Mary as a president in charge of their
activities. Ballinger wrote Mary that “of course your consent is necessary before any
step is taken in the matter, and . . . we were appointed a committee to communicate
with you and ask your approval of our work.” They successfully removed the remains of
both men and reburied them in Lake View Cemetery with a joint monument on March 2,

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21 Constitution and By-laws of the Daughters of the Republic, 11. Fifty Years of Achievement, 52. Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Daughters of the Republic, 1f. Herbert C. Banks, ed., Daughters of the Republic of Texas Patriot Ancestor Album, (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Co., 2001), 8, which states the eligibility for membership as, “Any woman having attained her sixteenth birthday is eligible for membership, provided she is personally acceptable to the Association and is a lineal descendant of a man or woman who rendered loyal service for Texas prior to the consummation of the Annexation Agreement of the Republic of Texas with the United States of America, February 19, 1846.” This ancestor could have been a colonist in any of the recognized colonies, someone who served in the military or government, or any “loyal citizen, male or female, regardless of age who established residence in Texas prior to February 19, 1846.”
1894. The San Jacinto chapter, of which Mary Jones was a member, focused its efforts upon obtaining the San Jacinto battlefield and setting it aside as a historic park. By their third annual meeting they added five additional chapters to the DRT, each in or near historic locations.22

In agreeing to head the DRT, Mary Jones added a memorializing association to her interests. According to Catherine Bashir, the LMAs in the years following the Civil War, “took an early and defining role in shaping public memory of the Lost Cause.” The DRT chose to memorialize the Texas Revolution and the Republic. Many DRT members holding dual membership in both the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the DRT. The first LMAs focused on burial and memorials, the UDC continued to focus on memory and memorialization of the Civil War. The DRT claimed that the Texas struggle for independence represented a triumph and in their minds an honorable victory. In this Jones took a unique course, starting as the president and perhaps in part in recognition of her earlier interest in preserving the past. Her interest and unique situation as the only surviving first lady of the Republic kept her in the minds of others, particularly in the forefront of Guy Bryan’s thoughts. Bashir concluded that participation in memorial associations, while openly focused upon the past also served

22 Betty Ballinger to Mary Jones, Mar., 17, 1893, Folder 5, Box 2E271, AJP (quotations). According to the Texas State Historical Marker on the site, The Magnolia Grove Cemetery Association formed in 1870 and begin selling lots on June 20 of that year. The cemetery fell into disuse and disrepair following a severe storm in 1875. “All cemetery property except previously purchased burial plots was repossessed in 1878. Shortly thereafter the association went bankrupt and the graves of members of as many as 22 families were removed to other graveyards. Nevertheless, burials continued in some sections of the cemetery for several years. By 1900 and after several land transactions, much of the original cemetery became the property of B. E. Mann and T. A. Cobb. Although the cemetery was again damaged in the storm of 1900, photographs reveal many gravestones here in 1922.” Finally, the city of Galveston exhumed the remaining marked gravesites in 1941 to make room for an airport. Turner, Women, Culture, and Community, 169. Proceedings of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas 1893, 3.
to propel the members into the public arena. W. Fitzhugh Brundage decided that these club women increasingly needed and sought state involvement in their memorializing activities. Certainly, Mary Jones found herself incrementally drawn into the public eye.

When the DRT failed to raise enough funds to purchase the grand monuments or secure the battlefields, Mary found herself using her connections and influence to persuade politicians and wealthy families to contribute.²³

The Saturday before the Galveston chapter of the DRT removed the neglected remains of David G. Burnett and Sidney Sherman to Lake View Cemetery, 1894, also in Galveston, Mary Jones agreed to the removal of the remains of Anson Jones to what she considered a more suitable site. This fit her campaign to restore his reputation.

Mary displayed a keen awareness that even in death, location played a role. This would be the second time Mary disinterred Anson’s remains. Initially, she had buried Anson in the Masonic cemetery in Houston, but later when the opportunity arose to move his body to the new Magnolia Cemetery, established in 1870, where he would be buried near that of Burnett, she agreed to have him placed there. Resting with the other Texas heroes kept faith with her memory of his sacrifice and stature. Following a storm in 1875, the cemetery fell into disuse and the association bankrupted in 1878. When the Sidney Sherman chapter of the DRT decided to remove the bodies of Burnett and

Sherman Mary also moved Anson again, this time to Glenwood Cemetery in Houston, 1894. A number of distinguished Texans had been buried at Glenwood, well known pioneers like DeWitt Clinton Harris, Peter W. Gray, William Fairfax Gray, and Thomas S. Lubbock. Cromwell had previously expressed his personal preference for Glenwood as the final resting place for Anson’s body.  

Opening the second meeting of the DRT, at the behest of President Jones, Betty Ballinger outlined the organization’s purpose, priorities, and aims. She appealed to their sense of duty, their patriotism, and their willingness to shoulder their share of the burden to honor the brave men who risked all for their freedom. Voicing the pride of Texas, she declared:

For the women of other States I cannot speak. Texas, our home, has an individuality possessed by no other State. Alone she has achieved her independence and stood erect in her own strength a free Republic. No act of Congress—no accidental division, decided her limits. Her boundary lines are drawn red with the blood of her oldest sons—the blood of our fathers.

After this rousing opening, she declared that the future was for the men and the past was for the women. Let the men strive and struggle for their place in the future, while

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24 Mary Jones, letter to Betty Ballinger, December 1893, Mary Jones/Family Papers Collection. A.R.G. Edwards to Mary Jones, May 30, 1892, Folder 3, Box 2E271, AJP; Edwards explained that “the slab is broken through the middle but I have had a great deal of experience in these matters and could ship it to you created so that it would be lain together again and last for another 25 years.” A note from Mary noted that she paid the charge and had the stone shipped. Anson Jones was originally buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Houston. This cemetery was organized about 1847 by the Holland Lodge No. 1 on ¾ of an acre along Buffalo Bayou. The site was at that time was in the far southwest corner of Houston. This is graveyard is off Bagby Street at Lamar Avenue. It conjoined the larger Episcopal cemetery and together they covered nearly two acres of land. Both cemeteries were closed by the city of Houston by 1879, at which point families began moving their dead relatives on an individual basis. Both cemeteries fell into disrepair. When the city determined to expand the civic center in 1959 and construct an annex for City Hall the cemeteries were removed. Today, “The Three Coyotes Fountain” in Sam Houston Park marks the site of the former Masonic Cemetery. Recorded in Louis F. Aulbach, "Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston’s Wilderness Beginnings, Two Forgotten Cemeteries of Downtown Houston,” (http://www.epperts.com/1fa/BB68.html), accessed. April 10, 2010. “Site of Magnolia Grove Cemetery,” Texas State Historical Marker, marker number 7524.

the women kept the sacred home fires of memory burning. Unequivocally Ballinger laid out her plans for women to teach the children the glories of their past, to revere the memory of both men and women pioneers, and to seek out the graves of the fallen heroes for commemoration. She called them to the Texas sites where deeds of renown won their independence, to visit and to commemorate. She ended with the DRT official motto, “Texas, one and indivisible.” This claiming of the past recognized their use of history to interpret their present and covertly to inform the type of future they allocated to the men.26

These broader goals furthered the personal objectives Mary Jones had laid out for herself. She now headed an organization committed in its own constitution to the memory of the past. This same constitution provided for the election of a president to two-year terms, Mary served for seventeen years. Others looked outside their homes to change their world; she had focused on her family. Her letters reveal no abiding need to reform her society. Ironically, her love of family and home coupled with the resultant campaign for the reputation of her husband led her further and further from her home into non-traditional roles for a woman from the ante bellum South.

Her devotion to the members of her family circle propelled her life into a public and political one. The broad outlines of Mary Jones’ life followed the patterns suggested by the research of historians who examined the lives of southern women. According to Light Cummins and Alvin Bailey, women filled incidental roles in the early Texas histories. They languished with incomplete and two-dimensional descriptions that

26 Ibid., 2,3.
placed them in the background. Descriptions of Mary’s life, before the historians of the DRT went to work, cast her in supporting roles. Dilue Harris’s descriptions of her included comments on her beauty, popularity, and presence, but nothing about her ideas, concepts, or accomplishments. Her own letters do not reveal any remorse in focusing on her husband and children. Eventually, this very focus propelled her into the press, power positions, and fame.27

Anne Firor Scott in The Southern Lady asserts that the South changed at a slower pace, kept its rural roots longer, and followed a patriarchal system prior to the Civil War and long after into the twentieth century. This patriarchal social system allowed, even encouraged, women like Mary Jones to venerate their husbands and sons in heroic terms. Jones’s society might not have accepted her agitating for her own rights, but it welcomed the memorial associations devoted to the great men. Mary’s activism, even when it included public letters to newspaper editors, governors, and congressmen was in the service of conservative values. This transition to changing methodologies in the service of a conservative agenda in turn changed women like Mary. They became more knowledgeable and proficient in political and business matters.28

The LMAs that proliferated during the post-Civil War era attracted women like Mary Jones who did not seek “women’s rights;” instead, these organizations became vehicles for memory and rebuilding southern manhood. While most sought to deal with

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the human devastation from the war years, Mary’s restoration efforts caught the strong
tide of women rebuilding their husbands only she started her work on Anson’s memory
earlier. Although, the DRT’s leaders expressly yearned for traditional family life, their
efforts to save battle sites and erect monuments opened new public doors for them.
These ladies stepped out of their homes often into ladies’ religious organizations and
from these into memorial societies. Their aims brought them further and further from
the home fires and into the public eye. Perhaps because they felt their cause to be
sacred and selfless, they developed more expertise at organization and influence.29

On a very personal level, Mary Jones was focused upon the past. She was in her
seventies when the DRT formed. Many of her closest family members had died. By the
1890s not only had she lost two husbands but also two of her sons. The death of her
youngest son, Cromwell, apparently affected her deeply. She moved to Houston in 1886
to live with her two sons Samuel and Cromwell, but after only eighteen months
Cromwell died, on January 19, 1888. In many ways Cromwell had become a substitute
for Anson in Mary’s life. He not only bore his father’s name as his middle name, he
essentially provided for Mary financially even after he was able to sell some of her lands
and invest them for her. He joined some of the same clubs and organizations his father
had joined. Cromwell remained unmarried, perhaps due in part to the ongoing reliance
his mother had upon his life. Mary’s letters often included an expectation of her own
death due to illness and age. Most of her immediate family died before they reached
their fifties; Mary might well have believed that she too was near her death. Thus, she

29 Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader, Christie Anne Farnham ed. (New York:
New York University Press, 1997), 141-143.
felt that her best years were in the past and her mind turned to the preservation of that past. The DRT provided her the camaraderie of like-minded women and the means to keep the past alive. His cause of death was not recorded, but he regularly experienced debilitating fevers and ear problems.

Initially, the women of the DRT appeared to organize as an auxiliary to the Texas Veterans Association and they may have aided the veterans at their reunions, but they developed a separate identity and mission. The organization of the veterans was slowly disappearing as they aged. Their numbers decreased sharply in the decade preceding the founding of the DRT. The number of veterans paying dues dropped from 560 in 1883, to 239 in 1888, and to only 187 in 1889. The numbers may not correctly reflect the number of veterans living because some paid their dues years in advance and may have died prior to 1889. The veterans invited Mary Jones to sit on the stage with them at their 1893 meeting and her daughter, Sallie Jones Ashe, appeared in a 1908 picture with the four living veterans able to attend. The days were numbered for the actual veterans, but by including future generations the women of the DRT were becoming the dominant organization.30

During the 1890s Mary Jones played an active role as president but often left the speaking engagements up to her vice presidents and members of her executive council.

30 Texas Veterans Ledger, 1890, Box 2N137, Adina De Zavala Papers. “Group of Daughters and Veterans Posing for Picture within Walls of the Alamo,” April 22, 1908, San Antonio Daily Express, Box 2E 276, Anson Jones Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas. A male group, The Sons of the Republic of Texas, formed in 1893 two years after the DRT began. They met in conjunction with the Texas Veterans Association until they became inactive. The Sons of the Republic of Texas as reconstituted in 1922 and continues to function. See “Sons of the Republic of Texas,” Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vss02), accessed July 20, 2011.
She received correspondence from DRT members and the general public as president and she responded in kind. She did not accept public speaking engagements, even with her own DRT conventions. In a letter to her friend and fellow officer, Adèle Looscan, she admitted that she felt “too nervous” to deliver the opening address to the 1896 DRT reunion. Her arrangements with Betty Ballinger to deliver the welcoming address on her behalf failed when Ballinger grew ill, so she asked Looscan to “prepare the address for her.” This situation indicates that even if some of the ideas belonged to Mary, she feared to write the address. This concern over both public speaking and writing for a large audience probably relates to her educational background. Mary Jones admitted that she had only spent a year in school prior to arriving in Texas and she knew that many of the women in the DRT had access to a more formal education. Her writing skills and willingness to help teach her own children at home indicates that someone might have tutored her at home.  

While the executive committee evidently handled many of the public functions of the DRT, Mary Jones maintained a keen interest in obtaining the San Jacinto Battlefield where her husband Anson, served during the Texas Revolution. Their first appeal for funds to purchase the San Jacinto Battlefield and make it a state park was to the 23rd Legislature during the time Governor James Stephen Hogg was in office, 1891-1895. The DRT asked for $75,000 to purchase the land where the battle took place, but only $15,000 was appropriated. When the bill reached the governor, he cut that sum down to only $750.00. Evidently, the state had already purchased ten acres of land there, and

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31 Mary Jones to Mrs. Martha J. Lane, 19 Feb., 1892, Box 761, MJP; Mary Jones to Seth Shepherd, 11 June 1896, Box 127, ABLP. Mary Jones to Adèle Looscan, 13 Feb., 1896, ABLP.
he recommended that they only buy the portion of the land along the bayou next to the state’s ten acres that included the graves of the eight soldiers killed in the battle. This was not Mary’s last disappointment in dealing with political realities in Texas. Lacking the franchise, women like Mary gained political experience through their attempts to garner state funding.\footnote{J.J. McKeever, \textit{Inception, Organization and Work of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas}, (n.p.: Daughters of the Republic of Texas, 1904), 9.}

The women of the San Jacinto Chapter discovered that there were conflicting ideas of just what constituted the actual battlefield, so they enlisted the aid of the Texas Veterans Association. They were wise: They brought in surviving “heroes” to lend credibility and perhaps some public appeal to their quest. Additionally, they chose to bring them in on the 4\textsuperscript{th} of July, 1894. Mary Jones and her fellow members understood the value of timing and publicity. The San Jacinto Chapter of the DRT accompanied these aged veterans on a field-trip to the battle site. The visitors traveled in a yacht, a steam tug, and barge. This occasion included a dinner during which Mary was present on the yacht, “Boston” and photographed for a Houston newspaper. Her name recognition accorded her the role Guy Bryan had expected when he brought his daughter, Hally, to meet her and begin the organization. Mary played this role well; she quickly assumed the role of a woman who symbolized the past.\footnote{“A Yacht Party,” \textit{Houston Daily Post}, July 8, 1894, Box 2E276, CAH.}

On the second attempt of the chapter to persuade the legislature to allocate funds for the purchase of San Jacinto Battlefield land, they had the help of Senator Waller T. Burns, and Judge John T. Browne, who appealed for the appointment of a
commission to purchase the grounds. The 25th legislature passed the bill, and again the
governor (this time Charles A. Culberson, 1895-1899) refused to sign it at that amount.
He agreed to sign it if they cut the amount to $10,000. They agreed and he signed it into
law. The commission took more than four years to acquire the titles to 337 acres, nearly
the entire battlefield. At least one or two of the veterans rode around the battlefield to
place markers were the various incidents took place. This took place in 1901 – sixty-five
years after the battle. Due to the lapse of time, the accuracy of the veterans’ memories
in designating the locations of the events of that battle should be considered suspect.  

In 1901 the women of the DRT again entered the political arena and once more it
was for funding. They petitioned the 27th Legislature to allocate $25,000 to fence the
grounds of the battlefield. In response, the Texas Senate allocated the substantially
lower amount of $10,000, and this was further reduced to $1,000 (under the direction of
Governor Joseph P. Sayers, 1899-1903). In the end even this amount was not actually
expended as Sayers deemed that it was inadequate to complete the task. Undaunted,
Mary Jones and the San Jacinto Chapter of the DRT once again approached the
legislators for funds to aid them in protecting the historic park. This time the 28th
Legislature was “memorialized” but was unable to act on the bill before the session
closed; however, in a special session a bill that appropriated $20,000 for fencing the
grounds was passed. The women had learned that winning one set of votes was not
victory, and predictably the funding was vetoed by Governor S.W.T. Lanham, 1903-
1907. The women had far more success with the legislature than with the governors. It

was a progressive era, but these Democratic governors were very sensitive to spending public monies.\(^\text{35}\)

Their efforts to establish San Jacinto as an official historic site illustrated their tenacity and willingness to make a bloodied battlefield the focus of their preservation. San Jacinto became the first state park in 1907. Mary’s work of preservation bore fruit, but this required patience, time, and money. During the entire time from 1891 until the park designation, they continued to seek funds for monuments on the property. They enlisted the help of other women’s clubs. Funds came from various groups including the Self Culture Club of Austin, the Ariel Club of Denton, Ingleside Women’s Club, Woman’s Thursday Club of Dublin, B.O.G. Club of San Antonio, and the 93 Club of Fort Smith among others. When they could not squeeze funds from the government, Mary’s San Jacinto Chapter of the DRT appealed to other ladies. They sent their request for funds to maintain the graves at the San Jacinto site in an “open letter to The Women of Texas” that said, in part,

> Feeling sure that the sympathy and co-operation of every true woman in Texas will be with us when they understand the nature of our undertaking, this appeal is addressed to them. We have appealed to the State to help us, but with an empty treasury, shall we longer wait? The demands of this busy commercial and political age upon the time and energies of men, furnish them with a ready excuse for the non-performance of these high obligations, which sentiment and patriotism suggest, but which bring no sordid gain or pecuniary profit. Woman knows no such servile submission to the dollar; prompted by a patriotic love of Texas, which knows no limit, we say with the poet: “Earth hath no holier ground than where departed valor lies.” Is it not time we were proving our gratitude to the men who fought there, by something more substantial than flowery words?\(^\text{36}\)

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 11.
\(^{36}\) Clara Driscoll’s Account Book, Folder C-III, Box 2M164, Adina Emilia De Zavala Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas. Mrs. M. Looscan to Mrs. Isaac Dallam, Box 127, ABLP (quotation).
They held fundraisers that required selling items at bazaars and continued to solicit large gifts. In one case Francis R. Lubbock donated funds he had been keeping since the 1850s totaling $1,501.25. The women lauded the legislatures for their support but decried the neglect of others, a thinly disguised swipe at the governors.\(^\text{37}\)

Mary Jones and her “daughters” did not have ready access to the state coffers, but they could pursue less costly means of promoting their version of Texas history. When donations were inadequate for large acquisitions, they found other ways to ensure that their account of the birth of Texas was not forgotten. They took control of promoting history before the public. Several letters were sent to Mary Jones recommending a professional historian and the president of the Austin History Club, Dora Fowler Arthur, to edit a regular Texas history column in the *Texas Magazine*. They concluded that they could control the subject of the articles. The DRT officers determined that the only way to convince women to subscribe to the magazine was to ask Mary Jones to send a letter to their members recommending subscription. The San Antonio Chapter of the DRT not only began marking historical sites throughout the town but also worked to have schools named after Texas heroes. These activities meant that the ladies of the DRT were able to decide in some cases what sites were worth remembering and which heroes were worth having school children think about as heroes. They were making the Revolutionary and Republic periods of Texas more recognizable.\(^\text{38}\)


\(^{38}\) Bride McNeill Taylor to Mary Jones, 4 Sept., 1896, Box 127, ABLP; Rebecca Fischer to DRT Board of State Officer and Mary Jones, 4 Sept., 1896, ABLP. *Daughters of the Republic of Texas State Committee Report, 1896*, Box 127, ABLP. McKeever, *Inception, Organization*, 15.
One of the busiest years in Mary Jones’s life was 1896. She was actively promoting San Jacinto projects, using her reputation to gain support from the rank and file members of the DRT, petitioning the state government, answering personal appeals and fielding requests for speakers on historic topics. Though women lacked the vote, some like Mary moved into politics through petition and influence. She successfully petitioned the senator and representatives of Texas to create “a department to house the colonial and republic relics” collected by the DRT. The state government set aside a separate room in the capital building for their displays. She made it clear that they expected to be the custodians of this collection. Lacking the franchise, the DRT still gained a place within the primary political symbol of Texas, the capital itself. In spite of some valuable accomplishments, not all their endeavors were fruitful. The DRT petitioned the legislature unsuccessfully for additional legal holidays for the sake of commemoration of Republic related events. The DRT objectives brought them into the political world to achieve them. They discovered that state calendars, large funding projects, and the position of their displays required government involvement.39

In order to promote the public image of Anson Jones in particular and the Republic era in general, Mary Jones found herself involved in the visual arts. The value of monuments, art work, and statuary had been demonstrated by the LMAs memorializing the Civil War. One of her most successful forays into this world of display was through her correspondence and friendship with the artist Henry Arthur McArdle, who painted several historical works that included Civil War and Texas themes. Among

39 Mary Jones to Senators and Representatives of the Legislature of the State of Texas, c. 1896, Box 127, ABLP (quotation). Unnamed Civil War Veteran to Hally Bryan, 9 June 1897, Box 127, ABLP.
these was a work he entitled *The Battle of San Jacinto* begun about the same time as his second version of *Dawn at the Alamo* painted in the 1880s. Evidently, McArdle ran short of funds both to provide for his family and to support his art. In addition to whatever struggles artists are normally subject to in achieving financial security, the nation was undergoing a serious depression in 1893 with high unemployment. He explained to Mary that his situation was destitute and that he paid for room and board by trading paintings for each. He asked Mary “to use her influence” to help him. To emphasize his plight he told her that, “My former charge for life size portraits was $100, I will now paint them for $50.” He knew of Mary Jones’s interest in San Jacinto and asked for her help. He appeared convinced that with Mary’s connections she could either locate for him donors or investors, and thus he wrote her over a period of months looking for financial aid.  

This was not the first interaction between McArdle and Jones. They established a correspondence in 1891 when McArdle needed material on Anson Jones for his painting. Mary supplied him with a tintype portrait, based upon an 1845 daguerreotype. She also invited him to visit her home and to allow her son to show him around the San Jacinto Battlefield. Her letters encouraged his interest in the San Jacinto project. McArdle praised Mary Jones’s letters and took the liberty of forwarding them to others hoping for additional support. He recorded a small donation from her in 1893. This

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40 Henry Arthur [Harry] McArdle (1836-1908) became an important Texas artist. He was known for his vivid depictions of Civil War themes, Texas heroes, and Texas Revolutionary era themes. He was born in the year Texas achieved its independence from Mexico. See Claudia Hazlewood, “McArdle, Henry Arthur [Harry],” *Handbook of Texas Online* (http://www.tshonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmc03), accessed July 20, 2011; McArdle to Mary Jones, Dec. 9, 1893, Folder 5, Box 2E271, AJP. H.A. McArdle to Mary Jones, June 19, 1894, Box 127, ABLP.
donation and her position probably emboldened him to seek her assistance in
influencing others in 1894. The results proved excellent for Mary. McArdle not only
painted a graphic portrait of the battle, but he also provided a patriotic image focused on
the Texas heroes and their victory. In his key to the painting, McArdle placed Anson
Jones as figure number one, out of fifty-one Texas figures.41

Mary Jones was not alone in supporting McArdle; his efforts to paint the battle fit
with the DRT’s mission. Mary Briscoe and Adèle Looscan also appeared on McArdle’s
short contributor list. His Alamo and San Jacinto paintings hang prominently in the
Texas Senate chambers. Undeterred by political obstacles, the Daughters were able to
see those men they wished to venerate and have remembered placed before the state
legislators. These were the same men whom would continue to petition for funds
towards the preservation of sites like San Jacinto and the Alamo. Males exclusively held
the political posts of power, but in the postwar South the roles men once played in
bonding society and culture were changing. Elizabeth Hayes Turner pointed out that
club women “moved collectively to renew the concept of public virtue by acts of
memorialization and commemoration.” Club women like Mary and the DRT members
found ways to express their vision of the past. As the guardians of that memory they
aided in its formation. Mary’s support of McArdle helped to exchange Anson’s public

41 S.E. Jones to McArdle, May 5, 1891, No. 129, The Battle of San Jacinto Notebook, The
McArdle Notebooks, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library & Archives
Commission, Austin, Texas. H.A. McArdle to Mary Jones, Mar. 1, 1893, Folder 5, Box 2E271, Anson
Jones Papers (hereafter AJP), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas,
Austin, Texas. Mary Jones to McArdle, July 1891, No. 131, TMN. “Contributors to Aid Completion of
Painting,” No. 50, TMN, “Picture and Key for ‘The Battle of San Jacinto.” TMN.
image as a depressed, unpopular, and side-lined politician for vivid representations of his bravery in a defining battle in Texas history.\textsuperscript{42}

The members of the DRT kept an eye for projects and opportunities to promote the men and events of the Texas Republic. Like the McArdle paintings, Mary Jones and the DRT found ways to join work initiated by others. When renowned artist Elisabet Ney accepted a $10,000 commission from the 27th Legislature of Texas for statuary, the DRT petitioned and won the right to choose one of the two statues allocated to Texas in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. They chose a statute by Ney of Stephen F. Austin, and after further “exertions” they also celebrated the placing of Samuel Houston’s statue there as well. The choice to place two Texas Revolutionary leaders over Civil War heroes represented a victory for the DRT. The state chose to send statues honoring their origins over their rebellion.\textsuperscript{43}

Eventually, the idea of a heroic founding gained acceptance throughout Texas. Statues, murals, new markers and graves in the Texas State Cemetery, a giant statue of Stephen F. Austin, and busts of the Republic presidents and Revolutionary heroes


were commissioned and displayed from the state capital to even a sixty-seven-foot statue of Houston along interstate highway, I-45. Though it was a feat beyond the resources of Mary Jones during the early years of the DRT, the centennial-motivated building of the San Jacinto battlefield monument drew inspiration from the hard work and constant petitioning of the DRT. So large and costly that it required federal, state, and private funding, it became the single largest monument column in the world at 570 feet. Through the placement of public visual prompts, these women gave their interpretation of history a sense of historical reality. They established their version of the past with facts on the ground. Eventually, the Alamo would join these other graphic cues, which the DRT used to incite a Texas patriotic spirit. 44

Walter Buenger in The Path to a Modern South produced strong arguments that Texas led the way into a modern South over many other southern states. A key element from his research indicated that Texas transitioned from a focus on their confederate past to a celebration of their road to independence. This change in thinking and reordering of memory, opines Buenger, moved from a lost cause to one that they won. This created a greater willingness to accept a sense of national identity rather than just a southern and regional one. Buenger’s work suggested that this transition from a veneration of the Civil War to its Republic history took place starting around 1910. By a measure of state expenditures this appears to be a valid conclusion. The vision of Mary

44 The Washington Monument, in Washington, D.C. claims to be the tallest stone monument at 555 feet, but the San Jacinto monument, including the star measures 570 feet. At least two prominent statues of Anson Jones were eventually erected. One sits in front of the Jones County Courthouse in Anson, Texas, commissioned by the Texas Centennial Commission. The other statue stands before the entrance to the State Library in Austin, opposite one of Sam Houston. These were placed by the Texas Masons and both are wearing their Masonic aprons. Herbert Gambrel, “Anson, Jones,” Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fjo42), accessed May 1, 2011.
Jones and the women of the DRT indicate that the groundwork for this transition was laid nearly two decades earlier. Their advocacy for Texas Republic symbols over Civil War memorials was strong and often public. In many ways the DRT was a vital and important component in the journey of Texas to a Modern South.45

Not only did the DRT seek to influence the general public of Texas, they understood the value of passing their values on to the next generation. Like Mary Jones, many members of this organization were mothers. And like Mary they often taught their own values to their children. At the 1892 meeting of the Texas Veterans, Guy Byron acknowledged that the veterans were aging and dying, so they needed to pass the work on.

Who better could we name as our heirs, than these daughters, what hands more suited for strewing flowers on the graves of our sleeping heroes, what feet more willing to go on errands of unselfish devotion, what voices better attuned to sing, that refrain which has always been music to our ears, “Texas one and undivided forever and aye.” As it is conceded that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the land. If we wish patriotic men in our legislative halls, our council chambers, they must learn that patriotism at their mother’s knee. It must begin in the home with the infant, when first it begins to lis and by the women, let this be our commission to these daughters, “teach the generation now rising around us, that Texas has a past, as glorious as her future can possibly be.”46

One of the members asserted that patriotism came from teaching children, “love of home, love of community, and love of state,” and “you cannot build from the top down, you must build from the bottom up.” Though Adina de Zavala was no longer a member of the DRT when she wrote her missive, the spirit of intense patriotism and a

46 “Response to the Address of Welcome,” April 20, 1892, Folder 5, Box 2E271, AJP (quotation).
sense of necessity to inculcate their principles in children came through in her 1919 letter. De Zavala evidenced a spirit of patriotism that she shared with the members of the DRT. She wanted a written pledge by all Texas school teachers giving their “oath of allegiance to the State of Texas and the Nation.” De Zavala sought penalties, fines, and the dismissal of any school teacher or official failing to teach Texas History, patriotism, or the duties of good citizenship. Retained along with Mary Jones’s letters in one archive was a published list of Texas school superintendents for 1895, based upon the penciled marks by most of the names of the superintendents, it appeared that Mary might have been contacting each one individually in order to enlist their aid in making Texas history and patriotism a part of their didactic practice.  

Likewise, the DRT sought ways to gain access to the schools and to the curriculum and to the hearts of school children. Mary Jones in her 1898 address to the April 20 meeting of the DRT, as read by J.M. Hunter, challenged the members to reach the children. She declared that there was a “Great need for books of patriotic Texas songs and recitations suitable for use in the schools.” She hoped that this would appeal to the “literary and musical talent of our State, and our request is earnest for help in this department.” This was not the first time she had called for a mission to create devotion in the children for the Texas past. In an 1893 address Mary told the DRT members assembled at the Houston Armory that they must teach the children to revere the battle of Goliad at the same level historians admired the Greek stand at Marathon.

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47 Adina de Zavala, Box 2N137, Adina de Zavala Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas (1st quotation). Adina de Zavala to Unknown, July 4, 1919, Adina de Zavala Papers. School Superintendents and Treasurers of the State of Texas, January 1, 1895, Box 127, ABLP (2nd quotation).
Furthermore, she called on them to recall San Jacinto as “sacred” to their memory as Bunker Hill had been to the generations of Americans after their revolution. A seventh grade class from an unnamed school, on the occasion of Sam Houston’s birthday, presented Mary Jones with a poem that conjoined the sacred and the patriotic in Texas. “Our fathers spurned oppressions laws, All fought for God and right; So may their sons in Freedom’s cause: Be foremost in the fight!” The indoctrination of the youth was already paying dividends.⁴⁸

A Texas flag song contest and the development of “San Jacinto Day” were among the various attempts to teach state patriotism to schoolchildren. Intended as a state version of the national anthem, the ladies of the DRT determined to create a patriotic musical piece to be sung to the state flag. Even William L. Prather, president of the University of Texas offered a small prize for the person who submitted the best composition. Eventually, Lee C. Harby won the contest, the last verse and chorus typified the theme of the song:

Oh! Texas, tell the story o'er.  
With pride recall each name,  
And teach your sons to emulate  
Their virtues and their fame;  
So shall your grandeur still increase,  
Your glory shines afar —  
For deathless honor guards the Flag  
Where gleams the proud Lone Star!  
CHORUS:  
Flag of our State, Oh! Glorious Flag!  
Unsullied in peace, and triumphant in war;  
Heroes have fought for you,

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Statesmen have wrought for you —
Emblazoned in glory you bear the Lone Star! 49

The members of Mary Jones's organization hoped for children to learn the words, grow up eulogizing the Republic of Texas, and to "recall each name" of the heroes. Here Mary could hope that Anson would be remembered as one of the founding fathers of Texas. In addition, by 1899 the DRT supplied poems and recitations to be used in public schools for San Jacinto Day, held each year on April 21st, the anniversary of the battle. The Texas State Department of Education was helpful enough to print the program of poems, songs, and recitations for their teachers, all supplied by the DRT. The program essentially extolled the glories of Texas' past. School children were to sing the “Texan Heroes’ Song,” recite poems essentially equating their past with that of Greece and Rome. Additionally they were to sing a Texas rendition of Dixie as well as to recite an emotional poem for the aging veterans. Mary Jones found herself at the head of an organization not content to let the past fade; like her they wished to spread the news to new generations. With evangelistic zeal, they sought to reshape patriotism.50

The tenth annual DRT meeting, 1901, still followed the original pattern of meeting in the same town as the Texas Veterans Association and convened immediately following the convocations of the men. Even though the veterans stayed and listened to

many of the women speakers, Mrs. Nelly Stedman Cox declared of the daughters, “And then, from out of the quiet and seclusion of circumscribed environments stepped women. ‘she came, she saw, she conquered’—not worlds, but heterogeneous man.” Clearly, at least some of the ladies had awoken to the stirrings of new horizons for women. As these ladies advanced their goals, they gained self-confidence with their victories.51

The influence of Mary Jones as the president of the organization broadened as her reputation spread beyond the DRT. A number of groups sought her membership; even though it would have been obvious due to her frail condition that she would play no active role in most, her name on the membership rolls lent prestige and legitimacy. The Texas Veterans Association made her a member as early as 1883 and continued to enroll her each year until her death in 1907. The United Daughters of the Confederacy made her an honorary member. The newly formed Texas State Historical Association listed Mary as a charter member, and she received invitations to key patriotic events. Her invitation to the “Storming of the Alamo” in San Antonio and her response were published in the Houston Post. The daughters of the DRT made an impact on Texas, and many looked to Mary Jones for inspiration.52

51 Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting, 6.
52 Texas Veterans Association Certificates of membership for Mary Jones, Folder 5, Box 2E271, AJP; H.C. McIntyre to Mary Jones, April 12, 1891, AJP; Mary Jones’s original United Daughters of the confederacy certificate of membership is in the Star of the Republic Museum, Blinn College collection, Washington on the Brazos, Texas. She was elected to the Robert E. Lee Chapter of Texas, handwritten between “elected” and “member” is the word “honorary.” It is doubtful that she attended any meetings, but her name on the membership role was evidently of value to the organization. “Daughters of the Republic,” Houston Post, N.D., Box 761, MJP. Richard McCaslin traces the history of the Texas State Historical Association from its founding in 1897 to 1997 in At the Heart of Texas: One Hundred Years of the Texas State Historical Association, 1897-1997 (Austin: Texas State Historical Association Press, 2007), 1-15.
Whereas Anson Jones declined in popularity over his life to the point of political shunning, Mary gained in reputation and influence. Over time her popularity rose. The San Jacinto chapter of the Masons took the extraordinary step of inviting Mary to a new member installation service, and there they presented her with a Master Mason’s Jewel. Clearly, a significant portion of her prestige came from her marriage to a president of the Republic. It was ironic that she found popular appeal based upon her relationship with a man who lacked that same appeal. Yet, her rising influence was also an indication of her own success in her campaign to restore his image. Mary Jones contributed to her own achievements as president of the DRT. She played the role well. Mary maintained cordial relationships with others who looked to her for leadership and later for inspiration.53

Others also respected Mary Jones with something approaching reverence as her reputation reached incredible heights during this period. During a tour of Texas by President William McKinley in May 1901, he stopped in Houston, where the DRT arranged for him to receive a Lone Star flag from the hands of Mary Jones herself. At the ceremony Marie Bennet Urwitz defined the DRT, paraphrasing the words of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic;” she declared that Christ had died to make men holy but it was the Texans who had died to make men free. President McKinley must have been surprised when they presented Anson Jones’s widow to him as their living link with the

53 “A Jewel Presentation,” Houston Chronicle, n.d., Box 276, AJP.
past, the “high priestess of our order.” This would not be the only place where these patriotic women begin to conjoin holy concepts with their causes.\textsuperscript{54}

Indeed, the DRT came to consider its origins as semi-sacred. The portion of the Ballinger home where Betty Ballinger and Hally Bryan met and discussed their ideas for a memorial association was later christened “The Cradle.” It began as a part of William Pitt Ballinger’s library and became detached after the house was destroyed by a storm. This weathered section survived at least two hurricanes and the travails of several moves, endowing it with some favored status. This surviving portion of the home was preserved and remained detached. Likewise, Adina De Zavala reported on her efforts to save the Alamo and compared it to Thermopylae. Tin sum, the DRT created broad memory cues and associative memory tags even for sites like the Alamo.\textsuperscript{55}

By the 1905 annual meeting, Mary Jones’s health plagued her; the San Jacinto chapter recorded that she made only one local meeting that year. Nevertheless, all official appeals for funds from the state government continued to use Mary’s name. By this point, Mary Jane Briscoe had died, Marie Bennet Urwitz missed meetings due to illnesses and family tragedies, and though Rebecca J. Fisher would succeed Mary Jones as president, she too missed meetings because she was too feeble. One secret to Mary’s success was simply that she outlived most of those who had negative memories of Anson. She came to represent a link with the past, but in her longevity she

\textsuperscript{54} Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting, 6 (quotation).
became less able to maintain an active participation in the activities and meetings of her beloved DRT.

The organization seemed to gravitate towards elderly venerable presidents. Earlier, General Sydney Sherman’s daughter, Caroline Sherman Menard, took the presidency of the Galveston chapter in 1891, but she suffered from age related disabilities too often to preside at the meetings and was replaced as president of the chapter in 1892 by Betty Ballinger. On one level, these women bore close connections to important leaders of the Republic years; however, their advanced ages allowed younger women to present their agendas for the club. These three leaders also represented some of the last of the female pioneers. Orphaned and abducted by Indians during a spectacular raid that resulted in the near death of her brother, Rebecca Fisher fit the profile of the Texas pioneer girl. Though many of these ladies took a back seat in club activities as leaders, their symbolic roles were invaluable.  

Mary Jones lived long enough to witness the so-called “second battle” of the Alamo. This final chapter in Mary’s DRT experience proved her most decisive in a leadership role. Her decisions during this period not only paved the way for the DRT to become custodians of the Alamo, but they also paved the way forward for the DRT. The San Antonio de Valero mission complex in the heart of modern San Antonio was first scouted as a site in 1691 by Franciscan Fray Damian Massenet but not founded until 1718. Its accompanying presidio helped to form the town of San Antonio. Over time the

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area saw the establishment of four other missions, but San Antonio de Valero was secularized in 1793. This was essentially a process that handed over control of the mission to the local Christians for leadership and the local government for financial support. This was the normal goal of a long-term mission, establishing the work and leaving it in the hands of well-instructed converts. Beginning around 1801 or 1802 a cavalry company from San José y Santiago del Alamo de Parras took up quarters in the old mission. The name Alamo stuck.\footnote{Donald E. Chipman and Harriet Denise Joseph, *Spanish Texas 1519-1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992, rev. 2010), 117, 121-122, 128. Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (New York: Oxford Press, 2003), 83.}

During the Texas revolution the Alamo was occupied by Mexican General Martin Cos and his army. They fortified the Alamo and prepared to withstand a siege led by Texas volunteers under Stephen F. Austin. Cos surrendered the Alamo after a determined attack led by Ben Milam in 1835. Mexican general Antonio López de Santa Ana took the Alamo back and essentially annihilated all the combatants in 1836, including William B. Travis, James Bowie, and David Crockett. This was neither the first nor the last battle of the Alamo. Over a course of several years during the Texas Republic, Mexican armies retook the Alamo and abandoned it a few more times. Texas lacked the finances to maintain a strong army to repel the Mexican forces, who in turn lacked the finances to support an army in the field at such a long distance from their capital. After the annexation of Texas to the United States, the complex fell into disuse and was sold in parcels to various commercial and even governmental concerns, finally
leaving the chapel in the hands of the Texas government. By the late 1890s the remains of the “long barracks” were used as a store.58

The acquisition of the mission convent by the DRT has been conflated with the more photogenic Alamo Chapel, thus creating a great deal of confusion later in discussions over the grounds. The state purchased the Alamo Chapel from the Roman Catholic Church prior to the formation of the DRT in 1883. Two opposing versions arose as to how the DRT became the custodians of both the chapel and of what remained of the mission next to the chapel. They resulted in large part from two different visions of what constituted the Alamo site. Like so much of what Mary Jones and the DRT did, it had to do with shaping public memory. This internal battle centered on two factions led by two strong-willed women, Adina de Zavala and Clara Driscoll.59

These two powerful personalities clashed over their visions of how best to preserve the “holy ground” of the Alamo. Adina De Zavala led the San Antonio chapter of the DRT. She was the granddaughter of Lorenzo De Zavala, a veteran of the Texas

58 Campbell, Gone to Texas, 128-145, 159-182.
Revolutionary war era and government official. De Zavala’s group existed as a history club prior to joining the DRT in 1893. They committed themselves to preserving artifacts of the 1836 battle at the Alamo and had been industrious in identifying other historic sites around San Antonio, particularly the old missions. De Zavala was personally appalled by the neglect of the old Alamo mission and sought to stop what she saw as greedy commercial interests from exploiting and destroying the historical buildings. As the mission of the DRT took on the dimensions of a sacred trust, the exact usage of the grounds took on zealous passions.60

As a member of the DRT executive committee, De Zavala reported upon the condition of the Alamo and suggested that the members of the organization should involve themselves in its preservation. After a discussion, they proposed that they ask the city of San Antonio, the custodian of the Alamo for the state, to relinquish control to the DRT. They determined that they would ask the mayor of San Antonio to form a committee to select a custodian of the Alamo, and that a member of that committee should be from the De Zavala chapter of the DRT, of which Adina De Zavala was the leader. She later complained that at least initially she found it difficult even to interest the DRT executive committee in the Alamo. Conversely, she believed that the

60 Adina de Zavala referred to her opponents in the Driscoll camp as “officiating usurpers.” In Adina de Zavala’s notes on the 1907 DRT convention, Folder C-I, Box 2M163, ADZP. Adina de Zavala wrote numerous drafts for letters to DRT members and for newspaper editors presenting her case as an attempt by “men” in the hotel syndicate to get the Alamo property. She accused the DRT of negotiating with the hotel syndicate for money to tear down the main buildings. See Folders F-CV and F-CIV, Box 2M164, ADZP.
preservation and purchase of the Alamo property was “the conception, the dream, and the life-work of the De Zavala Chapter.”

After learning of the impending sale of the store covering the remains of old mission, De Zavala called upon fellow DRT member Clara Driscoll to help save the Alamo from a group planning to build a hotel in the nearby warehouse. De Zavala lacked the money or the ability to raise enough funds to purchase the property at $75,000. Driscoll had the interest and the money to purchase an option to buy and eventually signed a contract to purchase the entire property. The dispute first arose over whether to tear down everything except the mission chapel or to attempt to save some of the other walls as well. De Zavala believed that the long barracks provided more historical value because more fighting took place there than in the chapel. She also noted that more of the men died in the barracks than in the chapel. Driscoll thought that the remains of the barracks were too far gone and should be removed to provide a park that highlighted the Alamo Chapel. Various accounts of just how much the officers of the DRT planned to remove surfaced. In some cases it appeared that they only wanted to remove the modern façade of the store built over the site leaving the “historic stones” in place. At other times it sounded as if they planned to remove every stone.

On March 18, 1903 Clara Driscoll paid Charles Hugo, owner of the Hugo-Schmeltzer property, $500 for a thirty-day option to purchase the property. The Hugo-Schmeltzer group owned a store built over the ruins of what had been the long

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62 DRT Proceedings, 1903, 3, 21-23.
barracks. At the end of that period the DRT had only raised a little over $1,000 towards the next payment of $4,500. Driscoll paid $3,478.25 of this amount, thereby extending the option to purchase the Alamo mission property to February 10, 1904, at which time a payment of $25,000 would be due. In spite of a year to raise funds and the aid of the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs, only $7,187.98 was collected. Again, Driscoll stepped in with her checkbook and provided the balance of $17,812.02 to meet the deadline. The second vice president of the DRT, Cornelia Branch Stone, said at their 1904 annual meeting in Fort Worth that freeing the Alamo from its shameful surroundings was a collective undertaking. It was due to, “the patriotism, zeal and unselfish devotion of Miss Clara Driscoll, of San Antonio, nobly aided by the De Zavala Chapter, D. R. T., of that city, inspired by Miss Adina De Zavala.” Though De Zavala started the work, Driscoll’s generosity moved her to the front in many of the accolades.63

It became painfully obvious that two dramatically different plans for the property divided members of the DRT. The leadership of the DRT sought to focus attention on the Alamo chapel and saw the store and any remains of the old mission as detracting from the site. De Zavala’s group wanted to focus attention on the long barracks and preserve every stone possible. This internal discussion moved into the public with a signed petition; it was printed and distributed to the DRT members. The personal disagreement over what actual buildings to preserve moved into the public arena through letters to newspapers. Driscoll in an interview with a news reporter appeared to place the emphasis upon the chapel, not on the property she was helping to purchase.

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De Zavala saw the chapel building as secondary and the mission grounds as the key area from the 1836 battles. This dispute had been primarily within the San Antonio chapter as Driscoll was a member of the De Zavala chapter and served as chairman and treasurer over the Alamo Mission Fund. But this quarrel broadened in 1905 to the full DRT organization. This became evident with De Zavala’s attempt officially to become the DRT’s “agent” when it came to maintaining the Alamo. A group opposed to De Zavala’s chapter gaining custody of the Alamo arose within the executive committee. They delayed the assigning of an “agent” until the property could be transferred to the state of Texas. The DRT failed to raise the funds and turned to the Texas state legislature to purchase the property and repay Driscoll. Mary Jones signed a Quit Claim deed for the tract purchased by Driscoll for the DRT. She did not sign it until August 3, 1905, thereby delaying any decision by the executive committee to make the De Zavala Chapter the custodians.64

Why the opposition arose lacks full substantiation from Mary Jones’s perspective, but there are strong clues to her position. She consistently utilized sacred terms when she made her case for the preservation of history and for its importance to the present. The San Jacinto grounds had been made special because of the holy blood that had been shed by Texas heroes. This conjunction of importance with holiness became transferred to the preservation of the Alamo. This made the chapel a fitting focal point

64 Adina de Zavala composed a petition to stop the organization “now known as the DRT by the original members.” It was signed by many important leaders and members of the DRT including: Betty Ballinger, Lucy Ballinger Mills, Mary Briscoe Winsor, Jessie Briscoe Howe, Adele Briscoe Looscan, Lucy M. Lytle, Elizabeth Lytle, Billie Sherman Kendall, and Adina de Zavala in Folder CV, Box 2M164, ADZP San Antonio Express, January 29, 1905. DRT Report, 1905, 41-43, 46, 50-51. “Quit Claim Deed,” Texas Title Company, Box 2M164, Adina De Zavala Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas.
for Mary Jones, as she perceived that it had been sanctified by the sacrifices made there. For Mary, the chapel fit the sacred narrative better than the remains of non-descript stone walls covered by a modern store. The Alamo became the ultimate in lost causes by men who kept the faith with Texas against impossible odds. Historic exactitude was sacrificed for the use Mary and the executive committee wished to make of the Alamo story. In addition to this sacred-history connection, De Zavala’s strong personality and leadership capacity appeared to take over the Alamo. In some ways Mary treated De Zavala’s efforts as a hostile take-over, and Mary wanted to maintain control over the interpretation of the Alamo.

The maneuvers over custody of the Alamo and Alamo mission properties reached fevered pitch; both sides used overt and covert ploys to gain control over the Alamo. In it all, Mary Jones played a pivotal role. Mary believed that custodial care for the Alamo belonged to the entire organization of the DRT. When the property was transferred to the state, Driscoll contacted Mary and asked for “temporary control of the Alamo.” When Mary Jones learned about De Zavala’s bid to claim custody of the Alamo for her own chapter, she sent a telegram to Florence Eagar in San Antonio. “Do not under any circumstance turn the Alamo over to any other person. Hold it under your appointment for the Daughters.” To De Zavala, Jones wrote a strongly worded reprimand demanding that she turn over everything that she had relating to the Alamo. Mary made the ownership of the Alamo clear:

You must make a complete receipt of all funds raised by you and the de Zavala chapter, Daughters of the Republic of Texas for the purchase of the Hugo Schmeltzer Alamo Mission property at San Antonio. You will give names of donors and amounts and report to the Executive Committee on 17th inst. at Rice Hotel Parlors, Houston, Texas. By enactment of the Legislature the Alamo property was placed in the care of the general society of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. You are requested to state from where the de Zavala chapter received authority to assume control of the Alamo Chapel in or about Aug. or Sept. 1905.  

Clearly Mary Jones was in charge and planned to force De Zavala to recognize her authority as president. Mary continued in the letter to question De Zavala’s honesty, “I understand the Alamo is now bare of all treasures and relics, and such as were there.” Mary exerted her authority and exercised her will, complete with chapter and verse from the DRT charters. She wanted De Zavala to know that all books, relics, manuscripts, historical records, and gifts given to a chapter of the DRT belonged to the DRT, not to the individual chapter. “I trust you will make your reports,” concluded Mary, “as complete as they can possibly be done.” This was not the end of the battle within the DRT over the possession of the Alamo and its historical interpretation.

De Zavala claimed the Alamo by “Divine Right.” She spent years collecting Alamo relics and stories. She believed that she was protecting the true ground of history. Following Jones’s commands and Driscoll’s direction, Eagar sought the keys to the property at the mayor’s offices and found that the De Zavala group had taken them a month before. As the De Zavala group sought a preemptive establishment of rights with the keys, the Driscoll side determined to change the locks. This was thwarted by

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66 Mary Jones to Adina de Zavala, n.d., Folder 197, Box 5, Eagar Family Papers (quotation).
67 Ibid (quotation).
the forceful intervention of De Zavala, who intimidated the locksmith and confiscated his locks and tools. This all made grand reading in the newspapers, but placed the DRT in a very poor public light. Reports and accusations appeared until the executive board began legal proceedings to get the keys, on November 3, 1905. Soon thereafter De Zavala surrendered the keys and possession to Driscoll.⁶⁸

Both sides attempted to take control of the situation during the 1906 and 1907 annual meetings of the DRT. The machinations of the two sides proved worthy of any male political parties in state or national politics. After motions, amendments, counter-motions, and delays, the DRT effectively became two separate groups. The spring meeting in 1907 resulted in a split that left the DRT openly divided and resulted in court battles over who would run the DRT and what would happen to the Alamo property. At that meeting Rebecca Fisher presided as the first vice president; Mary Jones no longer attended due to health. Feeling ill, Fisher, adjourned the meeting *sine die*, rather than surrender the gavel to the second vice-president, a supporter of the De Zavala group.⁶⁹

This proved crucial in the later legal battles, as the Driscoll supporters left, forty-six in total, the De Zavala group, numbering twenty-one, continued to meet. They passed their own agenda and considered themselves to be in control of the DRT.

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⁶⁸ Executive Committee, Mrs. Marie B. Urwitz, chairman, Daughters of the Republic of Texas: Statement of the Situation, (N.p., 1908), 4,5. Note: This special statement of conditions was decorated in swastikas, a non-offensive symbol prior to its use by the Nazi party in Germany; it was a common symbol in many cultures including Native Americans. San Antonio Express, June 3, 1906. “Plaintiff’s Petition,” Daughters of the Republic of Texas v. Adina De Zavala, Docket No. 18471, thirty-seventh District Court of Texas, Bexar County (District Clerk’s Office, San Antonio). Bill 65 decreed ownership would be decided in the Court of Civil Appeals for the First District on the case of DRT v Adina De Zavala et al. The sixteen page finding of the Court of Civil Appeals, Galveston, Texas upheld the earlier Harris Court ruling for the DRT, it argued that the Rebecca Fisher legally (“though unwisely”) adjourned the meeting and thus the business meeting was over at that point in “Court of Civil Appeals,” Box 2M164, Adina De Zavala Papers. ⁶⁹ Austin Statesman, April 20, 1907.
Interestingly, they elected Mary Jones as their president, in spite of her obvious opposition to their plans. Mary was too important as a symbol for either side to ignore. In order to assume any legitimacy before the eyes of the organization and the public, they needed Mary Jones as their president. The opposition also elected Mary as their president. The controversy and rumor spread through the membership of the DRT and to the public at large until the Executive Committee published its own “Statement of the Situation.” This document attempted to quell the unrest and reassure the membership that the executive body was in control and that President Mary Jones had endorsed their position. When they published this statement in 1908, President Jones had died, so they republished her 1907 repudiation of the De Zavala group from *The Houston Post* of June 16, 1907.  

To the Editor: It has come to my knowledge that a body of people are using my name, unwarranted by me, as President of an organization calling themselves ‘Daughters of the Republic of Texas.’ There can be but one body of that name. I was elected by the original organization, and as long as they honor me in this way, I will serve them. I recognize its officers as the true Executive Committee, earnest, energetic and patriotic in their endeavors to promote the interests of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.  

While alive, Mary remained both interested and involved in the disposition of the Alamo properties; she published a letter in the Houston paper revealing that her negotiations with Charles M. Reeves, a developer, had broken down. In spite of her age, 88, and her infirmities she appeared to remain integral to the work of the DRT. In gendered interpretations of a female historical perspective and a male historical

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70 *DRT Report, 1907.* “A Statement of the Facts: To the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and the People of Texas,” 1907, Box 2M164, Adina De Zavala Papers. 
71 Ibid., 5 (quotation).
perspective it would be tempting to understand the women as hoping to form a garden to avoid the bloodier aspects of the history. Mary Jones and the DRT started with the intensely bloodied fields of San Jacinto prior to the Alamo. Nor was Mary afraid to deal with “commercial” businesses. Her willingness to raise money for her causes brought her into serious negotiations with investors and businesses.72

Because both of the opposing groups wished to have Mary Jones on their side, the De Zavala faction accused their opponents of by-passing Mary to make their attacks. In a handwritten resolution, preserved by De Zavala, they set forth three acts by which they accused the DRT executive committee of bringing reproach upon the good name of the association. The first of these either explained the reason Mary appeared to be siding with their opposition or provided a reasonable doubt as to her apparent stance in the published material.

Procuring a stencil plate of official signature of the venerable President of this association and composing and issuing documents over such official name—reciting matters and things in words and form calculated to cause hard feeling and strife among members – when in truth and fact, it was a physical impossibility for the President to know anything of said matters so recited over her official signature. March 4, 1907 – statement over official signature of the President saying a proposition as to this park scheme had been submitted to her and the Executive Committee.73

This strongly worded accusation was subsequently stricken, and the following points renumbered. This change was evidently made by the same group who signed this document as it was stricken from the record in the same ink that penned the first charge. Were they unable to prove their point, did they wish to avoid embarrassing

72 Houston Post, March 4, 1907.
73 “Resolved by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in Annual Meeting at Austin April 1907,” Folder C-I, Box 2M163, Adina De Zavala Papers. This three page handwritten resolution possibly contained notes from the April 1907 meeting held after Fisher adjourned the main meeting (quotation).
Mary, or had evidence of Mary’s role surfaced? The remaining charges focused upon the “self-constituted Executive Committee.” No clear evidence corroborates their charge, however, her handwriting had grown unsteady over time and a signature stamp did exist. Her handwritten letters from about 1901 became increasingly unsteady in penmanship. After 1906 her daughter began signing her checks for her; at the least Mary had probably not signed anything official in 1907 and perhaps earlier. In spite of the possibility of these accusations being true, it was also possible that she had given her permission for the use of her stamp. Previously she had been aware of the two sides and had taken a side opposing the De Zavala group.74

The attempts by each side to gain approval for their vision of the Alamo continued even after the De Zavala Chapter lost the law suit and was essentially dismantled by the DRT. One of the more interesting but unpublished attempts to determine the historicity of the Alamo mission property came from De Zavala. She collected almost 75 petitions protesting the anticipated destruction of the Alamo “fortress.” These were signed and still in her possession; were they ever sent to anyone? In an effort to bolster her contention that the masonry walls of the Hugo-Schmeltzer building were original to the 1836 battle, she interviewed San Antonio residents about their memory of the ruins prior to the building of the stores and hotels. She collected many personal accounts with an emphasis on what parts of the Alamo were original.75

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74 April 17, 1906 was the last extant check signed by Mary Jones. After this her checks were signed by her daughter Sallie Ashe, these returned checks are in Box 761, MJP.
75 “DRT Petitions,” Box 2N129, Adina De Zavala Papers. “San Antonio Residents Accounts of the Alamo Ruins,” Folder F-C4, Box 2M164, Adina De Zavala Papers.
De Zavala’s zeal kept her from giving up, in a last attempt to thwart the renting of the property to either business or entertainment interests she locked herself in the building for three days. The press enjoyed the drama of a woman besieged in the Alamo. De Zavala gained her point and did not hand the property over to the DRT, instead, she handed it over to a San Antonio city official who in turn passed the problem to Texas Governor Thomas Mitchell Campbell. De Zavala won that battle and kept the DRT from renting the property at that point. Mary Jones died December 31, 1907, and was no longer available to intervene. The subsequent governor, Oscar Branch Colquitt, decided to remove the property from the care of the DRT and improve it himself; he planned to leave the stone walls as they stood. Colquitt ran short of funds and during one of his absences from the state, the city of San Antonio demolished the second story along the east side of the mission property, leaving the one-story walls as they currently stand.\(^\text{76}\)

The initial three objectives stated in the founding of the DRT did not cover the Alamo; their initial focus was the San Jacinto Battlefield, the memorialization of the graves of the Republic and Revolutionary men, and other sites of the period. But, as historian Jack Butterfield pointed out, the Alamo was central to the Texas creation myth and naturally became important to the women of the DRT. For decades the mission lingered neglected and in a state of disrepair; once the organization became interested it catapulted to the single most important symbol of the Texas fight for independence.

Regardless of the internal quarrel, they still found a way to make the forgotten Alamo a centerpiece of Texas historical memory.77

Sadly, the leadership of the daughters splintered. Many of Mary Jones’s oldest friends left with the De Zavala faction, including Adèle Looscan, Mary Briscoe, Betty Ballinger, W.C. Craddock, Nellie Lytle, and Nettie Houston Brinquhurst. This “second battle” was a conflict over memory. The DRT was primarily an organization that declared its interest in preserving memory; however, they now contested the shape of that memory. Governor Oscar Colquitt described this contest and the legislative act giving control of the Alamo to the DRT as “a grievous error.”

Out of it has grown a dispute within the ranks of the Daughters concerning what shall be done with the property, a dispute which can only be regarded as tragic by those who love Texas and who know of the personal worth of the disputants, all descendants of the men who gave Texas independence. It is a pity, a tragedy, that the women who worked so nobly in unison to preserve the property should now be divided by a schism of long standing and intensity. The settlement of the future of the property is scarcely more important than is the restoration of harmony with that worthy organization, the Daughters of the Republic.78

The executive committee of the DRT agreed with Colquitt and resolved to hand over the property for administration by the state. They made an unusual request, that the property be administered by five Texas men to be appointed by the governor’s office. This can only be understood as a plan to keep De Zavala from taking control of the property.79

79 Ibid., 156-157.
Mary Jones led a group united on the site to be acquired, but they fractured over what the property meant. They were a “memory factory,” but what form would this remembered Texas take? What they chose to remember was as much about what they chose to forget as it was about remembering. As Mary Jones wished the public to forget her husband’s suicide and to revere the greater parts of his life, so the DRT set out to form selected memories of Texas. The collective memory that the DRT chose to eliminate many of the worst personal elements of the Texas heroes, their attachment to slavery and their amnesia over the important role of Tejanos in the War for Texas Independence.

Mary Jones passed away at her daughter’s home in Houston on December 31, 1907. Margaret Hadley Foster spoke for the San Jacinto Chapter and declared that Mary embodied the very purpose of the DRT. They buried her in the pouring rain, her casket draped in the Texas colors of the Lone Star Flag. Her friends eulogized her in glowing terms as the “most distinguished member” of those left who witnessed the Texas Revolution. At least six judges and several prominent Houston families served as her pallbearers. The Alamo flag flew at half-mast. Even though Mary had repudiated her group, flowers arrived from Adina De Zavala. A tribute poem from the hand of Sam Houston’s daughter, Nettie Houston Bringhamurst, lauded Mary’s legacy. This poem represented the resolve to forget the troubled past between Anson Jones and Sam Houston, which was equally a testament to Mary’s ability to determine what kind of past would be remembered. Not only had Jones and Houston quarreled, likewise Mary Jones distrusted Houston enough to alter her own son’s name. Only ten years earlier,
Mary, keeping a distance from the Houston name, donated her copy of *The Life and Literary Remains of General Sam Houston* anonymously with Adèle Looscan’s help through her San Jacinto Chapter to the DRT historical collection. Nettie Houston Bringhurst’s poem illustrated the influence and position Mary Jones wielded within the organization.

With us in spirit though absent in the flesh, the key thought of her keeps our traditions fresh  
A priceless link between us and the Past, like some fair tree spared by the ruthless blast.  
Gray time himself gives her but tender touch, as if he, too, had loved her over much.

Her youth and beauty Texas knew full-well,  
Her gentleness and worth all tongues may tell.  
And from a life so pure and brave and good,  
She stands to us a type of womanhood.

Within her quiet home she sits and dreams,  
of things we read by History’s pale gleams.  
Those tragic days her spirit lives again,  
In chapters fraught with glory and with pain.

She views the scenes of which we love to write  
And saw the Lone Star in its new-born light.  
To her may every Texan turn with pride,  
Finding a counselor, friend and guide.

A flower left from Chivalry’s own time,  
What nobler theme could make the poets’ rhyme.  
And other bards shall sing fair songs of her,  
Who draws us closer with each passing year.

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80 Mrs. Margaret Hadley Foster, “In Memory of Mrs. Anson Jones,” *Houston Post*, clipping 5 December 1907, Mary Jones/Family Papers Collection, Box 761. “In Lone Star Flag—Mrs. Anson Jones Draped in Texas Colors,” *Houston Post*, clipping 2 January 1908, Mary Jones/Family Papers Collection, Box 761, Mary Jones to Adèle Looscan, Feb., 13, 1897, Box 127, ABLP.

81 Nettie Houston Bringhurst, “Written to and for Mrs. Anson Jones,” Apr., 1907, Folder 7, Box 761, MJP (quotation).
DRT historian and Mary’s friend, Adèle Looscan, wrote that no one else could possibly fill the unique role that she played as head of Texas’ first woman’s memorial association. She spent a lifetime shaping the memory of Texas for her husband and headed an organization that specialized in creating a lasting perception of Texas. At least some of the Texas myth came through the eyes of its women and in particular the efforts of Mary Jones. Mary Jones fit many of the general patterns discernible by southern historians, yet she proved individual and unique in her own paths. The DRT founders determined that no one else could fill the role she filled. Her deceased mate and her pioneer roots created more than a woman president; she served the DRT as a symbol. She spent a lifetime creating the right memories, first for her husband and then for Texas. In the DRT, Mary discovered a myth-making organization that suited her purpose. She aided in opening the doors for women, doors to move out of the home and take over the battlegrounds.82

The DRT expressly focused its attention at the Alamo upon the contribution of white males. It only highlighted the battle of 1836. Over time, others pressured the Daughters to include mention of the rest of the history of this site, to which they eventually acceded with historical plaques and descriptions. The state owns the site; the DRT runs it. Through the years in their role as custodians of the Alamo they fought off numerous challenges to their work and currently they still maintain the property. By choice, the DRT only allows two private groups to use the Alamo chapel for private events, The Order of the Alamo and the Texas Cavaliers both groups have a

82 Draft notes of Adèle Looscan for Mary Jones’ biography, Mary Jones/Family Papers Collection, box 761.
membership made up predominately of Anglo males. Mary Jones and her “Daughters” succeeded where all men before them failed. Many have occupied the Alamo and a number of armies have defended it, but they have successfully held the Alamo far longer than any of these armed men.83

Mary Jones did not leave her thoughts in a journal, so her actions and letters provide the evidence of her aims and intent. On a practical level, age played a decisive role for Mary. As the men who knew Anson dwindled in number due to death, Mary’s version of his life had the only living representative. Mary outlasted the other first ladies and achieved membership in a group of elite pioneer representatives who could carry their vision of Texas to those present at the turn of the twentieth century. As the male veterans grew increasingly infirm, surviving women inherited the mantle of history and determined that it in turn would immortalize their heroic view of Texas. Mary Jones did not yearn for a public life, but her general core values of family and the Texas Republic motivated her to a position through which she helped to shape the form of Texas history promoted in her adopted state.

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CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

By the end of her long life Mary Jones had accomplished her primary objective and reached other new milestones along the way. She sought to preserve the memory of the past as she understood that earlier time. More important, Mary helped to alter the public perception of her husband to correspond more closely with her own views of Anson’s intent and actions. As Texas underwent radical transitions in circumstance and population, Mary’s mission appeared to focus on conserving the past against the tides of change. The more she sought to shift attention to the past period of the Republic, the more the process in turn changed her. As Mary attempted to achieve the goal of drawing attention to her vision of the past, she herself was transformed by the process. Though her primary driving aim bore the marks of an altruistic objective, her work eventually benefited her.

When she promoted the work of Anson, it was in large part because she could claim access to his written work and association with him as his wife and confidant. This reminded others of Mary’s own place in history. When she supported the Texas Veterans Association and attended their meetings she did this as a natural step in preserving the memory of Anson as a Texas veteran, but this very effort for Anson was a key stepping stone for her eventual presidency of the DRT. These secondary benefits do not appear to have influenced her choices. Her work to establish Anson’s reputation
provided her an entry point into a better life than the desperate economic hardships she 
survived in the first decades after the Civil War. Her work renewed her relationships with 
upper-class elite women and provided her ties with the political life of Texas. Presidency 
of the DRT in some ways provided her one of the more powerful positions available to a 
woman in an era before women won the right to hold elected state political offices.

Mary Jones embodied her widowhood. Seldom seen out of black mourning 
dresses in public, for fifty years she utilized her clothing to symbolize her status. Her 
association with her husband and her devotion to his image garnered her attention and 
thus a public platform for her message. She endured outright poverty as a widow after 
the Civil War, but through the aid of family and friends reached a comfortable living. Her 
later widowhood was of reduced circumstance comparative to her married life, but she 
appeared to have what she needed to travel and even visit a health spa occasionally. 
Her improved economic status was due primarily to the judicious sale of her real estate 
holdings and the careful management of her resources with the aid of her son 
Cromwell.

“Americans tend to view widows as problem-ridden,” writes Helena Lopata, “and 
the societies that gave birth to this view have tended to shy away from widowed 
women.” This phenomenon may have been connected to a perception that widows 
appeared needy. The development of Ladies Memorializing Associations and the United 
Daughters of the Confederacy in the South provided a respectable outlet for women and 
a group identity that seemed to help them through their grief. In part this gave their 
personal sense of loss value and meaning in the larger community. In Mary Jones’s 
case, her emphasis on her status as a widow implied a request for an understanding
and recognition of her pain. Respect was perhaps easier to give than money, thus making Mary more accepted in society. By these means she gave meaning to her personal loss and ultimately validated her own life’s purpose. Eventually, she found additional objectives in the broader process of remembering not only her husband’s legacy, but also that of the Texas Republic.¹

Mary’s widowhood coupled with the changes in a postwar South helped her to escape some of the elements of “true womanhood” that Barbra Welter considered as limiting women. Kathryn Kish Sklar argued that at least some women saw their homes as a power base, not for direct political involvement, but for influence on the family, community, and beyond. Prior to Mary’s widowhood her participation in community events was limited. She appeared at public events solely as Anson’s partner. After his death, she attended weddings, funerals, public holiday celebrations, association meetings, church services, religious community events, even public fundraisers. Though her husband was absent in the flesh, her specific widowed status provided her entrance into some of the venues that she would have considered to have been couples or males-only purviews. The extension of an invitation by a Masonic lodge for her to witness their installation of members illustrated the unique status that she gained as Anson’s widow. The fact that she had a personal introduction to a political figure as important as a sitting president of the United States, William McKinley, came again as a result of her widowhood. Had Anson been alive, he would have been the more probable recipient of the introduction. His very absence when joined with the fact that she had been married to him helped her garner opportunities she would not have otherwise

enjoyed. Mary often spoke of herself as Anson’s widow. These verbal reminders when coupled with her visual mourning dresses were her deft way of opening doors of opportunity for herself.²

Mary Jones focused her life on the memory of Anson, the Texas Revolution, and the Texas Republic. Anson’s accomplishments and reputation were in the forefront of her work, but she too left a legacy. Her work left a number of routes to continue her work. Mary’s family adopted her cause and continued to aid her throughout her life. Particularly her youngest son, Cromwell, played an active role in representing his family in public events. He spoke at community gatherings and joined fraternal organizations. He wrote a biographical sketch of his father and submitted it to at least two publishers. He often acted on his mother’s behalf when others wanted information, pictures, or mementoes of Anson. Cromwell not only served as a lawyer, but like his father he entered politics and was elected as the district judge for Harris County. Cromwell found his life consumed by his work and his mother’s requests. Though he often called upon young ladies, he never married. In many ways Mary’s needs made him into a surrogate husband upon whom she relied for financial assistance, advice, and friendship.³

Likewise, Mary’s eldest son, Samuel, reached for professional status and influence. He served his community as a dentist and reached state-wide recognition serving as president of the Texas Dental Association in 1885-1886. Following Cromwell’s death, in 1888, Samuel helped Mary when she met with Henry Arthur McArdle and answered some of the correspondence from others inquiring about his

³ Cromwell Jones died Jan 19, 1888 and is interred at Glenwood Cemetery, Houston, Texas in the Jones family plot.
father, Anson. Samuel outlived his mother by only five years. Mary’s only daughter, Sallie Jones Ashe, attended the organizational meeting of the DRT and served as a member of that organization. She married Sam Ashe who was politically active during and after Reconstruction, running for sheriff. Sallie maintained a friendship with influential women through the DRT and in her other interests. This included Annie Webb Blanton, the first woman in Texas to hold statewide office in 1918 as superintendent of public instruction. Mary’s granddaughter, Willie Gaston Ashe, joined the DRT in 1892. During the time Mary Jones served as president of the DRT, her daughter and granddaughter learned of her passion for the past. Among the clippings kept by her family one editor wrote, “Your ever watchful eye is ready to seize every circumstance that will inure to your advantage in perpetuating the deeds and memories of our fallen heroes.” The most intense work of restoring Anson’s image may have passed on with her death, but her personal example of public service continued in her family as her grandson, Charles E. Ashe, became a judge. As a widow from the old South, she displayed immense personal courage and fortitude in rearing her family to strong positions of leadership and public service.  

The DRT embodies the idea of legacy. Mary Jones played a founding role and was elected president yearly without a break until her death in 1907. Seventeen years as head of the women’s group interested in preserving history also meant that she helped to shape that communal remembered past. How she and the “Daughters” chose to commemorate the battlefields and leaders played a key role in how the newcomers to

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Texas would view the meaning of the past. She and the members of the DRT wanted to set the narrative as one of heroic men of godly values who wrought a hard-won victory for independence. Their work was not only about what they chose to remember but also what they decided to overlook or forget. Their choices diminished the role slave labor played in both settlement of the state and as one of the reasons for the Anglo revolt against Mexico. As they exalted the role of primarily Anglo-Saxon men, the contributions of Tejanos in the Texas Revolution fell to obscurity. These choices helped to set the historic tone for generations of Texans.

Mary actively molded her memory of events into a form readily adopted by many Texans. This was particularly true for newer immigrants, who, perhaps due to her age and experiences, gave her the gravitas of a reliable source. Perhaps more importantly, she was able to provide her interpretation of what elements of history were important. In particular Mary and the DRT focused upon the heroism of the Anglo men in the Revolution and chose to forget the less glorious aspects of their lives. Though privately she disdained Sam Houston, publicly she declined to criticize him as a founder of the Republic. Instead she emphasized the work of her husband Anson. Her work on the past did not change the past, but it influenced the perception of history, and then the course of the future. Mary and the DRT generously granted men the active roles in history, but in reserving the right to “remember” and transmit that past they retained an arguably more powerful influence on the future. Texans could embrace losses and interpret them as heroic. The victory at San Jacinto redeemed the defeat at the Alamo, the stunning victory by Houston’s forces became the reigning memory of the Texas Revolution. They could overlook the flaws of those men of action and preserve the
positive. The bondage of slavery receded in their memories eclipsed by the fight for freedom and independence. Also, the Tejanos who fought for the Republic, such as Jose Antonio Navarro, were forgotten and not returned to their historical importance until the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s.\(^5\)

In the final two decades of her life, the deaths of close family members and particularly that of Cromwell brought her to a crisis. She had lost her father, mother, step-father, four full siblings, several half-siblings, two husbands, two sons, a daughter-in-law, and a granddaughter. She had dealt with these deaths and moved forward until the death of Cromwell, who had become a substitute for Anson. He cared for her and watched over her from his teen years until his death. Previously Mary had demonstrated only a passing interest in séances held by a friend, but after Cromwell died she became an active participant, even a medium.

Americans experienced a growing interest in spiritualism during the nineteenth century. As science and religion vied with one another some sought to amalgamate many of their principles. They believed that spiritualism allowed for that. It was a way to test rationally the supernatural, and It appealed particularly to women. Shut out of most official leadership roles in churches spiritualism essentially gave women an authoritative voice. Elizabeth Hayes Turner found that this situation was changing in some churches. There were female teachers within the churches who were able to teach classes with adult males. They gained their authority in part due to competence, but also they continued in their roles longer than the ministers and pastors. They may have started

\(^5\) Andrés Tijerina argues that Texas memory was shaped by Anglos that omitted and distorted the roles and contributions of Tejanos in “Constructing Tejano Memory,” in Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner, eds., *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 176-202.
teaching children, but over time they gained a loyal following as their students aged and accrued the mantle of a female “saint” in their reputation and stature.\(^6\)

Mary Jones’s conception of the afterlife and her ability to contact others would have placed her at odds with main-line Christian churches. This helps to explain why her funeral was performed by the minister from the Christian Science Church, rather than by an Episcopal priest. Some of the early groups seeking religious revelation or comfort included Millerites, Shakers, and Christian Scientists. In part due to this new found freedom, a number of female religious leaders emerged during the late nineteenth century. The Christian Science movement was connected to Mary Baker Eddy. Helena P. Blavatsky was a leader in the Theosophical movement. Ann Lee was the “mother” of the Shakers and Ellen G. White’s visionary experiences proved key to the founding of the Adventist movement. Mary Jones did not start a new denomination, but as she moved into her own leadership roles, she utilized what she saw as a gift to comfort and to guide her. As Mary and other women sought leadership roles in a primarily male-dominated society, spiritualism appeared to open opportunities for them that had previously been filled only by males.\(^7\)

\(^6\) Ann Braude identified a clear connection between the women’s rights movement of the nineteenth century and spiritualism. Spiritualism provided them direct appeal to a “higher power” than the traditional masculine power. Braude argues that a female medium felt empowered, particularly when she conjoined science, religion, and political ideas. See Ann Brande, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2nd Ed. (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2001), 1-10, 82-89, 162-164. William D. Moore traced the roots of American spiritualism through the spiritualist camp meetings of the late nineteenth century to the Second Great Awakening. These were old forces acting upon a growing sense of individualism in expressions of American Christianity. “Spiritualism rejected received patriarchy, religious dogma, and other constructs of cultural authority. All human sources of knowledge and power were of secondary importance when compared with insight gained through communication with supernatural forces,” William D. Moore, “To Hold Communion with Nature and the Spirit-World: New England’s Spiritualist Camp Meetings, 1865-1910,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 7 (1997): 231. Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community*, 63-93.

Some of the bereaved found comfort in the idea that they could assimilate their faith in an afterlife with continued contact. That communication often required an intermediary, commonly known as a medium, who had special sensitivity to the otherworld. They used tarot cards, Ouija boards, musical instruments, knockings, levitating tables, altered voices, and automatic writing also known as spirit writing. This began playing a role in Mary Jones’s life. Others referred to her as a medium, and seeking answers from the dead she focused on contacting Cromwell and soliciting his advice and aid in her daily life. She spent hours filling up the margins of newspapers with disjointed sentences, often foretelling of the future. At one point she carried on arguments with what she conceived to be the spirit of Cromwell, asking him to dictate through her letters to send to others about Anson. Evidently, he refused to write the letters and left it up to her.8

While many disapproved of spiritualism, others also sought a means to contact the dead. Perhaps one of the most prominent was Mary Todd Lincoln. Following the death of her son Willie, one observer wrote, “Mrs. Lincoln has been out to see a spiritualist who has made wonderful revelations to her about her son Willie.” Not all sought solace through contacting the dead, but those who did appeared to feel comforted by the idea that those they missed also missed them. When relating her past to others, Mary Jones did not say that her son Cromwell had died, rather “he passed into spirit life.” During his life, Cromwell proved to be Mary’s most faithful letter writer; the continuance of this correspondence after his death gave her a sense of continuance. As she relied upon his advice before, she believed that he continued to

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8 H.B. English to Mary Jones, Feb. 19, 1890, Mar. 21, 1890, May 9, 22, 1890, July 24, 1890, Folder 4, Box 761, MJP. Examples of Mary Jones’s “spirit writing” in Folder 7, Box 761, MJP. Mary knew that many churches “denounced” spirit writings, but she believed that this was connected to God.
advise her through spirit communication. Mary wrote that Cromwell called for justice on behalf of his father. These messages helped to validate her continued quest to justify Anson’s life and work.9

The success of Mary’s campaign on Anson’s behalf could be measured by the treatment historians gave him. Subsequent histories of Texas portrayed Anson favorably during Mary Jones’s lifetime. He did not evolve into a heroic figure, but the critiques of his colleagues were forgotten. Some of this was directly due to Mary’s influence. Homer S. Thrall utilized Anson’s own “autobiography” as a source for his History of Texas. Without Mary’s efforts to publish his work, this would have been lost. Others reported the facts of the Texas Republic and interpreted the manner of Anson’s death with a spirit of grace. Dewitt Clinton Baker’s assessment of Anson’s suicide was as a “fit of mental aberration.” In other words, even Anson’s suicide could be interpreted as the exception to an otherwise honorable life. By 1896 Cadwell Walton Raines had accepted Mary’s explanation and judged that Anson Jones had been “unjustly” suspected of opposing annexation. He also portrayed him as “Of good New England stock, and one of the purest of the public men of Texas.” Though he only served as president of the Republic for a shortened term, a statue of him stands at the entrance of the State Library in Austin. A county is named in his honor and the Texas Centennial Commission erected a statue of him at Anson, in Jones County. Though Anson Jones did not become a household name, Mary achieved a positive assessment of him from historians.10

9 Theodore Pease, ed., Diary of Orville Hickman Browning, vol. 2 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1925), 608. Mary Jones’s notes, Folder 7, Box 761, MJP.
Justin Harvey Smith’s appraisal of the annexation of Texas leaned heavily upon the words Anson Jones preserved in the material published by Mary Jones. Smith frequently quoted from Anson’s appraisal of others and events. Significantly, Smith accepted Jones’s assessment of the role of European interest in Texas. Jones claimed that he pursued this course in order to spur the United States Congress towards the annexation of Texas. Smith clearly believed that Anson Jones, Sam Houston, and Ashbel Smith preferred Texas independence over annexation. Still, he recorded events in a favorable light for Anson Jones as a true patriot and good man. He acknowledged that many did not understand Anson’s conduct and thus some considered his actions to be “treacherous.” Smith’s work was published only a few years after Mary Jones’s death and resembled very much what she had advocated about her husband through her life. Later historians continued to view Anson’s work in a positive light. Eugene C. Barker concluded that Anson Jones was a man of great ability.11

Mary’s own death did not go unnoticed. In many ways she had been a living symbol of their past. The loss of Mary Jones illustrated a key milestone as she was among the last of the pioneers from the Revolutionary era in Texas. The statewide eulogies proclaimed for her “every womanly grace” and extoled her as a patriotic inspiration. The newspapers included photographs of her, always in her chosen

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mourning attire, black dresses. This five-decade self-identification as Anson’s widow left one editor to write of her and Texas, “the glorious history of which her name and that of her distinguished husband will be forever linked.” Mary Jones would have been pleased that others understood her connection with Anson and Texas. In an article printed only one day before her death and in recognition of her fragile physical state one writer said, “Mrs. Jones is the most interesting person now living in Texas.” Public expressions of sympathy came from both sides of the DRT split. One member wrote for the Houston Post that regardless of the differences all could gather at her grave. For them she exemplified the purpose of the DRT. The presiding executive committee of the DRT sent a letter of sympathy to all DRT members, daughters who were bereaved over the death of their mother. Even Adina De Zavala sent flowers. After all of the difficult times, truly Mary Jones served as a central figure that all sides agreed upon.  

Her funeral was held in a pouring rain that did not stop the outpouring of friends, family, and old acquaintances. The services were hosted at her daughter’s, Sallie Ashe, home. The San Jacinto Chapter of the DRT were in attendance as were the descendants of the “San Jacinto Heroes” and the Descendants of the Texas Pioneers. Her pall bearers represented many of the prominent Houston families, with an additional group of honorary members including at least three judges and several captains. Her casket was draped in the Texas flag and the flag flying over the Alamo was lowered to half-mast in her memory. She was the perfect foil for what Texans saw as their best

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12 “Mrs. Anson Jones Dead,” Houston Chronicle Dec., 31, 1907, Folder 8, Box 761, MJP (1st quotation). “Noted Woman is Quite Ill,” Houston Chronicle Dec., 30, 1907 (2nd quotation). Margaret Hadley Foster, “In Memory of Mrs. Anson Jones,” Houston Post Jan., 5, 1908, Folder 8, Box 761, MJP. An additional obituary was published under “Jones Obituary,” in Berkshire Massachusetts Courier Jan., 16, 1908, Folder 8, Oversized Box, MJP. Executive Committee note of sympathy, Folder 1, Box 762, MJP.
past. She was a symbol of the type of previous time, which she promoted for Texas. It was easy for the obituary writer to eulogize her,

With the courage which enabled her to face hardship and dangers before which strong men quailed, there was blended the gentleness, and refinement, the sympathetic tenderness that is the heritage and charm of the highest type of womanhood, and with her passing goes one upon whose like we will not soon look again.  

An interesting postscript to Mary’s death occurred later in the pages of the Houston Chronicle. A reporter discovered Mary Jones’s tombstone in an old “dilapidated and desecrated graveyard out on San Felipe Street.” He expressed surprise that this revered woman’s grave could be so neglected. This opinion in turn apparently angered and mystified Mary’s family. Her son-in-law, R.G. Ashe, responded that she was buried in the family plot at Glenwood Cemetery in Houston. He emphasized that, “The sacred grave of Mrs. Jones is cared for with love and respect.” The family had no idea why there was a second tombstone that was larger than the one at Glenwood. Ashe made it clear that he had attended the funeral and knew where Mary Jones was buried. The second monument, the one found by the reporter, was located in the Founder’s Cemetery, also in Houston. The epitaph reads, “Sacred to the Memory of Mary Smith McCrory Jones.” There is no record of who erected this second memorial, but etched at the bottom in a different script type is the line, “Interred in Glenwood.” Presumably this was done by the family in order to clarify this peculiar situation. While there is no evidence of who erected the second stone without informing the family, there is a possibility. Mary’s mother, first husband, and siblings were buried in the Founder’s

Cemetery and she certainly qualified as a member of a pioneer family in Houston. There is no evidence of who paid for the monument.¹⁴

Today the state of Texas maintains a replica of Anson and Mary’s plantation home as the Barrington Living Farm. Thousands of school children and tourist visit annually and learn about Mary’s life and family. She chose to remain a widow and embrace the role. She focused her energies upon her family and the reputation of her husband. These choices did not hinder her life; rather she used her aims to reach a better life for herself socially and with powerful public influence. These goals doggedly pursued brought her to a unique opportunity as head of the DRT with the chance to preserve and shape the future’s memory of the Texas Revolution, the Texas Republic, and Anson Jones. As she aged and became less able to attend DRT meetings, she embraced her position of “living symbol.” Like some Delphic priestess, she met with a few associates to dispense words of wisdom. They in turn relayed her words and blessings to her “daughters” at the statewide conventions. She was willing to allow others to act so long as she could supply the interpretation. Mary Jones utilized her position in the DRT to guide and to direct the work of the organization. Mary Jones was not the mother of Texas, but she became the iconic mother of an organization that still has thousands of “Daughters.”

¹⁴ “Chronicle Story of Desecrated Graveyard Reveals a Mystery,” Houston Chronicle N.D. Folder 1, Box 2E276, AJP.
APPENDIX A

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
Mary Smith McCrory Jones Family:

Jacob Pevehouse, b. circa 1778, d. 1 Dec. 1840, m. circa 1800 Rachel Kellums
Children:

1. Sarah (Sallie, Sally) b. 1800 TN, d. 21 June 1845, m. 1817 Little Rock AR, John McCutcheon Smith, b. 1796, d. 1832 – Children:
   A. Mary b. 24 July 1819 AR Territory m. 23 July 1837Hugh McCrory
   Mary m. 17 May 1840 Austin Anson Jones b. 27 Jan. 1798, d. 9 Jan. 1858 – Children:
      1) Samuel Houston (later changed Houston to Edward) b. 26 Feb. 1841, m. Laura Virginia Childress, b. 21 June, 1845 – Children:
         a. 
      2) Charles Elliot b. 4 Sept. 1843, d. May 1862
      3) Sarah (Sallie) Sophia b. 8 Jan, 1845, m. 10 Aug. 1865 Richard Gaston Ashe b. 25 Dec. 1843 – Children:
         a. Charles Elliot Jones b. 17 Sept. 1866
         b. Willie Gaston b. 7 June 1868
   4) Cromwell Anson b. 5 June 1850
B. Squire b. 15 May 1821, d. 11 Oct 1879
C. William b. 1826, d. Apr. 3, 1837
D. Rachel Francis b. 18 Mar. 1827, d. 6 Aug 1856; m. 28 Dec 1843 John Bollinger
E. Sarah Ann b. 1832/33, d. 13 June 1845

1. Sarah m. 18 Oct. 1835 John Woodruff b. 25 Dec. 1790 KY, d. 27 Mar. 1847 TX – Children:
   A. Eliza Austin b. 15 July 1836, d. 1 May 1912, m. Eli Nations b. 16 April 1826, d. 24 May 1912.
   B. Miranda (Mirandy) b. 26 April 1837, d. 1 Feb. 1925, m. Serand Ardoin – Children: 4.
   D. Cornelia Canellia b. 22 Feb. 1844, d. 31 Aug 1887, m. 23 Sept 1862 Sanford Pelham Ritchey – Children 3.
2. James b. 7 Apr. 1802, d. 1842, m. Mary Polly Hodge – Children:
   A. Clarinda Pevehouse m. John Ross Kegans
3. Preston b. 1815, d. 26 Jan. 1878, m. 30 Nov. 1838 Syrena Ann Bell
4. Catherine b. 1808, d. bef. 1842, m. 1827 James William Lasley
5. David b. 31 Dec 1811, d. 29 Apr. 1897, m. 10 Oct. 1829 Cynthia Ross1 m. 10 Dec. 1842 Malinda (Lindy) Pearce2
6. Nelson b. 1804, m. 21 May 1828 Prudence Ross
7. Abraham b. 1812, m. 26 Nov. 1840 Mary Hodge – Children 8.
8. John b. 1814, d. bef. 6 May 1860 m. 7 May 1840 Martha Roberts – Children:
   6
9. Mary Martha b. 1817, d. 1852, m. Leo Roark
10. Enoch b. 1820

Jacob Pevehouse, m. 1 Oct. 1829 Hannah Ross2 – Children:

1. Jacob (Preston to brother David 24 Jan. 1873, heard that Jacob died in David’s settlement) Pevehouse Letters, Navarro County, Texas
2. Hannah Lucinda b. 1826, m. Elijah (Eli) Vesey (Veazey)

Anson Jones Family

Solomon Jones b. 1754/5 CT, d. 23 July 1822, m. Sarah Strong b. 6 Apr. 1758, d. 8 Mar. 1806 – Children:

1. Sarah b. 26 Jan. 1780, d. 29 Sept. 1809
2. Sophia b. 2 May 1782, d. 5 Jan. 1860
3. Mary b. 18 Oct. 1783, d. 25 June 1865
4. Nancy b. 30 June 1786, d. 7 May 1791 (drowned)
5. Betsey Maria b. 19 Feb 1788
6. Clarissa b. 6 May 1790, d. 7 Jan. 1809
7. William b. 17 Oct. 1791/2, d. 11 Nov. 1827.
8. Ira b. 19 Feb. 1793
9. Anson b. 20 Jan 1798, d. 9 Jan. 1858
10. Almira b. 5 Sept. 1803, d. 19 May 1865, m. 6 Jan. 1822 Frederick Blatchford
APPENDIX B

1860 MARY JONES FARM: HEADQUARTERS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Cash</th>
<th>Machines</th>
<th>Asses</th>
<th>Milk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>Unimproved</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Implements</td>
<td>Horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Jones</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor Avg.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>4,875</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashbel Smith</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>40k</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Value of</th>
<th>Bushels</th>
<th>Bushels</th>
<th>Bushels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>livestock</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Jones</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbor Avg. (38)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX C

SURVEY OF 100 HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD SURROUNDING MARY JONES

Information taken from Schedule 1 1860, census – Free Inhabitants in Precinct No. 8 in the County of Harris, Post Office of Lynchburg, Texas

Survey of 100 heads of household surrounding Mary Jones: (four heads had no occupation listed, these were omitted)

- Male heads of household 58 occupations other than farming
- Male heads of household 31 farming
- Female heads of household 7 farming
- Female heads of household 4 occupations other than farming

White Women listed as heads of household who farmed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Value of Real Estate in dollars</th>
<th>Adult Males – Age 18 or older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. Jones</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>1 Adult male, son Samuel, age 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3 Adult males, asst. farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2,609</td>
<td>1 adult male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>No males listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>1 adult male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>1 adult son and 1 asst. farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>1 adult son and 3 adult laborers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occupation of Women listed as non-farming heads of household:

- 1 Sewing
- 2 Boarding House
- 1 Stock Raising
Two of the 58 male farmers were listed as planters:

#1. Real Estate valued at $70,000

#2. Real Estate valued at $100,000
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