



Remember Alamo survivor Susanna Dickinson through songs and stories

By: *Daniel Clifton* // January 04, 2016

BURNET — All Fletcher Clark thought he was going to do was write a "little ditty" about one of the only survivors of the Alamo, perform it once at the Susanna Dickinson Museum in Austin and be done with it.

Funny how life and history can change your plans.

The song became an enthralling ballad, and Clark and his friend Donaly E. Brice are booked at the Alamo on March 1 to perform their program, "Songs of Susanna Dickinson" — but not before they stop at the Herman Brown Free Library on Jan. 9.

"It's been quite interesting — and fun," Clark said.

For those who don't remember Susanna Dickinson from their school history lessons, she was married to Capt. Almaron Dickson, one of the soldiers defending the Alamo in 1836. Susanna and their infant daughter, Angelina, were among the people who lived in the old Spanish mission during the

13-day siege. When the guns and cannons fell silent, only a few people remained alive, including Susanna and her daughter. Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna let her leave and take a warning to Gen. Sam Houston, who was camped with his Texian army in the Gonzales area.

The warning didn't work; the Texians later routed Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto.

Susanna Dickinson's life, however, was more of a footnote in the pages of history except for those such as Donaly Brice, who won't let it fade from memory.



Fletcher Clark (left) along with Donaly E. Brice will present 'Songs of Susanna Dickinson,' a musical program about Alamo survivor Susanna Dickinson (right) on Jan. 9 at the Herman Brown Free Library in Burnet.

When Brice approached Clark about doing something for the Susanna Dickinson Museum in Austin a year or so ago, the Bastrop musician wasn't really expecting much. But he also knew his friend, a renowned Texas historian and author, enjoyed finding the stories and histories that most people overlook.

"I thought it was going to be this little ditty, but as he was feeding me all this information about Susanna, I would just keep going," Clark said. "I ended up with this rather long ballad."

The ballad, "There Must Be a Good Man in Texas," takes a look at Susanna's life after the death of her first husband and marrying her fifth one some years later. It was in the middle of those events that Clark found a big part of her life's story.

"What everybody forgets is there were three husbands in between, and she led a very difficult life," Clark said. "It wasn't easy being a woman in Texas during that time. She had to do some things that some people would probably look down on her for."

Clark sees Susanna's story as one of redemption.

"She led a very courageous life," he said.

During the program, Clark starts off with "Ballad of the Alamo" popularized by Marty Robbins. Then, he and Brice tell of Dickinson's life through both narrative and songs.

"We really believe it's history coming alive in the way we do it," Clark said.

Since performing the living history piece for the Susanna Dickinson Museum, different organizations have requested the program. The Jan. 9 stop at the Herman Brown Free Library comes at the invitation of the Jane Wells Woods Chapter (Burnet County) of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.

"We're honored to be able to bring Susanna's story to people," Clark said. "So much of history is from the top down rather than seeing it as the culmination of all the lives of the people. By beginning to look at history from the individual stories, it really changes how we view history, how we relate to it."

Admission is free. The event starts at 9:30 a.m. with a social followed by the program at 10 a.m. The library is located at 100 East Washington St. in Burnet.

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