

# Susanna Dickinson comes to life in Gonzales

Texas heroine Susanna Dickinson, Messenger of the Alamo, is brought to life in Songs of Susanna, an historical program of song, verse and lecture by songwriter Fletcher Clark and author/historian Donaly Brice. Clark's epic ballad, "There Must Be a Good Man in Texas," provides a panoramic tale of Susanna - in itself a microcosm of the emergence of Texas. Sponsored by the Gonzales County Historical Commission, the performance will be 8 p.m. on Saturday, May 9, 2015 at the Gonzales Crystal Theatre, immediately off the courthouse square of the "Lexington

of Texas." The public is invited, and donations are suggested/accepted.

Songs of Susanna follows Susanna (nee Wilkerson) in her travels from Tennessee to Gonzales, Texas, with her husband Almeron Dickinson, who would become a fallen hero at the Alamo. As Messenger of the Alamo, she carried Santa Anna's demand for capitulation to General Sam Houston, who then prepared his Texian army to join in the "Run-away Scrape." After victory at San Jacinto, she found herself widowed and penniless with her infant daughter Angelina, "Babe of the Alamo." Unskilled and illiterate, she would marry three more men in Houston, seeking in vain that husband who would keep her and her daughter happy and secure. Moving to Lockhart, she would marry her fifth husband Joseph Hannig, a young German immigrant half her age. Moving to Austin, ultimately Susanna Wilkerson Dickinson Williams Herring Bellows Hannig would become prosperous and respected.

"Donaly and I were asked to prepare a program for the Friends of the Susanna Dickinson Museum in Austin," said Clark. "For me, what began as a simple folk song about an historical figure turned into four-chapter epic ballad of verse and song spanning the challenges she faced - challenges universal to nineteenth-century



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women of Texas." Clark's writing was guided by Brice's research and his access to source materials as Senior Archivist for the Texas State Library.

"I asked Donaly and Fletcher to present their program at our 2014 Annual Meeting celebrating Susanna's 200th Birthday, and couldn't have been more pleased with the results," said Terri Schexnayder, Former President of Friends of the O. Henry & Susanna Dickinson Museums. "The combination of Donaly's historic genius and Fletcher's musical magic brought Susanna Dickinson to life that evening."

Fletcher Clark is a veteran musician and songwriter from the earliest days of the emerging music scene in Austin and its famed concert hall Armadillo World

tack of the Texas Republic. He has also written a number of historical articles that have been published in the The Plum Creek Almanac and The East Texas Historical Journal. Donaly is a member (and recently named Fellow) of the East Texas Historical Association, the West Texas Historical Association, the Southern Historical Association and the Texas State Historical Association, who elected him as a Fellow of that organization in 2010. He has presented papers and given lectures to many historical and genealogical groups throughout the State of Texas.

our understanding of our Texas heritage. Clark and Brice working together is indeed a true delight."

Fletcher was introduced to Glenda Gordon, Chairperson of the Gonzales County Historical Commission, by their mutual friend (and GCHC Board Member)

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Headquarters. Moving to Lockhart seven years ago, he began sharing music with Donaly Brice at their Emmanuel Episcopal Church (the oldest west of the Mississippi). Fletcher produces and hosts the monthly series Evenings with the Songwriter at Lockhart's historic Dr. Eugene Clark Library (the oldest in Texas) exploring the art and craft of guest professional songwriters. The acclaimed series is in its fifth season.

Now retired from the Texas State Library, Donaly Brice has written or co-written four books on Texas history, including The Great Comanche Raid: Boldest Indian At-

Following the initial presentation, Clark and Brice brought their program to various Daughters of the Republic of Texas chapters. Nancy Evridge of the Heart of Texas Chapter said, "What an entertaining way to tell the story of Susanna Dickinson! Our luncheon was a huge success thanks to your memorable program!" They also presented the program in Luling for the Caldwell County Historical and Genealogical Society, prompting author/historian Chuck Parsons to remark, "Once experienced, this program of song and history will not be forgotten. It gives new life to

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Howie Richey. "I stumbled into this creative cauldron while working with creative director Barbara Crozier and her Shakespeare Ninjas youth troupe at the Gonzales

Crystal Theatre," said Clark. "We collaborated on a March 1 presentation to celebrate Texas Independence, and I fell in love with the theater and its potential for the intimate

staging of musical and historically-based theatrical events. I believe this upcoming presentation will be the first of many collaborations. I look forward to making many new friends

and fans in Gonzales."

From that first collaboration, he wrote and sang his song Immortal 32 at a February GCHC commemoration event for the fallen heroes at the Gonzales

Memorial Museum. Earlier in the day on the upcoming May 9, there will be a dedication of an Official Texas Historical Marker from the Texas History Commission hon-

oring local figure William B. Fleming at the site of his fabled horse farm, now the scenic Rancho Richey Refuge.