

AGARITA GAZETTE



A Chronicle of the Plum Creek Shooting Society



Agarita Ranch

November 2012

Lockhart, Texas

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Remarkable Texas Woman: Molly Goodnight

by Lorelei Longshot

*Editor's note: Not too long ago, **Lorelei Longshot** asked why I did not write a story about the women in Texas history. I responded by suggesting she write a story. She did and a great story it is. Thanks **Lorelei!***

Mary Ann "Molly" Dyer Goodnight, 1839-1926, Mother to the Buffalo. In 1878, fewer than one hundred buffalo survived in Texas when Molly Goodnight, from the "JA" home ranch in the Palo Duro Canyon, heard the plaintive cries of what she thought were wounded animals. She set out with her gun to find them. If they were badly injured, she would put them out of their misery. Instead she found two baby bison that were not wounded at all, but whose



Continued next page.

Long Juan Here!



Considering the number of members off shooting at Comin' At Cha, we had a great turnout for the November monthly match. 50

Continued page 6.



What's Inside:

Find Delta Raider	8
Movie Wit & Wisdom: Work	8
Photos	10-14
RO's Corner: Posse Marshal .	9
Comin' At Cha Report	14

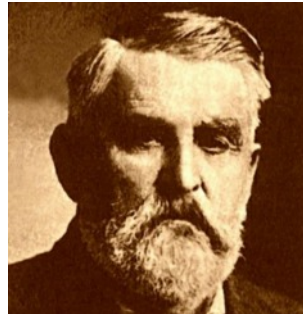
mothers had been slaughtered and skinned and whose carcasses lay covered with black flies. Because the carcasses would attract lions and bobcats, thereby putting the calves in further danger, Molly rode out on the range to find her husband, Charles, and asked him to rope the calves and bring them back to the JA.

Charles at first opposed her because elimination of the buffalo was, in part, what had made his enormous cattle business possible. Though she was never domineering, Molly often got her way because she did not give up and because she knew her husband well. The two liked nothing better than to ride out together in the (Palo Duro) canyon to observe the wildlife. Charles agreed when she told him, "Think of it as an exciting experiment."

It was an important first in wildlife conservation. The orphaned calves were the beginning of the first domestic buffalo herd and would become the signature of the Goodnight Ranch in the decades to come. Just as important, the two buffalo played a role in preserving the culture of the Plains Indian.

In 1839, Mary Ann "Molly" Dyer was born to a prominent Tennessee family. She had five younger brothers. Her parents moved to Fort Belknap in Parker County when she was fourteen. The federal government had set up a temporary Indian reservation forty miles to the west. The Indians, mostly Comanches, were "suffering from extreme hunger bordering on starvation" because of the degradation of their hunting grounds. In 1859, after an ex-Indian-agent stirred up raids and racial hatred on both sides, there was much fighting. One of Molly's brothers was killed in these battles.

After her parents died, Molly cared for her remaining brothers and eventually became a schoolteacher. Molly was on her way to a new post in Weatherford when she first met Charles Goodnight. It was 1864 and she was traveling with an entourage of soldiers because of the possibility of a Comanche



raid. Goodnight was already well known as a hardworking cattleman and a fearless Indian fighter. He had, in fact, been with the group of Texas Rangers who had "rescued" Cynthia Ann Parker from Comanches

four years before. It is ironic that years later he developed a friendship with Cynthia's son, Quanah Parker. After he and Molly met on the trail, Charles made a habit of visiting the Weatherford schoolteacher. Charles was not the only man attracted by Molly's grace, intelligence and good cheer. Goodnight spent years away from cattle-rich Texas driving herds into New Mexico, Colorado and Wyoming, where the animals were more valued. After courting her for five years, he was in the position to make a marriage proposal that she accepted. While he lacked formal education, he made up for it in drive and ability. Molly and Charles were married in Kentucky among Dyer relatives. Molly then joined Goodnight on his new ranch in Pueblo, Colorado. Now grown into young men, Molly's three youngest brothers were invited to come along to try out the ranching life.

The first things that Molly and her modest entourage saw when they entered the town of Pueblo were the bodies of two outlaws dangling from a telegraph pole. They had been caught by a posse and hanged without trial. Molly's father had been attorney general of Tennessee so this vigilante "justice" was anathema. Charles scrambled to make their new home in Colorado seem more civilized than it was and introduced her to another woman in who she found what she called "human qualities" – evidently more than could be said for some of the local men. Molly founded the town's first Southern Methodist Church so Sunday mornings might be properly spent in the worship of God. Charles's business

Continued next page.

enterprises expanded into banking, real estate, and mining. Despite the threat of Indian raids, Molly had lived in Texas as an independent, single woman. She kept asking to return to Texas because living with outlaws and lynch mobs seemed worse.

With the financial collapse of 1873, hard times visited the West. This was on top of an already difficult year of drought so Molly went to stay with relatives in California while Charles returned to Texas to plan his next move. When Charles visited Molly in 1876, he was full of plans. A Mexican guide had led him to a gorgeous natural region in the Texas Panhandle. The wide Palo Duro Canyon was an ideal place to run a cattle ranch. Charles staked his claim and found a partner in the Irish financier John George Adair. This backer asked only that the ranch be named after him. While Molly was still in California, Charles and his men started the “JA



Ranch.” When Charles did not respond immediately to her message from California telling him that if he didn’t come join her in “civilization,” she would come to him at the Palo Duro ranch, she wrote again. This time she said, “I will be in Denver a week after you get this letter. Meet me there.”

Molly, Charles, John Adair, his wife Cornelia and four others left Denver in 1877. Molly chose to drive a wagon instead of riding a horse like Cornelia. Still harboring strong fears of her nomadic neighbors, Molly once mistook a patch of beargrass for a band of Indians on the horizon. Palo Duro Canyon had once been a prime Comanche hunting ground. Because of the canyon walls, it had been used to contain a large herd of mustangs. The Comanches were defeated by federal troops in 1874 when the troops slaughtered the mustangs thus ending forever Comanche dominance there.

Two weeks after arriving safely at Palo Duro, the Adairs left. While they had made

the ranch possible, they put a strain on Molly’s natural hospitality. In Colorado, cowboys working for the Goodnights had routinely joined them at their dinner table. When a cowboy sat down at the dinner table one day on the JA, John Adair complained that he and “Lady Adair” could not sit at the table with a servant. The cowboy got up to leave, but Molly responded that anyone who was good enough to work on their ranch was good enough to sit at her table. As the cowboy returned to his seat, John Adair took Cornelia to another table.

While Charles and his men built a cabin and corrals, Molly cheerfully made do. On his first trip, Charles had brought some 1,800 cattle to the canyon. To ensure that the cattle did not leave and that the buffalo they had driven out did not reenter the canyon, several outpost men guarded the canyon’s opening. Molly loved her new home. The canyon was thick with shrubs and wildflowers compared to the sparse vegetation of the surrounding plains. The canyon was named for the palo duro or cedar tree. Along with the chinaberry and cottonwood trees, they provided blessed shade in the summertime. Since Molly’s house backed up to a canyon wall, she was protected from the relentless winds that discouraged so many plainswomen, but there were rattlesnakes and other creatures



to fear. While she was once brushed aside by a small stampede of buffalo, there were

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innumerable delights such as the pesky but sociable prairie dogs, the brilliant-red cardinal flower, fresh wild berries, the enormous blue sky overhead and the sun as it warmed the ruddy canyon walls every morning.

Though she never had children, Molly's early caring for her brothers served her well on the ranch. Maternal by habit, she was at ease with the ranch hands. She was smart, attractive and thoughtful. And she could cook. The cowboys loved her. She was even known to ride out to the men on the distant lines to deliver berry cobbler or cakes. Molly repaired britches and darned socks as she listened to their complaints or soothed their aches with home remedies when the men came to stay at the home camp. She was always ready to sit down with one of the boys for a lesson in reading and writing. To express their affection and gratitude for all her small acts of caring, the cowboys began calling her "Aunt Molly." Her popularity earned her the title, "Mother of the Panhandle: Darling of the Plains." Her husband's strict rules and her influence made for a well-behaved crew that was not disposed to drinking or card playing.

Attesting to the men's affection for her are two artifacts. The JA Ranch cowboys saved their money and presented her with a silver tea service, symbolic both of the "civilization" she brought to Palo Duro and of her enduring hospitality. The second was a gift from her husband of a tall clock inscribed in her honor with these words: "For many months in 1877-78, she saw few men and no women, her nearest neighbor being seventy-five miles distant, and the nearest settlement two hundred miles. She met isolation and hardships with a cheerful heart and danger with undaunted courage. With unfailing optimism, she took life's varied gifts and made her home a house of joy."

Once a cowboy presented her with something just as thoughtful - a sack containing three live chickens. Assuming

that they were for eating, she made reference to the next day's dinner. Quickly the cowboy corrected her. The chickens were for her to keep as pets. Later she described the odd satisfaction of their companionship, "No one can ever know what a pleasure those chickens were to me, and how much company they were. They would come when I called them and they would follow me wherever I went, and I could talk to them."

Many things helped her survive the fearful loneliness including spending time chatting with the chickens and observing prairie chickens and curlews and taking mental note of the succession of plants and grasses. She also studied plants used in teas, tonics, salves, and compresses, learning when they flowered and scattered their seed and which seeds would grow where and why. The threat of Indian raids haunted her imagination in the early years, but nature supplied other dangers so her attentiveness to her surroundings was a matter of survival as well as enrichment. Because Charles shared Molly's love of the natural world, they often rode together on the open range taking interest in everything from turtles to cactus and frost-resistant peaches. On these long excursions, the traditional sidesaddle was uncomfortable so Charles fashioned a sidesaddle with an extra horn where Molly could brace her knee.

Less than a year after founding of the JA Ranch, Quanah Parker and his band began to raid the Goodnight cattle herd. Charles had never hunted buffalo for sport. He had only driven them out of the canyon so he

could raise his cattle there. Although Molly knew both Quanah Parker and Charles



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Goodnight were reasonable men, not the kind that incited so much hatred in the past, she was nevertheless frantic when she learned that Charles had gone to speak with the Comanche chief. She barricaded the doors to her cabin with furniture. Charles confronted Quanah with genuine compassion as well as political savvy in a peace talk. He told Quanah that the Comanches' quarrel was with the State of Texas, not with him since he was from Colorado. This "little white lie" made peace possible. To satisfy their hunger, if the Comanche were unable to find buffalo, Quanah's people were welcome to as many as two a day of Goodnight beef.

Eventually Molly got used to the idea of Indians near the canyon. She thought of them occasionally as she fed the buffalo calves in their pens. Years later, after the



buffalo herd had grown to a considerable number and the Comanche had settled in Indian Territory, Charles invited Quanah and friends to return to the canyon for an old-fashioned buffalo hunt, which was an opportunity that helped the Comanche preserve the knowledge of their traditions.

In 1885, at the height of productivity, the main ranch in Palo Duro Canyon had nearly fifty houses, hundreds of miles of roads, twenty or thirty large water tanks, just as many corrals and two thousand bulls. It produced its own hay and had a dairy and poultry house stocked with a variety of breeds, as well as a tin house and a

blacksmith's shop. The main house, which was a two-story wooden structure, had water fed through iron pipes. The mess house where young men did the cooking was a "large and very substantial" structure.

Scores of farmers and ranchers came to the region because of improved technology. The invention of barbed wire meant that would-be ranchers did not need to find a natural barrier, such as a canyon, to contain their herds. Windmills allowed water to be pumped from underground, which enabled subsistence farmers as well as ranchers to settle in the Panhandle. During the depression of the mid-1880s, Molly and Charles were forced to leave the canyon ranch to the Adairs and move to a smaller ranch near the town of Goodnight on the prairie. The town, named after Charles, by now a famous rancher, had started as a station on the Fort Worth and Denver railroad line.

Approaching her fiftieth birthday, Molly was ready to return to town life. In Goodnight, she opened her house wide to people of all ages, from beggars to celebrities, providing a center of cultural and social life, much to her husband's chagrin. She started a project to encourage conservation of native plants and to educate Texans about the buffalo. She built a church, as she had done in Colorado, but Charles never joined. In 1898 Molly realized her dream of founding a college. Goodnight College was situated just over the hill from the Goodnight's new ranch and the region's youth came to take junior-college courses. Tuition could be paid for with beef or by working in the garden and dairy that provided the school's food. Mary Ann Dyer Goodnight became "Aunt Molly" to an entirely new group of young men and women, nurturing them as she had the cowboys. Goodnight College enrollment quickly declined in 1910 when a larger "normal" college was opened several miles away.

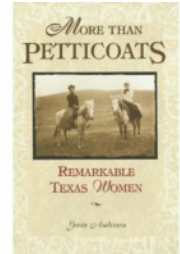
The Goodnights were forced to cut back
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on cattle with the reduction in their landholdings, but they always kept the buffalo, increasing the herd to 250 head. The herd gained international attention when Charles began breeding “cattalo,” a hardy cross between the plains and pasture animals. Buffalo became more valuable alive than dead by the end of the century. Goodnight buffalos were sent to the New York Zoo, to Yellowstone National Park and even to Europe. Buffalo hides, mounted heads and buffalo meat became novelty items that only the wealthy could afford. Molly’s herd was also a major attraction for passersby and visitors to their large home.

At the end of her life, Molly’s house was a combined museum and bed-and-breakfast.

Indian artifacts that had been found or given as gifts, or purchased on trips to reservations, were displayed along side objects from the ranching heydays. In a fitting finale to an eventful life, she gave many tours herself. She had participated in and witnessed much of the drama of early Texas history. Molly Ann Dyer Goodnight died in 1926.

For more information about women in Texas history, Lorelei recommends “More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Texas Women” by Greta Anderson.



Long Juan Here (continued) shooters on three posses shot six stages, followed by an early, but great, Thanksgiving dinner with deep-fried turkey and all the fixin’s. Thanks, **Lefty Leo, Anne, Artiman** and **Kitchen Kate**.



Congratulations to **Kickshot**, our overall winner, and to all category winners and clean shooters. See www.pccss.org for complete scores, a match report and photos from the shoot.

Thanks to all who showed up early to register for the match. It made it easier to get started on time. We will continue to close registration about 8:30 to work on posse assignments. We will open

registration again just before the safety meeting at 8:45 to accommodate late arrivals. Note that we may not be able to honor posse requests for late arrivals.

December Match. Our December monthly match will be something special. We will shoot a six-stage main match starting at the usual time, hammers down at 9:00 a.m. After lunch on our own, there will be a three-stage Wild Bunch match, start time TBA. We will conclude the festivities for the day with our annual Christmas party, including a great evening meal and a costume contest. Make plans to attend. Fees for the main match will be \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. The Wild Bunch match is free. Dinner will be \$15 per person. Guests are welcome. Be sure to RSVP by emailing **Delta Raider** or using the CONTACT page on the PCSS website.

Annual Meeting and Election of Officers. We will hold our annual meeting at the December shoot and will elect our president, vice president and treasurer. The first two will serve a one-year term. The treasurer will serve a two-year term. As secretary, I will be serving the second year of a two-year term. **Dragon Hill Dave, Joe Darter** and **True Blue Cachoo** have all

agreed to run for another term. If anyone wants to run for president, VP or treasurer, please let me know by November 20th. Anyone wanting to review the club by-laws, can download them from the DOWNLOAD page on the PCSS website.

2013 Dues. Annual dues for 2013 will be due January 1st and can be paid beginning in December. The dues structure will be changing. Annual dues for individuals will be \$36. Families will be \$60. Only individuals residing in the same household are eligible for family memberships. Dues will be prorated monthly. For example, an individual joining in February would pay \$33 and \$18 if joining in July (\$3 per month for an

individual; \$5 per month for a family). A life membership (available for individuals only) will cost \$225 beginning in 2013. For the rest of 2012, the cost will continue to be \$200. When you pay dues for 2013, you will need to complete a new membership/waiver form. All life members will also need to complete a new form for 2013. The new form will be available for download on the website no later than the end of November. If you plan to pay your dues at the December match, you can save time by downloading and filling out the form in advance. If you have questions, shoot me an email or send a message using the CONTACT page on the PCSS website.



Overall winner, Kickshot, and the lovely, Six Goin' South

Find Delta Raider

Only six people found **Delta Raider** in the October Gazette: **Boon Doggle, Skinny Steve, Six Goin' South, Gold Dog, Cowboy Small and Lincoln Drifter.**



Kitchen Kate says last month was the most fun she's had in years. **Delta Raider** wasn't so sure. For the rest of you, try again this month. He is in this issue more than once. Find any of them and you will be mentioned in the dispatches.



Western Movie Wit & Wisdom: Work

“You got to break eggs to make a cake.”

Sheriff Masters played by Ted Adams in Billy the Kid Trapped (1942)

“No one ever drowned in sweat or was buried in blisters.”

Dale Weems played by Ted Danson in Cowboy (1983)

“What the job is ain't important. It's how you do it.”

Lyedecker played by Jim Brown in 100 Rifles (1969)





Sterling Sage



**Skinny Steve's daughters,
Andrea & Haely**

RO's Corner: What makes a good Posse Marshal?

There was a good discussion recently on the SASS Wire about what makes a good posse marshal. I have tried to summarize a listing of the various comments. Whether you are a posse marshal, timer operator, RO, shooter or whatever, some good thoughts were shared.

- Maybe the posse marshal should not be the timer operator. In any event, no one should try to or be required to run the timer all the time. It is a tiring and taxing job.
- Tone and attitude matter.
- Safety first and foremost, but remember everyone is there to have fun.
- Be cheerful, smile, help everyone have fun and have fun yourself.
- Safely assist the shooter; coach when appropriate; don't coach when not appropriate and not wanted.
- A good working posse makes the job easier: people need to help with posse duties – spotters, brass pickers, score keepers, set targets, loading and unloading table, etc. Posse marshal needs to sure helpers get relieved so they can shoot. Posse marshal also needs relief.
- Know the rules.
- Confirm names and categories on the first stage.
- Read stage instructions clearly and verbatim.
- Be sure the spotters are ready before the buzzer.
- Keep things moving.
- Be sure the spotters know how to count misses. If they only THINK it's a miss, it's a hit.
- Be willing and able to make the right call, without discrimination.
- Be sure the scores are reported accurately.
- Be patient.
- Be good herder of cats.

Note that part of a posse marshal, timer operator being able to do a good job requires that everyone on the posse help with posse duties. Be sure to do your fair share and more.



Artie Fly shooting the holy black!

Thanks to Skinny Steve for the sepia shots

Caos Drifter



Elroy Rogers





Delta Raider



Dutch Van Horn

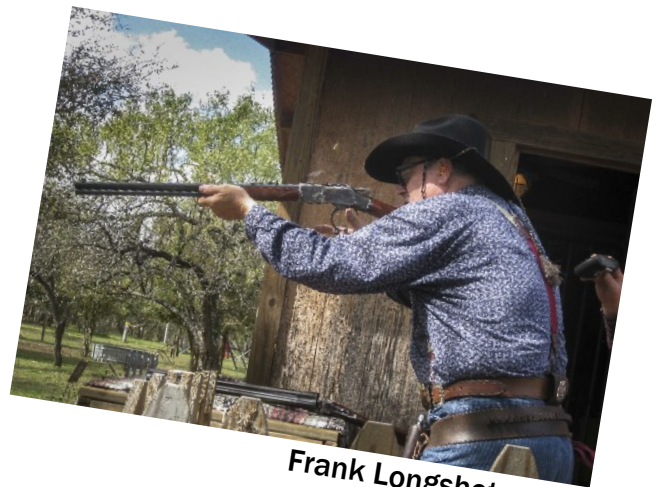
*For more photos
from the
November match,
go to
www.pccss.org*



Artie Fly, Kickshot & Bunkhouse Bob



Chapel at Agarita Ranch



Frank Longshot



Dream Chaser



T.C. & Jake Paladin



Little Bit & Delta Raider



**Deputy Bloodhound Shooting
Pine Tree Timing**



Chisos



Gold Dog



Will Johnson's faithful follower, Flo



Jake Jones



Lightning McQueen & Little Bullseye



SkinDawg showing his form



K Ash Maverick



Scooter



Bad Little Mama & DUKE



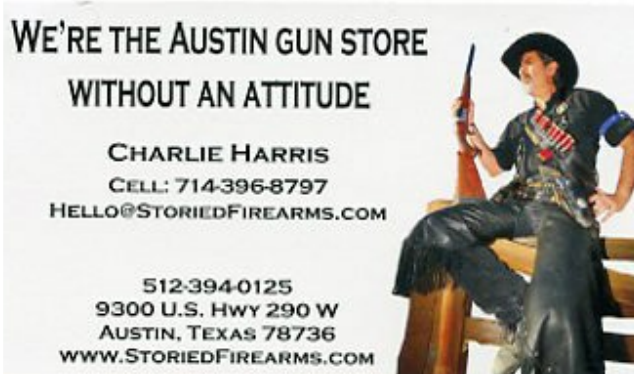
Sexie Sadie



Mary-Ann



Gunfighter Howdy Nabor



PCSS Shooters do well at Comin' at Cha!

- Bear Gunz - 4th Wrangler, 7th WB
- Big Iron Patnode - 5th B-Western, 21st WB & Clean Match
- Buckeye Slim - 21st Cowboy
- Dragon Hill Dave- 3rd Class Cowboy, 21st WB & Clean Match
- Handlebar Bob - 2nd Senior Duelist & Clean Match
- Joe Darter - 10th Wrangler, 3rd WB
- Kit Carson - 11th 49'r
- Nichols Creek - 13th Duelist
- Lazarus Longshot - 13th Frontier Cartridge Duelist & Clean Match
- Lorelei Longshot - 6th Ladies Frontier Cartridge
- Phantom - 3rd 49'r, 22nd Overall (best of the PCSS shooters)

Congratulations to all!



Lightning McQueen



Troup Farr with The Adobe Kid Timing