



The Lea Legacy

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Every fall Texas seventh graders study the Battle of San Jacinto and its winning general. They hear colorful stories about Sam Houston, elected President of the Republic of Texas and to the United States Congress from Tennessee and Texas and as Governor of both states. However, most Texans never learn about the influence of three women in the General's life—his sister-in-law Annette Lea Bledsoe, his mother-in-law Nancy Lea, and his wife Margaret.

Of the Lea women, Annette arrived in Texas first, moving from Alabama before Sam met Margaret. Once here, Annette and Massie Millard founded the women's society at Old North Church in Nacogdoches in 1839, the first woman's missionary group in Texas. After that the Spanish-speaking Annette tirelessly crisscrossed Texas on horseback and by oxcart, organizing Baptist women for prayer, missions, and Bible study.

Nancy Lea helped establish Siloam Baptist Church in Alabama and served as the only woman delegate at the 1823 organization of the Baptist State Convention of Alabama. When the widowed Nancy moved to Texas shortly after Margaret and Sam's 1840 wedding, her faith traveled with her. She and Margaret joined Galveston Baptist Church, and later Nancy, Margaret, and Annette became charter members of Concord Baptist Church near Cleveland. When her son-in-law finally accepted Christ, Nancy sold her silverware and contributed 500 silver dollars to cast a bell for the Independence Baptist Church. Later Mrs. Lea donated \$1,000 to purchase Bibles for foreign missionaries.

Margaret Lea Houston's loving spirit, strong faith and fervent prayers quietly influenced Texas, calmed her illustrious husband, and won 61-year-old Senator Sam Houston to the Lord. Sam and Margaret, who was educated at Alabama Baptist's Judson Female Institute, encouraged their children to attend Baylor, and at least six of the eight—Sam, Nancy, Margaret, Mary, Antoinette, and Temple—received Baptist educations. When Rufus Burleson baptized the Texas hero, Houston insisted that his wallet be baptized, too, and he joined the Lea women in generous support of his church, Christian education, and missions.

A grave marker in Independence reflects Margaret and Nancy's lives: "Women of character, culture and staunch devotion to their families and church, each in her own way greatly influenced the career of Sam Houston and the course of Texas history."

Thank God for the influence of individuals. As you give to the Mary Hill Davis Offering, for Texas Missions and the Cooperative Program, follow the generous example of one who carried "a baptized wallet."



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