



Susanna Dickinson earned her prominence in Texas History as *Messenger of the Alamo*. She and her daughter Angelina, *Babe of the Alamo*, were the Anglo survivors dispatched by Santa Anna to convey his message to General Sam Houston that defeat was inevitable. Houston joined the *Runaway Scrape*, and his military retreat would lead to victory and independence at San Jacinto. Geographically, Susanna's life path traversed from Tennessee to Gonzales to San Antonio to Houston to Lockhart to Austin.

Susanna emigrated to Texas from Tennessee with her young husband **Almeron Dickinson**, among the earliest settlers in the **Green DeWitt Colony**. They took up residence in the new town of **Gonzales**, though their league of land deeded by the *empresário* was located in what is now Caldwell County, on the San Marcos River somewhat south of *El Camino de Real* connecting Nacogdoches with San Antonio. This league was in addition to several lots the couple acquired for living and working in Gonzales.

Following the fall of the Alamo in 1836, the young widow sought in vain to build a new life for herself and her daughter in the emerging town of **Houston**, then a sewer of vice and degradation, offering her cooking and her companionship as the only assets of an illiterate and otherwise unskilled woman. Following an unfortunate relationship with a cruel exploiter (and her early tenure in the establishment of **Pamelia Mann**), she was married to three men there. She divorced the first as a drunken brute who beat her to barrenness. The second died of alcoholism and depression as his fortunes in Houston were undermined by the Capitol having been relocated to Austin. She fled the third in 1855 to relocate to **Lockhart** and begin anew. Once there, she acquired new properties in 1856 and opened a boarding house, the only true trade she knew.

A Lockhart blacksmith, **Frank Hannig**, was particularly partial to Susanna's cooking. (She eventually sold some of her properties to Frank.) Her fourth husband's action in Harris County for divorce by reason of her alleged illicit conduct went uncontested by Susanna, and in June of 1857, she was at least - and at last - free of him. Frank introduced her to his younger brother **Joseph Hannig**, a cabinet maker, and they were wed in December. Though older, the combination of her alluring maturity and financial stability must have been attractive to the young German immigrant. Not long after the marriage, two of Susanna's abandoned grandchildren came to live with them, and they made plans to divest themselves of their Lockhart properties and relocate to **Austin**.

Once there, Joseph became very successful in the furniture business to which Susanna had staked him, and he ultimately became a civic pillar of the community. Susanna became a focus of Austin society, given her husband's prosperity and her eternal place in Texas History. She died in 1883 at age 68, and is buried in **Oakwood Cemetery** in Austin. Although Joseph Hannig remarried and moved to San Antonio, when he died in 1890 it was his wish that he be buried beside Susanna.

In 1949, due to efforts initiated by E. A. Masur of Lockhart, a nephew of Hannig, the State of Texas unveiled a slab of white marble covering their Oakwood grave. In 1976, a granite marker commemorating Susanna's life was dedicated in the Texas State Cemetery. In 2003, the fine 1869 home of Joseph and Susanna Dickinson Hannig was saved and deeded to the City of Austin. Originally located on Pine Street in Austin, it was moved to its current location at 411 E. Fifth, restored to be situated next to and companion to the O. Henry Museum. Opened as The Joseph and Susanna Dickinson Hannig Museum on Texas Independence Day, March 2, 2010, it is operated by the City of Austin, and supported by the Friends of the Brush Square Museums.