

MISSED IDENTITY: COLLECTIVE MEMORY, ADINA DE ZAVALA
AND THE TEJANA HEROINE WHO WASN'T

by

SUZANNE SEIFERT COTTRAUX

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF HISTORY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2013

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Acknowledgements

Writing this Master's thesis has represented one of the most challenging and rewarding projects I have ever undertaken, and I would not have been able to accomplish it without the unwavering guidance, support, and encouragement of my committee chairman, Dr. Stephanie Cole. As my research progressed and my perspectives about Adina De Zavala continued to evolve, Dr. Cole provided astute insights, profound questions, and an enthusiasm that quickly equaled my own about the topic. Once I commenced writing, she served as an accessible and supportive sounding board—often “talking me off the ledge”—and ensured that I maintained both my focus and my point of view. Her sense of humor helped quite a bit, too.

In addition to Dr. Cole, I must express my deepest appreciation for my committee members, Dr. Joyce Goldberg, Dr. Sam Haynes, and Dr. Stephen Maizlish. Drs. Goldberg and Maizlish, familiar with my work in the graduate program, held my efforts to extremely high standards and helped ensure that my final thesis would truly represent the best of my abilities. Dr. Haynes' in-depth knowledge of Texas history also proved invaluable in this process and will be critical in my future work. Dr. Gregg Cantrell at Texas Christian University provided many important insights and points of guidance, for which I am very grateful. Though he was unable to serve on my committee, I also must thank Dr. Douglas Richmond, for whom I wrote my first paper about Adina De Zavala. His enthusiastic interest in this relatively unknown woman, whom I discovered quite by accident, indicated to me that hers was a story that must be told correctly. Additionally, I offer sincere thanks to Dr. Don Frazier, a lifelong friend and professor of history at McMurry University, for his advice and suggestions at critical moments.

The archive librarians at the University of Texas at Arlington's Special Collections, the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, and the Sisters of Charity at Incarnate Word in San Antonio also warrant my gratitude. In particular, Angel Lane,

the Director of Records and Archive Management at the Sisters of Charity, deserves my special appreciation for helping me uncover difficult-to-find information.

Having grown up in San Antonio in the 1970s, when annual field trips to the Alamo and other missions represented an important component in elementary-school education there, I never heard of Adina De Zavala until my first research project about her in 2007. Since then, she has haunted me because I so believed her story must be told. In working to do just that, my most passionate cheerleader and reader has been my mother, retired judge Charlene DeBolt Seifert. Thank you for listening to every idea, question, and conclusion I needed to share, for commiserating when I felt discouraged, and for telling me when I simply needed to pull myself together. You will never know how profoundly grateful I am. I am equally thankful for the patience and support from my husband, John Cottraux, my daughter, Gabrielle Cottraux, my father, William Seifert, my brother and sister-in-law, Leo Reid and Jill Trescott, and my friends and my colleagues who have shared this journey with me, through all the ups and the downs.

Finally, I would like to thank the late Dr. Hal Rothman, for whom I had the privilege of serving as a research assistant during my undergraduate education at the University of Texas at Austin. He always urged me to reach higher in my academic pursuits. While he passed away before I began my Master's program, I believe he's giving me a fist-bump from the great beyond.

April 19, 2013

MISSED IDENTITY: ADINA DE ZAVALA, HISTORICAL MEMORY,
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Suzanne Seifert Cottraux

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2013

Supervising Professor: Dr. Stephanie Cole

As greater attention is paid to Hispanic and Tejano contributions to Southwest history, many journalists, Tejano activists, and even historians have commandeered Adina De Zavala's life and legacy as an example of Tejano leadership and accomplishment. The grand-daughter of Texas's first interim vice president, Lorenzo de Zavala, Adina dedicated her ninety-three-year life to ensuring Texas's early history would not be forgotten amidst the state's explosive commercial growth. A reverent Catholic, she devoted her efforts to the preservation of the Spanish missions and corresponding histories in and around San Antonio that pre-dated Texas independence from Mexico, with a special concentration on the Alamo.

Given constraints of race, class, and gender in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, her options as an unmarried schoolteacher from a middle-class family with a Mexican surname were limited in racially divided San Antonio. Once she learned about her grand-father's legacy, she recognized in this rich heritage the opportunity to forge a new identity for herself as a preservationist of history, allowing her to be of service and to establish her own legacy. While scholars are correct in recognizing her contributions as a historian, teacher, and preservationist, those who label and elevate Adina as a Tejana activist have hijacked the role ethnicity played in her motivation. Instead, the convergence of her sense of isolation, economic uncertainty, and the

emerging interest in Texas's early history provided her the ticket to transcend social spheres in which she could not have belonged and forge a sphere in which she could.

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INTRODUCTION

Societies in fact reconstruct their pasts rather than faithfully record them, and that they do so with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind – manipulating the past in order to mold the present.¹

In the March 2002 issue of the *Tejano Association for Historical Preservation – De Zavala Chapter* newsletter, Rolando Romo wrote a brief article announcing the creation of a new preservation award. “T.A.H.P. recognizes the important role that Ms. Zavala undertook as an early Hispanic preservationist and has named its preservation award after, ‘The Adina de Zavala Preservation Award.’”²

In *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History*, historian Teresa Paloma Acosta celebrated Adina De Zavala as “one of the first Tejanas to write Tejano history” because “it was clear to De Zavala that historians were already ignoring and erasing the Spanish record.”³ In a separate chapter about Tejanas and the Texas education system, she included Adina De Zavala as an example of Tejanas who, along with women named Gonzales, Garcia, Ximenes, Balencia and Mata, “pioneered the field.”⁴ Acosta also described Adina De Zavala as a “Tejana Community Leader”⁵ and further, as one of the “writers of Mexico de Afuera,” translated as “Mexico Abroad.”⁶

On November 27, 2007, *San Antonio Express-News* reporter Elaine Ayala posted a special invitation on the MySA.com homepage. “All Texas schoolchildren should know her name and her contributions to the preservation of Texas history. For three years, TexasTejano.com has been doing its part to make that happen,” she wrote about Adina De Zavala, whose one-hundred and forty-sixth birthday would be celebrated the following day in an event at the Alamo sponsored by TexasTejano.com. Citing Rudi Rodriguez’s comment in the press release issued by TexasTejano.com, “Adina was a true heroine to the San Antonio community. Her efforts helped

preserve our Tejano and Texas heritage. She descended from one of the legendary Tejano families and was a true pioneer.”⁷

As greater attention is paid to Hispanic and Tejano contributions to Southwest history, many journalists, Tejano activists, and even historians have commandeered Adina De Zavala’s life and legacy as an example of Tejano leadership and accomplishment. The grand-daughter of Texas’s first interim vice president, Lorenzo de Zavala, Adina dedicated her ninety-three-year life to ensuring Texas’s early history would not be forgotten amidst the state’s explosive commercial growth. A reverent Catholic, she devoted her efforts to the preservation of the Spanish missions and corresponding histories in and around San Antonio that pre-dated Texas independence from Mexico, with a special concentration on the Alamo. She credited herself for having spearheaded preservation of the Spanish Governor’s Palace. She is remembered for establishing the Texas Historical and Landmarks Association, an organization dedicated to raising funds for the placement of markers throughout the state to commemorate battle sites and graves of early Texans who fought for independence. Adina proved a prolific writer with a playlet about the Six Flags Over Texas, two self-published manuscripts and numerous newspaper articles about Texas’s missions, myths, legends and heroes to her credit.

That she accomplished much is indisputable, and for that reason she has been lauded by historians and community leaders alike as an Hispanic role model and champion of Tejanos’ contributions to the Republic of Texas. Her desire to transcend these constraints and create a sphere in which she could be socially relevant and productive drove her impassioned work. Still, she did not grow up learning about her grandfather’s important contributions to the Republic of Texas and, instead, had a relatively modest upbringing. She was educated briefly at Ursuline Academy in Galveston, and later attended the Sam Houston Normal School in preparation to become a teacher. It was not until her late teenage years, when she began writing letters of inquiry

to her uncle, Lorenzo Jr., in Merida, Yucatan about her grandfather's service to Texas, that she recognized a legacy in danger of becoming forgotten. Further, she recognized in this rich heritage the opportunity to forge a path for herself as a preservationist of history, allowing her to be of service and to establish her own legacy. Given constraints of race, class, and gender in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, her options as an unmarried schoolteacher from a middle-class family with a Mexican surname were limited in racially divided San Antonio.

While scholars are correct in recognizing her contributions as a historian, teacher, and preservationist, those who label and elevate Adina as a *Tejana* activist have hijacked the role ethnicity played in her motivation, and are responding to contemporary trends that do not correspond with the historical evidence. The recent emphasis on historical memory and, in particular, the increasing focus on redefining Tejano and Hispanic history to underscore the Anglo/Tejano racial binary, have perpetuated false assumptions about Adina and her work. Ultimately, she was not working on behalf of Tejanos; she was not working to validate Tejanos; she was not seeking to lead Tejanos, or even represent them. She was working as a Texan, an American, and to be effective in an environment where her surname was a liability, her economic status was unremarkable, and her social opportunities were relatively limited.

Adina's only connection to Tejano culture was her surname, which she spent a lifetime working to memorialize as the grand-daughter of a Texas founder and which gave her a degree of credibility as she pursued her historic preservation interests. Yet, her Mexican surname combined with the focus of her work—the Spanish missions and Spanish Governor's Palace—only could have ensured her label as *Tejana* at a time when Anglo-Tejano relations were strained at best. For Adina, history represented an opportunity for transcendence; by glorifying the sacrifices and bravery of Texas's heroes, she was "serving the children and people of Texas" by giving them values to which they should aspire.⁸ History also provided her an opportunity for transcendence.

While her Anglo contemporaries maneuvered with ease in a rapidly commercializing San Antonio where socioeconomic status and material opportunity were prized, Adina used her study of history to establish a new community in which she could lead.

Adina learned, however, that while history may provide an anchor, it also can prove an albatross. By celebrating the important work of her Mexican grandfather, for example, as well as focusing on the preservation of Spanish missions and legends, she would forever be connected to a Mexican heritage that would be perceived as “less than” by an Anglo-dominated society. While she strove to elevate the importance of Texas’s heritage in her writing and preservation work, she would be defeated at several important intervals by her Anglo peers. Despite her focus on Spanish missions, she did not focus on the Tejanos as a group, as evidenced most pointedly in the book she published in 1917, *History and Legends of the Alamo and Other Missions In and Around San Antonio*. In her chapter about the Alamo, she reprinted a list of “Heroes Killed in the Alamo” from the 1860 *Texas Almanac* and noted that while “this list differs from many that are published...is believed to be accurate, having been compiled from official and other authentic sources.”⁹ None of the heroes listed was Hispanic, though more than a dozen Tejanos have been documented as having fought and died there. That she did not delineate the contributions of Tejanos from other Texians who fought for independence and, in fact, excluded them altogether suggests she was not interested in serving as a racial activist and instead, ascribed to the prevailing Anglo-focused story of Texas’s history. At a minimum, it illustrates her recognition that to highlight Mexicans/Tejanos would mean positioning herself as a Tejano activist, which would have equated to social suicide in a racially and economically stratified San Antonio. Instead, her position would be one of moral aspiration: to depict the qualities of bravery and sacrifice she believed would uplift future generations if they would only value the lessons from Texas’s past. To do so would require that she overcome not just racial stereotypes, but gender stereotypes as well.



Figure 0:1 Adina De Zavala in her early twenties

Throughout her career, Adina experienced numerous disappointments and defeats. She intended her work, however, to serve as an example of how people should be of service, even as she did not call herself an example either for women or for Tejanos. Adina De Zavala's calculated efforts to create a life of relevance and acceptance when her social options were limited is the focus of this thesis. Consideration must be given to the complex social dynamics between Anglos and Hispanics in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Texas, as well as her unique family heritage, to understand that while one could easily ascribe her motivations to race, she actually was looking to eclipse that association even as it would hold her in its grasp. Exploring the cultural and family dynamics against which she would evaluate her options and work to achieve relevance in a highly stratified society provides a second important element to her story. Finally, in her career as a preservationist during which she proved both tenacious and often arrogant, her efforts largely were misunderstood by her peers, resulting in a degree of alienation and misinterpretation she believed she could resolve, through her original papers, even after death. Through her entire story as depicted through her preservation work, the people with whom she interacted, and the manner in which she carefully embellished her family's history to enhance her own credibility and subsequent legacy, it is clear that Adina did not identify herself as Tejano, and would have rejected classification as a Tejana heroine or activist that so many historians, writers, and political activists have ascribed to her.

Chapter 1

Ingredients for an Identity: Race, Heritage, and the Social Context that Shaped Adina

While Adina De Zavala was born into a family whose surname was inextricably tied to the founding of the Republic of Texas, she did not find that this legacy guaranteed future social acceptance because of the pervasive and deeply rooted prejudice many Anglos felt toward Tejanos and Mexicans. For at least the next century after Texas had become first an independent republic and subsequently a state, a growing “white power” structure created an environment in which Tejanos suffered racial discrimination. Adina and her family could not have been immune to this prejudice, despite their light complexions and heritage that was more Anglo than Mexican, because of their surname which, with each passing generation, became more synonymous with “Mexican” than with “Texan.” The fact that their greatest “calling card” was the legacy of Lorenzo de Zavala must have distinguished them as non-Anglo, the reason why some family members later responded by emphasizing Lorenzo’s alleged Spanish ancestry.

When Adina first began actively seeking more information about Lorenzo de Zavala and Lorenzo de Zavala Jr., she already was in her twenties, and had lived long enough in Texas to know that regardless of her family’s situation, racial prejudice would predispose Anglos to denigrate, subordinate, and persecute Tejanos and others of Hispanic origin. This cultural context is critical to understanding the choices Adina made, the obstacles she had to overcome, and the legacy she sought to create for herself and her family. Although she would not have known the state’s history as contemporary historians Arnold De Leon, Andres Tijerina, David Weber, Neil Foley and others revealed it to be, she certainly knew its outlines from the struggles her own family faced in attempting to preserve their legacy.

One of the principal issues, as these scholars have found, was religion. Many Protestant Americans hated and feared Catholicism. For them, the mass was blasphemous, the Pope was anti-Christ and Spain, as the most Catholic of nations, was thus suspect.¹⁰ The Spanish government was maligned and condemned by Anglos for “misgovernment” of their territories.¹¹ Spaniards were “unusually cruel, avaricious, treacherous, fanatical, superstitious, cowardly, corrupt, decadent, indolent, and authoritarian.”¹² Early immigrants to *Couhila y Tejas* believed their job was to “redeem it from the wilderness,” as Stephen F. Austin explained, and “settle it with an intelligent and honorable and enterprising [sic] people.”¹³ Anglos would ascribe to Tejanos, or Mexican residents of Texas¹⁴, the same “savage” moniker imposed on blacks and Indians, and treat them as inferior.¹⁵

Apart from this cultural tension, a historical conflict over territory shaped Tejanos’ experiences. Beginning in 1821, to be Tejano meant enduring the ongoing repercussions of a Devil’s Bargain initiated by the newly independent Mexico with Anglo settlers from U.S. states to populate, and thereby protect, *Couhuila y Tejas* from continued Indian invasion while capitalizing on the natural resources to fortify Mexico’s coffers. From the first grant of land to Moses Austin in 1821, Tejanos forever would be at the mercy of a growing Anglo population that was both culturally and economically committed to Tejano subordination as part of a greater belief that Manifest Destiny justified the exploitation of non-whites to further the nation’s expansion and fortify its economic strength. To be Tejano meant dreams would be squelched when those dreams threatened, impeded or otherwise denied Anglos their full grab of resources, political power and social dominance. To be Tejano, as Arnolde De Leon and Kenneth Stuart wrote in *Not Room Enough: Mexicans, Anglos, and Socioeconomic Change in Texas, 1850-1900*, meant living as an alien in one’s native land.¹⁶

When Lorenzo de Zavala arrived in Texas, he entered a place where the rules of settlement soon pitted racially prejudiced white immigrants against Mexican neighbors. Arriving

mostly from the Southern states where prejudice against dark skin (be it Indian or African-American) “justified” institutionalized exploitation and slavery, the Anglo immigrants quickly began farming cotton primarily in the coastal plains area. Those who wished to raise livestock received more generous acreage: one league, or 4,428 acres.¹⁷ And for those, like Moses Austin, who received empresario grants in exchange for taking the responsibility to recruit settlers to the province, the Mexican government granted five leagues of land for every one hundred families settled.¹⁸ Lorenzo De Zavala was one of the first empresarios and did receive a headright, but his mismanagement of the grant and his involvement with the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company resulted in a land title quagmire that Adina De Zavala and her family would spend years trying to resolve through the courts and the state legislature.

Because of the boundaries of *Couhila y Tejas*, which included San Antonio and Goliad (La Bahia) but did not extend as far south as Laredo or as far to the east as El Paso, early Anglo settlers had little contact with the Mexican population in Texas.¹⁹ In less than a decade, however, Mexico’s relaxed immigration laws resulted in Anglos comprising the province’s majority. That dynamic may have been enough to ensure Anglo supremacy in the province, but for legislation Mexico enacted in 1830 that proved antithetical to Anglo purposes: its unequivocal resistance to slavery. Even Stephen F. Austin, who had established and maintained a positive relationship with the Mexican government, bridled against the law, writing in 1833: “I have been averse to the principle of slavery in Texas. I have now, and for the last six months, changed my views... Texas must be a slave country.”²⁰ Anglo settlers rebelled against this Mexican law and soon, against Mexico itself.

Once Texians were poised to cut ties with Mexico City, their rhetoric and experiences heightened racial tensions. Leaders of the rebellion invoked racial epithets to galvanize Anglo support for the fight for independence, “reminding them that Mexicans were ‘the adulterate and degenerate brood of the once high-spirited Castilian’”²¹ and, as Texian “H.H.” wrote in a letter to

the *New Orleans Bee* in 1834, that the people of Mexico were the most “degraded and vile; the most unfortunate race of Spaniard, Indian and African, is so blended that the worst qualities of each predominate.”²²

With the Republic of Texas came the codification of “White Power,” characterized not just by the Republic’s constitutional guarantee of the rights of slaveholders²³, but by the prohibition of land purchase by anyone except Anglos. According to historian Neil Foley, “Texas whites and ‘Spanish’ Mexicans who aided in the Texas revolt against Mexico were entitled to a first-class ‘headright’ for one league and a labor of land, provided they could persuade the court that they were white and not of Indian or African descent.”²⁴ To be white guaranteed citizenship. To be anything other than white guaranteed subordination.

Even the Texas Republic’s new interim president, David G. Burnet, who had fought with Tejanos and Mexicans for an independent Texas, articulated deeply rooted disdain for the “mongrel” race. Burnet, who asked Lorenzo De Zavala to serve as the Republic’s interim vice president, expressed in a letter to Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky the profound and insurmountable differences between Anglos and Mexicans. The revolution, Burnet suggested, stemmed from the “utter dissimilarity of character between...the Texians and Mexicans. The first are principally Anglo Americans; the others a mongrel race of degenerate Spaniards and Indians more depraved than they.”²⁵ It is important to note that by preserving the legacy of Texas’s founding, Adina would be simultaneously honoring the very racial binary that placed her and others of Mexican heritage at a social disadvantage.

When Adina’s father, Augustine de Zavala, was a young boy, Anglos were working diligently to disenfranchise Tejanos—“Mexicans” in their eyes—from the mainstream community, perhaps with the hope of driving their return to what remained of Mexico. If this disenfranchisement took the form of promises not kept, such as the promise that laws would be published in Spanish, or that Tejano land ownership would be recognized in the courts, that was

the price of ensuring Anglo dominance over Tejanos and Indians.²⁶ “Association with the enemy—Mexicans and Indians—licensed indiscriminate violence against them,” wrote De La Teja. “Identification with Catholicism made them the enemies of progress and enlightened thinking.”²⁷ In the years following Texas statehood in 1845 and continuing to secession in 1861, Anglos demonstrated their commitment to progress through exploitation of Tejanos, a slave-based farming economy, and the emergence of numerous Anglo communities throughout previously Tejano-dominated regions. Augustine and his family, if not directly affected by such prejudice and exploitation, could not have been unaware that it existed. According to De Leon, the explosive growth of Anglo communities and military bases meant a significant cultural transformation and, indeed, the “arrival of white men” who, in many cases, were “unscrupulous swindlers” intent on achieving their fortunes. By the Civil War, lands that had belonged to Mexicans during the Texas Revolution had been seized by Anglos and Americanized Europeans.²⁸ For many generations to follow, Anglos would maintain control not just of the lands they had commandeered, but the economy as well.

The Texas in which Adina grew up was even more racially divided, despite a Civil War that abolished racial slavery. Texans continued thinking of African Americans and Indians as savage peoples, unworthy of integration into white society. By the turn of the century, Texas was a stronghold of segregation policies among southern states. Although Tejanos felt the brunt of legal segregation in a less direct manner than either African Americans or Indians, whites classified them with the other “colored” groups.”²⁹ Not only did Anglos believe Mexicans indolent and childlike, they also believed them backwards and unwilling to embrace progress and pursue opportunities for economic improvement.³⁰ Moreover, Anglos perceived Tejanos and Mexicans as subversives who would sabotage their livelihoods by helping slaves escape and, once the Civil War was underway, would refuse to lend their allegiance to the Confederacy.³¹ Of the Tejanos who fought in the Civil War, more fought for the Confederacy than for the Union but enough

“disputed the southern cause to rouse Anglos into questioning their loyalty.”³² Tejanos who chose to serve the Confederacy were rewarded for their loyalty, according to De Leon, but ironically, their service was viewed as helping to “keep the niggers in their place.”³³ In essence, these Tejanos—including Adina’s father, Augustine—were fighting for continued segregation and subordination of all people who were not white. The price they paid, according to historian Andres Tijerina, was a continued “dispossession of their lands along with their legitimate place in Texas history.”³⁴ No matter their service or attempts to assimilate into the white system, Tejanos would continue to be victims of institutionalized racism in Texas.

In the very years Adina championed Texas history, the patriotism of her ancestors repeatedly was questioned. During the Spanish-American War, Anglos feared that Mexican nationals in Texas would conspire with the Mexican government to launch attacks on American soil.³⁵ In 1915, more than 200 Mexicans were killed in South Texas after published reports of a revolutionary plan concocted by Indians, Mexicans, Japanese, and blacks to seize control of the Texas border on behalf of the Mexican government and murder any white male over the age of sixteen.³⁶ Like so many of Anglos’ biases against Tejanos and Mexicans, the generalized yet contradictory monikers of “indolent and lazy” and “subversive and organized” would be applied to an entire race as was convenient to serve Anglos’ prejudices.

While Anglos continued to question Tejanos’ and Mexicans’ abilities to assimilate into American culture because they did not exhibit proper allegiance to the United States or a desire for material advancement that so characterized the “American Dream,” Anglos exploited Tejanos and Mexicans for the cheap labor they provided and thereby undermined their opportunities to take advantage of the education and entrepreneurial possibilities that shored up that Dream. Thus the Tejanos of Adina’s acquaintance, who had less Anglo ancestry and less wealth, faced a harsh reality. As much as European immigrants initially were subjugated and vilified for their “otherness,” those from Northern and Western Europe assimilated more easily into Anglo culture

because of skin color. According to Neil Foley, “Mexicans, including Mexican Americans, had become, like the Chinese, a culturally and biologically inferior alien race.”³⁷ Their livelihoods generally depended on whatever farm work they could get, so Tejanos and Mexicans became a transient people, going wherever work could be found. This transience further reinforced Anglos’ perceptions that Tejanos and Mexicans lacked a fundamental reverence for that which Anglos held dear: property, wealth, and social progress. In other words, they remained “outside of American civilization.”³⁸

Although not as demeaned as African-Americans, Mexicans were not to be embraced as Anglo-Americans either, especially in the Jim Crow South. Foley wrote of a farmer from Nueces County who remarked, “I would not mind Jim Crowing the filthy Mexicans, but I would not Jim Crow a Mexican if he was educated and...nearer to the white race.”³⁹ Opportunities for Tejanos and Mexicans to become educated, however, were limited by a segregationist mentality that suggested that Anglos did not want to mingle with the “dirty ‘greaser’ type of Mexican child.”⁴⁰ As they thought, separate schools should be built for the “dirty ones” until they can “clean up” and become more fitting members of society.⁴¹

Class identity, then, was another difficult aspect for many Tejanos in the Texas of Adina’s formative years. Unfortunately, education of Tejano and Mexican children was a lower priority for their parents because the children’s labor often was needed to help the families survive. “All in all, economic forces were instrumental in relegating the vast majority of nineteenth-century Tejanos to the bottom rung of society,” according to Stuart and De Leon.⁴² While Adina and her siblings were educated both at home and in parochial schools, likely at the insistence of their Irish Catholic mother, public education in Texas largely was devoted to Anglo children. The same modernization that fueled Anglo prosperity denied Tejanos the opportunity to improve their stations, even as they represented a much-needed commodity. The railroad-fueled expansion of industry and agriculture in Texas required a reliable and inexpensive pool of labor.

For Anglo farmers and business owners, that meant Tejanos and Mexican immigrants. In 1926, John Nance Garner, a Texas Congressman and later the Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice President of the United States, told the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization that agricultural profitability relies on cheap labor and in Texas only those landlords who can “get the Mexican labor” are able to make a profit. Landowners wanted Tejano workers who would not compete with them but, rather, be directed by them. In other words, they wanted a “permanent class of peons.”⁴³

While many Tejanos were able to assimilate into Anglo communities before the late-nineteenth century, racial and class stratification became exacerbated by an influx of Mexican immigrants toward the turn of the century, the years in which Adina began her challenging journey as a historic preservationist alongside mostly privileged Anglo women. Tejanos who had worked to assimilate into a “white” culture resented Mexicans for validating Anglos’ stereotypes that “Mexicans in general were poor, dirty, and politically radical.”⁴⁴ Tejanos rightfully believed that Anglos would not care to differentiate between Tejanos and Mexican immigrants but, instead, would paint both cultures with the same brush. According to historian David Montejano, Anglos saw no difference between *peones* and landowners; regardless of class, all Mexicans were the same.⁴⁵ A Mexican surname like De Zavala, then, became an ethnic label regardless of the impressive achievements of the family’s patriarch.

By the end of the nineteenth century, many Tejanos sought to differentiate themselves from Mexicans and Indians and align more closely with Anglos’ distorted value system by claiming Spanish heritage.⁴⁶ In an interesting public relations move in the 1890s, southwestern urban “boosters” like Los Angeles journalist Charles Fletcher Lummis worked to encourage tourism and real estate development in their communities by promoting romantic stories of the Spanish Colonial period and all that the Spanish had achieved.⁴⁷ It cannot be coincidental that this

was the same period when Adina De Zavala and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas began in earnest their historic preservation efforts focused primarily on the Alamo.

This “Spanish Myth” resonated with Anglos, who developed an appetite for that which was Spanish, as long as it was not Mexican. While the vast majority of Hispanic colonists (a term created during this period to link those with Mexican ancestry to their whiter Spanish past) actually were mestizo, rather than Spanish⁴⁸, Tejanos claimed ancestry if they believed it would give them greater credibility among Anglos. Adina and her family, in fact, regularly described Lorenzo de Zavala as hailing from Spain, rather than Yucatan (Mexico).⁴⁹ However, those who accepted themselves as Tejanos did not disconnect from their heritage. “In a society of racist institutions, they had enough to do just surviving within the Hispanic sub-economy,” he wrote. “The survival and persistence of an ethnic tradition took absolute determination and fortitude on the part of the Tejanos in the nineteenth century.”⁵⁰ They wanted to assimilate without having to sacrifice their traditions. Anglos worked to keep that from happening.

One might expect that the Anglo-Tejano binary would be less pronounced in San Antonio, where Adina lived most of her life, given the city’s heritage as the first capital of Texas and its disproportionately large concentration of Tejanos and Mexican immigrants through the early years of the twentieth century. With the arrival in San Antonio of the International and Great Northern Railroad in 1881 – several years after Adina De Zavala and her family relocated there – came an exponential increase in Mexican laborers migrating to the city⁵¹ and, not unexpectedly, a corresponding increase in discrimination that became institutionalized.⁵² Tejanos who previously owned land and businesses in the downtown area sold their lots, due to economic and/or social pressures, and moved to less-desirable locations across the San Antonio River. Anglo-dominated banks emerged, changing the nature of how loans would be made and to whom. According to William J. Know, a San Antonio resident in the late 1800s, Anglos had “by peaceful penetration”

nabbed the best real estate in town.⁵³ San Antonio had become a city divided into “American San Antonio and Mexican San Antonio.”⁵⁴

That the most recognized symbol of the Texians’ bloody fight for independence sits in the center of San Antonio explains, in part, why Tejanos and Mexicans ceded economic and social authority to the Anglos in what was rightfully their cultural hub. In essence, the war never really ended. The Alamo represented the brave sacrifice of Anglo lives against savage Mexicans for the American ideals of liberty and freedom, which must be upheld at all costs. The battle cry, “Remember the Alamo,” had become a cultural code for future generations to remember that Mexicans were the enemy against whom revenge must be sought and sustained. Every conflict between Anglos and Tejanos represented a “vicarious recreation of previous battles.”⁵⁵ With independence in hand, however, Anglos treated Tejanos as a conquered people⁵⁶ and, arguably, Tejanos internalized this diminished posture. According to Montejano, Tejano subjugation could not have succeeded without their permission. “The stability of the segregated order rested on Mexican recognition of their own inferiority. Mexicans had to be taught and shown that they were dirty and that this was a permanent condition – that they could not become clean.”⁵⁷ The history of Texas became a story of white supremacy that underscored the national Manifest Destiny narrative: “White pioneers who came to Texas and threw off the yoke of an oppressive Mexican government; who endured conflicts with Mexicans and Indians; who engineered a merger with the United States and took a stand in a civil war between the states in an Anglo nation...who organized a vast frontier and defined a civilization that progressed into the twentieth century...”⁵⁸ Indeed, there simply was no room for Tejanos in the myth, making or management of Texas, even as Tejanos such as Manuel Lorenzo Justiniano de Zavala played critical roles to help Texas become an independent Republic.

To appreciate why Adina invoked Lorenzo de Zavala’s accomplishments as a platform upon which to establish her own credibility among Texas’s “royalty,” and to recognize why this

association actually may have served as a greater liability than an asset as her efforts intensified, one must understand Lorenzo de Zavala's background and the work that brought him, quite by accident, to Texas. On one hand, at the time of his resignation, Mirabeau B. Lamar, the president of the Republic actually had this to say about him:

Among the first movers of the revolution he has never departed from the pure and sacred principles upon which it was originally founded. This steady and unyielding devotion to the holy sacred cause of liberty has been amply rewarded by the confidence, of the virtuous portion of two republics. The gentleman, the scholar and the patriot, he goes into retirement with the undivided affections of his fellow citizens; and I know, gentlemen, that I do not express only my own feelings when I say that it is the wish of every member of this assembly that the evening of his day may be as tranquil and happy as the meridian of his life has been useful and honorable; a gentleman, a patriot, a scholar and one who loves his fellow man.⁵⁹

Thus, as first interim vice president of the Republic of Texas, Lorenzo de Zavala secured his place as one of Texas's esteemed founding fathers. On the other hand, however, his contributions were relatively marginal and his loyalty to Texas less compelling than his opposition to a Centralist Mexico. He was fifth-generation Yucatanian⁶⁰, a region heavily occupied by the Maya. The family's anxiety about this Mexican and possibly Indian heritage in Jim Crow Texas led them to repeatedly describe him as "from Spain."⁶¹ Adina perpetuated this story and changed other aspects of her grandfather's past to suit her present-day circumstances, as illustrated in the erroneously named chapter, "General Lawrence De Zavala," in her book, *History and Legends of the Alamo and Other Missions In and Around San Antonio*. Clearly, Adina worked diligently to research her grandfather's storied past and had presented the most glorified account possible. Since then, historians like Margaret Swett Henson have detailed his biography. Interestingly, the strong-willed clashes Lorenzo De Zavala faced, often products of his own unwillingness to compromise and "be polite," provide a foreshadowing—however coincidental—of the conflicts in which Adina became embroiled just seventy years later. Adina omitted or excused anything that cast Lorenzo

in a questionable light, making it important to understand who Lorenzo really was in order to see how she would manipulate historic memory of him.

Lorenzo de Zavala

Lorenzo de Zavala was born a privileged, though not wealthy, *criollo* who attended boarding school at the prestigious Seminario Conciliar de San Ildefonso in Merida⁶² and would, from early adulthood, exhibit intellectually precocious and often rebellious tendencies. After graduating in 1807, he rejected the traditional path that called upon second-born sons to join the clergy⁶³ and instead became a student of Enlightenment thinkers, reading books prohibited by the Inquisition. He was an intellectual who, with friends, would publish Merida's first newspaper. Fundamentally, he was a revolutionary in thoughts and actions.⁶⁴ Although he had wished to attend university in Mexico City, he did not have the means to do so and in 1807, at age nineteen, he entered into an arranged marriage with the thirteen-year-old daughter of his godparents, Teresa Correa y Correa⁶⁵, and immersed himself in local political activities designed to undermine Spanish authority. In 1812, he became secretary of Merida's city council, only to be imprisoned in Veracruz from 1814 through 1817 for subversive activities against Spain.⁶⁶ He used his time in prison to study medicine in preparation for a post-prison career as a doctor.⁶⁷

In 1817, he and his friends defied both the Spanish government and the Catholic Church to establish a clandestine Masonic lodge, the first in the Yucatan.⁶⁸ Considered a "religion of reason," Freemasonry always has been regarded as an enemy of the Church⁶⁹ even as most political leaders in Spain and Mexico were counted among its members. Not only was Lorenzo De Zavala an active member, but he became the York Rite Grand Master.⁷⁰ Given Adina's lifelong devotion to the Catholic Church, Lorenzo's flagrant opposition to the Church may be been another aspect of Lorenzo's story—like his Indian racial heritage—that Adina needed to resolve within herself as she worked to memorialize his important contributions to Texas history. She definitely knew about this affiliation, given that his certificate of membership as a Freemason was included

in the papers she donated to the University of Texas at Austin. However, she never included this information about him in her correspondence or published work.



Figure 1-1 Lorenzo de Zavala, Cabinet Portrait

In 1821, Lorenzo returned to politics, beginning with his appointment as deputy to the Spanish Cortes in Madrid, which took him via Havana to Europe and back through New Orleans. This whirlwind experience facilitated his introduction to many influential leaders and arguably whetted his ambitious appetites.⁷¹ He played numerous other roles on behalf of the newly independent Mexico including service as a member of the Mexican Congress, the Mexican Senate, governor of the state of Mexico, and Mexico's minister to France. In what would prove a fortuitous encounter, de Zavala met Stephen F. Austin in 1821 while in Mexico City. Austin was there to ensure that Mexico would continue to honor the empresario land grant negotiated in 1821 with his father, Moses Austin.⁷² The two ambitious men established a mutual respect, according to Henson, "that blossomed again in 1835."⁷³

In 1824, de Zavala helped draft the Mexican Constitution.⁷⁴ He proved a prolific writer, having started several publications to promote his political viewpoints as well as a book in 1834 about his travels throughout the United States and Canada. Mexico's second president, Vicente Guerrero, appointed de Zavala in 1829 to the post of secretary of the treasury,⁷⁵ a role he took

seriously enough as to impose taxes and other fees to bolster Mexico's languishing economy. These changes contributed to the demise of Vicente Guerrero's presidency in 1830.⁷⁶ Guerrero's successor, Anastasio Bustamante, embraced a Centralist political philosophy that proved anathema to de Zavala's enlightened, Federalist thinking. Having been an outspoken proponent of Federalism, de Zavala recognized in Bustamante's presidency a threat to his safety, so he and fellow Federalist leaders went to New Orleans.⁷⁷ He left behind his wife, Teresa; his son, Lorenzo Jr., was safely ensconced in a private school in New York City. The Centralist government seized de Zavala's property in Mexico, leaving him penniless but for his empresario contract giving him the rights to settle families in *Couhuila y Texas*.⁷⁸

De Zavala left New Orleans and traveled throughout the United States and Canada, using his letters of introduction from Joel R. Poinsett, the first U.S. minister to Mexico and personal friend, and Anthony Butler, President Andrew Jackson's ministerial appointee, to meet influential political leaders including Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon Bonaparte's brother and briefly King of Spain, who was in New Jersey at the time. He eventually landed in New York City, which became his new home base.⁷⁹ From there, he journeyed to Washington where he met President Andrew Jackson and learned more about the American political system in preparation to write a book, *Journey to the United States of North America*, that would help teach Mexicans about democracy.⁸⁰ According to Henson, "Except for slavery, Zavala admired most [U.S.] institutions."⁸¹ Like her grandfather, Adina also worked to promote "American" values of sacrifice, bravery, and courage by transforming the state's history into an unblemished heroic tale that skirted issues of racism and intolerance.

But at the same time, de Zavala made two seminal decisions that years later troubled his grand-daughter. First, in what would prove an illegal transaction, he chose to sell the contract for his empresario land grant to the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, as he had no patience for the time-intensive responsibility of settling one hundred or more families.⁸² His second choice

was to become romantically involved with Miranda West, a purported widow with a young son named Henry (but whose first marriage to a man named “Cresswell” is not documented in either church or civil records. As part of his contract with the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, de Zavala was required to help attract European colonists who would settle in Texas.⁸³ Once again, de Zavala embarked for Paris and when he returned to New York in 1831, he married Miranda (whose name he had changed, inexplicably, to Emily) on November 12, just seven months after the April death of his estranged wife, Teresa, whom he had left behind in Mexico. De Zavala’s and Emily’s first son, Augustine de Zavala, was born on January 1, 1832, less than two months from their marriage and just nine months after the death of de Zavala’s first wife.⁸⁴ In addition to Emily’s first born, Henry, and Augustine, Lorenzo and Emily would have two more children, Emily and Ricardo.⁸⁵



Figure 1-3 Emily West de Zavala

Despite his two years in exile, de Zavala retained his official position as governor of the state of Mexico.⁸⁶ In 1832, while he was still in New York, Antonio López de Santa Anna Pérez de Lebrón and other Federalists overthrew the Centralist government. Santa Anna became president of Mexico and appointed de Zavala as the Yucatan’s representative in the lower house of Congress.⁸⁷ When Mexico lifted its ban on immigration into Texas in 1834, de Zavala purchased

from Victor Blanco, the senator from *Couhila y Texas*, an estimated seventy thousand acres on the lower Trinity and San Jacinto Rivers to ensure his family's financial future.⁸⁸

A self-professed anticleric and passionate opponent of Church oppression, de Zavala's commitment to church property reforms alienated several very powerful Mexican religious leaders, who lobbied for his removal under the guise of a prestigious appointment as Mexican Minister to France.⁸⁹ De Zavala again left his beloved homeland in 1833 for New York and subsequently Paris, during which time Santa Anna shifted political course and reorganized both his cabinet and his country under Centralist policies, giving him full power to restore important privileges both to the Church and to the military.⁹⁰ Once de Zavala heard of these changes, he knew his political career in Mexico had ended, at least in the short term. What had once been a close and mutually respectful relationship with Santa Anna now had become a heated rivalry. De Zavala wrote impassioned letters to Santa Anna, lambasting him for the destruction of the constitution of 1824 that de Zavala had so carefully helped create.⁹¹ In response, Santa Anna ordered de Zavala to remain in Paris until his replacement arrived. To secure his family's safety, de Zavala sent Emily and their children to New York and, ignoring Santa Anna's orders to return to Mexico City once the new Minister was situated in Paris, he joined his family in New York in 1835.⁹² Having publicly criticized Santa Anna, his future would be in peril if he returned to Mexico. There was only one alternative: help Texas separate from Mexico.⁹³ For many, his abandonment of his service to Mexico and his collusion with the Texians constituted the worst form of treachery and betrayal. Lorenzo, it seems, believed this move consistent with his political philosophies and in the best interests of his family.

And so he came to Texas, even as his stature as a former Mexican official created suspicions among many Anglo Brazos Valley residents who were prejudiced against people of his ethnicity.⁹⁴ Still, because the Mexican government had placed a bounty on his head, he could not return to Mexico and was under threat of arrest while in *Couhila y Texas*. He met his first son,

Lorenzo Jr., (whose mother was the Mexican-born Therese), on upper Galveston Bay and after touring the area, purchased a home on Buffalo Bayou near the San Jacinto River.⁹⁵ This same home would become an important piece of Adina's embellished history many decades later, when she claimed inaccurately that Lorenzo and Emily gladly turned their residence into a hospital after the Battle of San Jacinto and cared for the injured while sleeping in the field themselves.⁹⁶ At the invitation of his neighbors, de Zavala presented a written treatise at Lynchburg in August, outlining Santa Anna's oppressive and, arguably, unconstitutional actions that denied people their rights.⁹⁷ One month later, when Stephen F. Austin returned from his two-year imprisonment in Mexico City, de Zavala joined the empresario and together they began planning for revolution.⁹⁸ It was a fruitful partnership, but from de Zavala's perspective, it was borne more from his philosophical, personal, and political disagreements with Santa Anna than with any personal loyalty to Texas. Later, it became apparent to him that his involvement had been sought more to appease and attract other Tejanos in the area, who could have aligned with Santa Anna, than because of his worldly experience as a diplomat.⁹⁹ Although he denigrated Mexicans in his travelogue about the United States, writing that Mexicans were "lazy, vain, ignorant and superstitious,"¹⁰⁰ many Texians saw him as an outsider. William H. Sledge of Columbia, Texas called him an "aspiring Mexican" and included him in the "we" he spoke of when he wrote that we "must depend on ourselves."¹⁰¹

De Zavala's Harris County neighbors, recognizing his political experience and familiarity with the perils of Santa Anna's oppressive policies, chose him as one of their delegates to a November convention where Texas's course would be decided.¹⁰² In working with other delegates to write a constitution for a potentially independent Texas, well before such independence had been secured militarily, de Zavala had sealed his future as a man who had turned on his homeland and could not return, but was keenly aware that as a Mexican, and as someone who had betrayed his own country, he would not be completely trusted or welcome in his adopted land.

At the Battle of San Jacinto, Texians capitalized on Santa Anna's distraction and captured him, caught unawares and, as legend has it, with his pants literally down. De Zavala, previously one of Santa Anna's confidantes, now was in the unique position of serving as interpreter and negotiator with the prisoner. Once Santa Anna signed the treaties of Velasco, Texas's interim president David Burnet appointed de Zavala to escort Santa Anna back to Vera Cruz.¹⁰³ While this journey did not happen, and Santa Anna instead was imprisoned in a local plantation until the Republic's first official president, Sam Houston, ordered his release in November 1836, De Zavala understood the gravity and the awkwardness of such a moment.¹⁰⁴ His new government was him to be the man to secure his former friend's political demise.

To ensure the cooperation of the many rebellious Texas residents who shared De Zavala's Mexican ethnicity, or so he believed, the delegates to the Washington-On-The-Brazos convention elected De Zavala to serve as the first interim vice president of the Republic of Texas.¹⁰⁵ De Zavala believed this symbolic appointment a way to appeal to Texas's Tejano population, and while he did not want the post he agreed to take it.¹⁰⁶ He soon grew frustrated with President Burnet, who gave him few meaningful duties, and grew equally frustrated by the direction the nascent government was taking particularly with regard to its support of slavery, an institution he categorically opposed. Within a few months of accepting responsibility to help shape the new government of the Republic of Texas, De Zavala resigned not once, but twice as President Burnet was unwilling to accept his resignation.¹⁰⁷ Having suffered myriad illnesses in previous years including malaria, De Zavala was frequently unwell and in the summer of 1836, his health took a turn for worse. He blamed the climate in Buffalo Bayou and began planning the family's relocation, but a boating accident with his son Augustine in November led him to contract pneumonia. He died at his Buffalo Bayou home on November 15, 1836 at the age of forty seven.¹⁰⁸

Despite his keen intellect, including proficiency in four languages, his passion for politics, and his illustrious career, Lorenzo De Zavala appears to have been a man unhappy with his circumstances. A certain restlessness colored his adult life as if he were on a quest for what, he did not know. He shifted loyalties as it suited him, as evidenced by his betrayal of first wife Teresa, not just with his affair with Emily West, but his behavior with other women (as expressed in a letter from Santa Anna on October 7, 1829). He had been accused of “monopolies, bribes and illegal commerce.”¹⁰⁹ He turned his back on Santa Anna, who had been both colleague and confidante for several years before achieving the presidency and restoring Centralism to Mexico. And when a fledgling Republic perhaps most needed his well-considered political council, he grew resentful that President Burnet had assumed most responsibilities and elected to resign his position rather than negotiate for a more equitable distribution of duties. De Zavala, it would seem, was driven by an ego that would make it difficult for him to cede influence or control to others. Yet, as a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and one of the authors of the Republic's first constitution, De Zavala's fingerprints on the state's future were indelible.¹¹⁰ The same fingerprints would serve as the foundation for Adina De Zavala—once she discovered and reconstituted them as an adult—and her quest for relevance within a society that seemed to have forgotten Texas's storied past and that certainly would marginalize the contributions of Mexicans.

Life After Lorenzo

While Lorenzo de Zavala's experience of racial prejudice in Texas was explicit, though short-lived, his descendants led quieter lives in which direct evidence of prejudice seldom made the public record. Nevertheless, the narrative of each successive generation including Adina's own suggests a family flirting with the margins of respectability. The family possessed economic resources, but could not compare with the Austins, Perrys, and Houstons, whose Anglo fathers had served more notably in the Texas Revolution.

When Lorenzo de Zavala died, he left behind his young wife Emily, age twenty-seven, and her young children Henry, age eight; Augustine, age four; Emily, age two; and Ricardo, age one, along with the grown son from his first marriage, Lorenzo, Jr. Emily took the young children back to New York presumably to finalize Lorenzo de Zavala's estate. Less than a year after Lorenzo's death, Emily was remarried to Henry Matthias Foch, a German immigrant who worked in a New York financial institution. Leaving sons Henry and Augustine in New York to attend Erasmus Hall Academy, a prestigious private school built in 1787 on land donated by the Dutch Reformed Church and funded initially by Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, John Jay and others¹¹¹, the Fochs returned to Zavala Point and within a few years, Emily's fifth and sixth children—sons Edward and Louis—joined the family.

Meanwhile, Lorenzo Jr. began working to assess Lorenzo de Zavala's estate. After he petitioned the court in 1838 to be administrator of de Zavala's estate, and having it so approved by the court, Lorenzo Jr. filed an inventory and appraisal of the de Zavala property based on his understanding. This inventory, a copy of which Adina included in her personal papers, must have provided at least in part the basis on which the de Zavala family would continue seeking remedy from the courts, well into the twentieth century. According to the inventory, Lorenzo de Zavala owned two leagues (4,428.4 acres each) of land on the west side of the San Jacinto River (including part of the land Lorenzo de Zavala acquired from Victor Blanco) and deducting one half league of land sold to Mirabeau Lamar. These lands comprised 6642 acres, according to the inventory, with an associated value of \$3321.00. In addition, the estate included one labor of land (177.1 acres) "held by title bond of Philip Singleton situated at the junction of Old River and Buffalo Bayou," with an appraised value of \$2500.00. The final two items represent the family's greatest interest: one headright to an unlocated league of land, valued at \$1000.00, and a "reserved undivided interest in premium lands as Empresario [sic] of Zavalla [sic] grant – an unascertained interest on the property of the New Washington Association."¹¹² The relative value of Lorenzo de

Zavala's estate, excluding the "reserved undivided interest in premium lands as empresario, today would be approximately \$170,000.¹¹³ Clearly, Lorenzo left a valuable estate and one in which inheritors would have an interest.

Seldom did the family seem to discuss Lorenzo de Zavala's actions as a statesman or diplomat, but they did occasionally look to gain title to lands he had claimed. In May 1839, Lorenzo Jr. filed another petition asking the court to issue a decree to Philip Singleton's estate administrator, Spyres Singleton, requiring him to give title of the labor of land to Lorenzo Jr.¹¹⁴ Singleton complied, but the land issue was not yet resolved. Emily De Zavala Foch and her new husband, Henry Foch, petitioned the court in March 1841 to include in the estate a "lot and improvements in the city of Galveston known on the plan thereof, as lot No. 12, B.562 and in Galveston County."¹¹⁵ Further, they requested someone be appointed by the court to divide the estate on behalf of de Zavala's legal heirs.¹¹⁶ Interestingly, Lorenzo de Zavala's adopted son, Henry, is not included though Henry contested this omission in later years. Additionally, it seems that Emily and her new husband did not have confidence in Lorenzo Jr.'s ability to equitably manage the estate and Texas law after 1840 allowed women to own property separate and apart from their husbands.¹¹⁷ Emily and her new husband, then, clearly wanted greater control over the family's assets. Lorenzo Jr. moved back to Mexico soon thereafter and for the next forty-plus years, it seems Lorenzo de Zavala's heirs did little to pursue claims to additional land and stock Lorenzo de Zavala received as part of his agreement with the Galveston Bay and Land Company.

But if Lorenzo Sr.'s heirs let rest their pursuit of Lorenzo De Zavala's estate, they remained connected to his wife Emily. Adina's grandmother did not remain a widow for long after her second or perhaps third husband, Henry Foch, died in 1849. She married E.D. Hand, the owner of the local sawmill less than two years later and would remain with him until his death in 1860. She did not marry again and, instead, devoted herself to raising her grand-daughter (and Adina's cousin) Katherine, whose mother Emily (Emily de Zavala Foch Hand's only daughter)

had died during childbirth. Having completed his education in New York, Augustine returned home to Zavala Point while Henry remained in New York. Despite his privileged education, the U.S. federal census of 1850 indicates that Augustine worked as a caulker, the lowest-rung position on a shipyard and one typically held by blacks.¹¹⁸ He continued to live at Zavala Point and in 1860 married Julia Byrne Tyrrell, an Irish immigrant. His family does not appear in the census of 1860, so it is unclear if he had continued working at the shipyard or spent his time farming the family land. They welcomed their first child, Adina Emilia de Zavala, to their family on November 28, 1861, just ten months after Texas had become the seventh state to secede from the Union. In less than a year, Galveston – Texas’s most important port just 53 miles from Buffalo Bayou – was threatened by a Union blockade and two months of repeated (but ultimately unsuccessful) attempts to capture the island.¹¹⁹

While the exact date of Augustine’s enlistment in the army is unknown, he elected to leave his young wife (just twenty-one years old) and infant daughter behind to serve the Confederacy. Augustine likely believed war service would provide him an opportunity for heroism, or at least an opportunity to put his fingerprints on history as had his father. More likely, he was attempting to underscore his citizenship as a Texan and to distance himself from the prejudice Anglos felt toward Tejanos because of their cultural opposition to slavery and reluctance to fight for the peculiar institution.¹²⁰ In her adult years, Adina claimed her father had served as a blockade runner for the Confederate Navy. Service records, however, reveal that he enlisted as a private in Company A of Madison’s Regiment, Texas Cavalry (Phillips’) 3rd Regiment, Arizona Brigade, and mustered out as a corporal, indicating that unlike sons in other landed families, he served at the lowest rungs of military service.¹²¹ He may have been part of one of the three companies, known as the Coast Guards, which defended Galveston and later joined the Brigade, whose military objective was to retake southwestern territories for the Confederacy.¹²² From December 1863 through March 1864, the regiment remained in Galveston. After a march to

Arkansas, the troops returned to the Houston area. With the surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Department on May 26, 1865, they mustered out of service.¹²³



Figure 1-3 Augustine de Zavala

Neither the timeline of De Zavala's service nor his own war stories suggest that he covered himself in the glory to which many elite Texans aspired. Indeed, his war service seems to have been fairly proletarian, though it may have led to a debilitating injury. Based on the only correspondence from Augustine to Julia from May 20, 1862 through July 1, 1862 in Adina De Zavala's papers, it appears that Augustine served fairly close to home. "I heard today that we were going to scout between San Jacinto and Trinity Rivers and if we do I can come home once and a while but thier [sic] is no telling what we will do. I don't think that any fighting will be done on the Island." He urged her to "give my love to Dick and his family to Ma and Kate kiss the baby for me and I send a dozen for you."¹²⁴ Just nine days later, he wrote again, telling Julia that he had spent time at the Island (Galveston) "driving off the cattle," which seems rather ignoble for a man of his pedigree though he was, of course, only a private. He did not believe there would be any danger of Union attack on Galveston, but assured Julia that he would look out for himself. "I have got the way staked out to get off if the Yankez [sic] do cut the Bridge down they can never catch me in a trap."¹²⁵ He promised to write when he could.

By June 8, 1862, his tone had shifted away from bravado to prosaic concerns. “I received your letter yesterday and will now try to answer it, you know I hate to write but for fear you should think I had forgotten you I will send you a few lines.”¹²⁶ He mentioned the cannon fire, which he expected she must have heard, and told her about *General Rusk*, a Confederate steamer, successfully running the Union blockade despite repeated shots at the vessel. He expected they would be in place all summer and that he would not be entitled to a furlough because “so many of the company have gone home sick.” After complaining about the mosquitos and requesting an old “bar” (likely, of lye soap), he wished he could be home with her and the baby “but it cannot be for the present. As long as we can hear from each other and keep well let us thank God for that.” He closed the letter more affectionately than prior correspondence: “I send you my love and as many kisses as you want...your loving husband, Augustine.”¹²⁷

Another month brought weariness and contempt for his circumstances, as well as toward the men in his company. He had received permission to come home, he wrote, but at the last minute another soldier went first. “Now I have to wait a week before I can get off,” he wrote. “I am going to get out of this company if I can and go with Capt. Lubock [sic] on the gunboat. I do not like this crowd here they have got a very bad name. We have very few honest men in the company. I don’t mix with them much. We have not got a cent of money yet and don’t expect to get any till next September. The officers are paid but the privates have to wait.”¹²⁸ While this likely was not his final letter to Julia, this was the last included in the papers Adina De Zavala bequeathed to Incarnate Word. Had Augustine achieved his desired transfer to serve with Captain Lubbock on the gunboat Bayou City, or become a blockade runner (as Adina later asserted), one would expect to find supporting records. Although the examples are few, the tone of his correspondence does not indicate a man seeking heroism or valor but, rather, a man who believed his station and his fellow soldiers were beneath him.

Assuming Augustine served through the entirety of the war, he would have returned when Adina was four years-old. It appears that Augustine's brother, Ricardo, along with his mother and niece, Katharine, lived fairly close, based on his urging to send them his greetings.¹²⁹ Even with some family proximity, though, Julia and baby Adina managed relatively alone through the uncertain times on the vast acreage of Zavala Point.

Once Augustine returned home from the war, questions about family dynamics further support circumstantial evidence that Adina had a childhood lacking in stability and privilege. Adina remained an only child until 1871, and was ten-years old when Mary Katherine was born. Julia De Zavala was a devout Catholic; presumably, so was Augustine. Did a war injury or illness hinder their marital relations or was there marital strife between Julia and Augustine in the years following the war? His time in the service notwithstanding, the significant lapse between their first and second child suggests that their marital intimacy was interrupted or compromised by something. Regardless of the situation, Adina would have been privy to any disharmony in the home.



Figure 1-4 Julia Byrne Tyrrell de Zavala

After Mary Katherine's birth in 1871, Augustine and Julia had four more children: Florence, Zita, Thomas, and Augustine Jr.¹³⁰ As lonely as Adina's life must have been while her

father was at war and until Mary Katherine was born, her world broadened when she began attending the Ursuline Academy in Galveston in 1871. Augustine had had the family's modest home moved by barge from Zavala Point to Galveston¹³¹ so the school was close.



Figure 1-5 Augustine de Zavala Family Home, Galveston, Texas

The all-girls parochial school, established in 1847 by the Ursuline Sisters from New Orleans,¹³² was open to girls of all faiths. Here, Adina's commitment to Catholicism seems to have blossomed; here, she also seemed to receive a degree of maternal nurturance perhaps not experienced at home, based on decades of correspondence with nuns at the Academy who offered her moral and spiritual support.¹³³

Adina's young adulthood revealed more evidence of a life marked with both uncertainty and the light trappings (if not full reality) of gentility. In 1873, Augustine decided to move his family to the Locke Hill area of San Antonio, approximately fourteen miles from downtown. Adina moved with them and once again, received her education at home while helping care for her younger siblings. Six years later, from 1879 through 1881, Adina attended Sam Houston Normal School (now Sam Houston State University in Huntsville). While numerous biographical sketches of Adina indicate that she attended a music school in Chillicothe, Missouri before going to the Sam Houston Normal School, no documentation of her attendance at such a school, nor the existence of one, can be located. She was offered a teaching post at Ursuline Academy in 1883 by Sister Agnes, but she rejected this opportunity.¹³⁴ She began her teaching career in Terrell, Texas,

in 1884, with her salary apparently serving as family support. Like Lorenzo, however, she was restless and as evidenced by the ruminations and draft letters in her teaching journal, she yearned for a life of greater meaning.

Yet, Texas did not treat Tejanos or Tejano history well. That prejudice became manifest as families like Lorenzo De Zavala's led lives on the margins of gentility and often in pursuit of the land and markers of prestige that were the birthright of the descendants of Anglo heroes such as Houston, Burnet and Austin. To be born into a family with a Mexican heritage meant limited opportunities to ascend the social ladder in an increasingly segregated Texas. Adina clearly understood racial prejudice and, in fact, exhibited it herself as evidenced by a story she drafted for the newspaper she established for her school in Terrell. The story, called "A Visit to the Negro School," recounted her class's adventure.

Fourteen scholars in care of Prof Paulus made a visit to the Negro school Thursday morning and you may be assured they had a picnic," she wrote. "As we came back...we saw two little Negroes playing hockey but when they saw Prof Paulus they transferred their cargo. By and Bye we reached our own school house and it was much more pleasant you may be certain. In the evening some one looked down the street and saw two black forms coming up it, and directly the black forms arrived at the portal gate of our domicile of education. Professor Black invited them in but luckily they came for chalk. We did not feel insulted at their not accepting our invitation for we all breathed a sigh of relief as we saw them fading away like a summer's dream.¹³⁵

Adina seemed not to recognize the possibility that she might, as a woman with a Mexican surname, find herself the target of prejudice when she reacted, in stereotypically Anglo fashion, to the young black children. She believed herself to be superior, even as her subsequent years in San Antonio would challenge that self-concept.

Chapter Two

Early Adulthood: How Isolation, Economic Uncertainty, and Family Legacy Converged to Forge Adina's Identity

The years after Adina's graduation and her early years in her teaching career were critical for a young woman poised on the socioeconomic border between gentility and working-class life. Whereas broad brushstrokes of discrimination against Tejanos and a multi-generational history of Lorenzo de Zavala's heritage mark the first components of Adina's identity, the next element of that story comes from understanding Adina's own temperament and how an intelligent, driven, and isolated woman met the events of these life-changing years. By her early twenties, Adina realized that her family's financial status alone was not enough to ensure her position in elite society. Moreover, though there are indications that she had a few romantic interests, she did not pursue either by choice or circumstance the traditional path for women, namely marriage and children. By 1886, when Adina was twenty-five years old, she moved back to San Antonio most likely because of her father's declining health and took another teaching position while helping care for her family. As yet, she had no clear sense of an identity outside of her immediate family and the needs of her younger siblings.

Part of the problem was that Augustine de Zavala never quite rose to the title of "patriarch." Although his occupation in the 1880 census was listed as "farmer," her father may not have been able to work because his illness had returned. A letter in 1889 from her paternal uncle, Lorenzo de Zavala Jr., depicts a man whose health had been a constant challenge. "I am exceedingly sorry to learn from you that your good father has been always suffering more or less from his old complaint," he wrote, "and I hope the Almighty will grant him the restoration of his health thoroughly and that he will spend his days in perfect joy and contentment."¹³⁶ Adina's salary financed, at least in part, her brother's schooling, a burden a friend in 1891 identified as one

she must be “awfully tired of.” The same friend wondered whether she had recovered funds from “Maverick Bank,” underscoring how “very shaky” “financial institutions seem[ed] to be.”¹³⁷

As difficult as these years were, however, they also brought opportunities. In the years just before her father died in 1894, economic uncertainty converged with two other seemingly unrelated dynamics—a renewed family inquiry into the lands and money purportedly owed to the de Zavala family and an emerging interest in the story of Texas’s fight for independence by publishers and journalists. For most of her life, Adina’s immediate family seemed unremarkable, perhaps even a liability for an ambitious woman. Augustine’s passing clarified the need for a true family leader, one who could ensure a stable future. But at this point, Adina saw that family—at least the larger, extended version of it—could provide the means by which she could establish an identity and ensure stability and relevance. Thus, the convergent events between 1886 and 1900 inspired Adina to learn more about the important contributions of Lorenzo de Zavala and his son, Lorenzo de Zavala, Jr., to the Republic of Texas and from there, to embark upon a life dedicated to protecting her family’s position while simultaneously preserving the history of Texas.

Beginning in the mid—1880s, family members were actively corresponding with one another, and with Henry de Zavala, Augustine’s half-brother and a lawyer working in New York, about how to recoup the lands and stock owed to the Lorenzo De Zavala heirs. This land represented the majority of the family’s potential assets and was the source of great and prolonged inquiry and investigation. Financial worries were exacerbated by Augustine’s death in 1894, which left Julia with two underage children (Thomas, age sixteen and Augustine Peter, age fourteen) to support.

Isolation

Given the career she created for herself as a passionate historian and preservationist, and the manner in which she stepped outside of contemporary race, class, and gender constraints to

challenge legislators and members of the social and cultural elite, Adina De Zavala merits admiration. Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that with the emergence of Tejano history, Tejano historians and community groups would memorialize her as an important example of Tejanas who overcame racial prejudices (if not economic hardship) to make a difference that would inspire Tejanos in perpetuity. Her historic preservation work, which will be detailed in Chapter Three, did not stop with her partial victory in saving at least the ground floor of the Alamo's long barracks, though this work would prove her one lasting legacy beyond the manuscripts she self-published.

Yet, to explore her life as she told it through the thousands of papers she saved and bequeathed to the University of Texas and to Incarnate Word University, is to grapple with a host of often conflicting perceptions, ideas, and emotions. As complex as the fragments and clues she left behind, Adina was unequivocally driven and passionate; clearly, her zealotry (if not imperiousness) was as off-putting to some as it was inspiring to others. In a memory book dated January 21, 1956, from a memorial meeting of the Texas Historical and Landmarks Association honoring Adina, a fellow preservationist, Mrs. Mendel, invoked a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, writing "To be great is to be misunderstood."¹³⁸ In this remembrance, Mrs. Mendel acknowledged that Adina's complex personality had both allowed her important accomplishments while often isolating her as well.

While it is impossible to do justice to the psyche of a long-dead subject, the written record points to a host of circumstances that shaped Adina's temperament. She had a troubled relationship with her mother (who had more explicit breaks with other de Zavala offspring); her mother ensured a strict religious upbringing; and, apart from a few nuns, Adina did not form many close relationships with men or women outside of the family. But for the strength she showed the world, there are clues that suggest she lived an isolated life where she was unappreciated by family and misunderstood by the people she so much wanted to impress.

A few people must have known this about her. Adina received a letter in 1879, when she was only eighteen years old and attending the Sam Houston Normal School, from Mother St. Agnes of her beloved Ursuline Academy who wrote, “You say you feel as if no one was praying for you – this should not be for you are often remembered before our Lady’s alter. Do not forget you are a child of Mary. Let this guide you in difficulties, shield you in dangers and console you in all troubles. Your temptations are many, I fear, where you are now; a prudent reserve, my loved Child, must mark your intercourse with others.”¹³⁹ Just two years earlier, Mother Agnes wrote back asking if Adina would consider a life of religious service. “Have you, my dear Child, any intention or desire to embrace a religious life? It is a priceless gift and one that God bestows on few.”¹⁴⁰ In another letter, she counseled Adina to live a life of service, writing “It is only what we do for God that will follow us or rather lead us into heaven.”¹⁴¹ In 1880, Mother Agnes urged Adina to make time for the sacraments and to seek out a visiting clergyman if she did not have a priest in Huntsville. “Try, my dear Child, to avoid the company of girls who only know how to talk nonsense. Endeavor to be exact to your first duties as a Catholic and to be more careful to avoid the least wrong during this holy season (Lent).”¹⁴² The nuns at Ursuline Academy and Mother Agnes in particular seemed to fill a void in Adina’s life, giving her reassurance, support and, maternal advice when she was trying to make the transition to womanhood.

In querying about her interest in the life of the convent, Mother Agnes implied that she suspected Adina would not marry. Others applied pressure to follow that conventional course of action, perhaps because they did not know her at all. Indeed, in 1884, Governor Oran Roberts offered Adina the personal advice that patriarchal men felt comfortable giving any unmarried woman of the day, despite the fact that she only had begun a correspondence with him to ask about family lands. “However much you may be devoted to the profession of teaching,” he wrote to her in 1884, just after he left office and when she was twenty-three years old, “you must look to the future and should not forget in your zeal that the highest position that a woman can adorn is to

be some good man's wife, whose aims, habits of life, and aspirations are in agreeable harmony with each other. I have always advised young persons to get married in early life, if a proper opportunity should present itself, and not wait for some imagined state of readiness and preparation anticipated in the future."¹⁴³ Further, he encouraged her to find someone close in age and "equal in other respects." For a twenty-three year-old woman dedicated to salvaging her family's legacy while earning a salary that would help support the family, this advice would have been embarrassing and discouraging. Even such a blatant and unsolicited reminder that she risked social censure for her decision not to marry, however, did not sway Adina from forging her own path.

That path included shunning an unambiguous chance to marry late in life (for the era) when Adina was thirty. While pursuing family business in at the state capitol in Austin, she apparently captured the attention of James Truitt, a state representative sixteen years her senior and divorced.¹⁴⁴ On March 27, 1891, Truitt penned a three-page letter to Adina in which he apologized for not getting to see her on Monday at the capitol after having said goodbye on Sunday evening. He had been called to another meeting and when he returned, the House had adjourned for the day "and the splendid hall, so lately adorned by your charms and graces, was silent and deserted."¹⁴⁵ The second page of the letter delineated his plans to interview Enrique Esparza, a purported survivor of the Alamo (and an historical "find" Adina would later claim as her own). On the last page, Truitt described his plans to visit her while on a legislative trip to Corpus Christi and Aransas and conveyed hints of his romantic interest in her.

My desire to visit the historic old city of San Antonio, always very great, has been very much intensified since I have met you and learned that it is your home, for you are one among the few young ladies I have met in life in whose heart and mind and soul I seem to find a perfect congeniality for my own, and as I crave the esteem and confidence of pure and noble women everywhere, I hope to be so highly favored by fortune as to deserve and win your friendship and esteem, so that when I return to the good old home in the east, I will have a sweet little friend in the great west, to whom I can turn, through the silent medium of the pen, for comfort and sympathy and

encouragement when the clouds of life hang low and the storm is raging around me.

He practically begged her to respond and “accord me the honor and the pleasure of a correspondence with you, if you deem me worthy of the honor.” One can imagine that while his attention surely flattered Adina, it may have intimidated her as well, inexperienced as she seems to have been with romantic relationships. At this point, she was thirty years old, teaching school, taking care of her family, and trying to obtain the property and remuneration that would provide her family future security. Having not inspired reciprocal feelings in Adina, Truitt remained only a friend.

In choosing not to marry, Adina maintained an isolation that characterized many aspects of her life. She seemed to trust few people, possibly due to a strained relationship with her mother, Julia. Adina did not speak of her mother, at least as can be deduced from articles about Adina, other than to say that she was Irish and of “patrician descent”¹⁴⁶ though there are no records to substantiate that claim. An article in the *El Paso Evening News* provides a little more color, stating that “the family, though partly of Spanish origin, as the name would indicate, is also descended from one of a number of Irish exiles driven out of their native country during some of the early religious wars.”¹⁴⁷ This same article carried the headline, “Miss Avena De Zavala, Savior of the Alamo” so arguably, if they did not get her name right, presumably the other “facts” are questionable as well. Further, given Adina’s affectations to fit in with elite Anglo society, had her mother possessed an impressive pedigree before immigrating with her family to Texas then surely Adina would have included those specifics in her living résumé.

Julia was, however, a very devout and probably very strict Catholic who expected the same of her children. Neither of her two surviving daughters ever married and, in fact, Adina lived with her sister Mary Katherine in a modest home on Taylor Street, near downtown San Antonio until Mary’s death in 1950. Julia’s two sons, however, seem to have caused her much grief. In a poem entitled “To Thomas from His Mother” on May 24, 1917, Julia wrote, “I do not

care what clothes you wear/I care not what you make/But oh, I long most anxiously/That we meet at Heaven's Gate. Then do not do the things I hate/The things that God condemns/For they will lead thee, dearest one/To dire perdition's fate. Oh, how I long and pray for thee/That whole, then be made free/To take once more, thy place be be/The child of God and me."¹⁴⁸ Though she does not name the sins that will leave him eternally in perdition, he left Texas for California and apparently walked a difficult path characterized by difficulty finding a job, managing money, and doing "things that God condemns," at least as his mother saw it.

Her youngest child, Augustine Peter, also came under Julia's moral scrutiny as evidenced by a codicil to her will that Mary copied and enclosed in a letter to him. She used the fact that the codicil was sealed (and that she had not filed it with the court) as a way to appeal to his gratitude (and pressure him to agree to the land sale she and Adina already had approved). "We did (and do not now) want your children or enemies to point to that and show a record against you," Mary wrote. In the codicil, written in her mother's "own handwriting," according to Mary, Julia stipulated the following: "A.P. can only have the lot on the Frederixburg [sic] road and alley. No more division, no more share. I have to find some one to put in his place. He cannot be executor of my will or have anything to do with it. No unnatural [sic] b___ that he is can I have handling my business when I am not here."¹⁴⁹ The word beginning with a "b" was erased, most likely by Adina. Unnatural bastard? Julia was married to Augustine Senior when he was born. Unnatural boy? Although married, this might suggest sexual preferences that would have offended Julia's Catholic-based sense of morality. Regardless, Julia clearly had dismissed him. Another document in Adina's papers depicts a man tormented by anxiety about his mother. Likely typed by Augustine Peter's wife, with a hand-written notation at the bottom reading "ca. 1936-37," the entry appears to be a biographical statement that begins with his efforts to start a bank in Oak Cliff/Dallas. However, the statement quickly becomes personal. "He has the sweetest [sic] disposition but sometimes he gets hell in him then his mama dont [sic] love him much, but when

he is sweet I adore him.”¹⁵⁰ “He says he loves me, but sometimes I doubt it because he gets so croos [sic] with me and I get so hurt I am sick and heart sore.” Clearly, Augustine’s relationship with his mother was problematic, as it became for his wife. Julia, it seems, maintained a very rigid posture with her children, even in death. Demonstrating her Catholic convictions, Julia’s will stipulated that if her children sold any of the inherited land, and they themselves had children, the proceeds from the sale must be used to educate the grandchildren in Catholic schools.¹⁵¹

While there are several photographs of Julia among Adina’s papers, no personal letters, cards or other expressions of Julia’s maternal sentiment can be found. However, in one of Adina’s “journals”—a teacher’s ledger in which she scribbled random notes and had saved various news clippings and inspirational quotations – was taped a rather telling column from the *Ladies’ Home Journal* (date unknown). Titled “Mother and Daughter” and sub-titled “There Should Be Perfect Confidence Between Them on All Subjects,” the column suggests that until a woman is married, her mother should be her best friend. “How many of you mothers can say that you are your daughters’ most intimate friends? I am afraid very few. Where does the fault lie, and is it altogether on either side? Perhaps it is chiefly with the mother, who does not take advantage of her opportunities to win the confidences of her child for life.”¹⁵² Because this column was taped in Adina’s journal, it obviously resonated with her perhaps because it was a reminder of how her own mother had failed to earn Adina’s confidence? “Every child has an individual character that may be modified by training or by circumstances,” the column continued, “but can never be wholly changed. Different temperaments require varied treatments, some yielding more and some less to the influences brought to bear on them. Do you realize that you are molding your child’s mind by daily touches, each one too slight in itself to effect any result, yet all together giving it as a bias that alters to whole?” (Having all but eliminated Augustine Peter from her will, Julia does give the impression of a mother who could be excruciatingly cold.)

The column then delves into more pointed territory, which may explain Adina's future as a childless spinster. "There are many things which a girl should learn from her mother, and which it would be easy for you to tell her, if there were an unbroken habit of confidence from earliest childhood. It is a mistaken idea – so utterly false and mischievous it must have been originated by the very spirit of evil – that there is a want of delicacy in a mother speaking to her child of subjects which are absolutely essential to her future welfare. How a mother can be cruel enough to let her child go forth to meet life unprotected by such knowledge passes comprehension." From the preceding sentences, which address "approaching danger" and "veil of ignorance," it is obvious that the column is urging mothers to talk openly with their daughters about their sexuality. "When your little girl comes to you with questions about the mysteries of life which trouble her innocent soul, never put her off with foolish legends and explanations which do not explain," the column continues. In other words, impose neither guilt nor judgment nor shame. Nothing can explain Adina's preservation of this column other than that it served as a reminder of how her mother had failed her in this regard.

In perhaps the most significant section of the entire column, though not highlighted in any way by Adina, are words concerning marriage. "As she grows older do not be afraid to talk to her of the sacredness and beauty of the love and marriage that has not been thought unworthy of being chosen as a type of relation between Christ and his church. She will not indulge in silly flirtations if you have done your part faithfully. She will know that while love is the crown of a woman's existence, it may never come to her, and that marriage without it is a mockery of the consecrated name." This last sentence is interesting for many reasons: first, there are indications that Adina did have at least one love interest as a young woman, though she never married. Second, she may have seen an unhappy marriage with her parents that she did not want to emulate. The only clue to support this theory is a photograph of Augustine De Zavala, found in Adina's papers at Incarnate Word University, on which a poem taken from a newspaper has been taped.

Written by Kathleen Kavanagh in August 1882, the poem's title, "Too Late," sums up the sentiment.

O, had I known thou would'st so soon have died, I would have been more tender, darling, still, Ay, lingered longer, closer at thy side, And done more lovingly thy will. O, had I known though would'st so soon have died, My kisses would have been more fond, more sweet, I would have bid thee fondly, 'gently chide, Content but kneeling at thy feet. O, had I known thou would'st so soon have died, A thousand ways would I my love have shown, A thousand times my foolish pride denied, Had I but known, had I but known.¹⁵³

Augustine was a relatively young man, just sixty-two years old, when he died; unlike Augustine's mother Emily, Julia never remarried. One can assume this poem, as positioned in tribute to her husband, served as a cruel reminder that she had neither loved nor cherished her husband enough. How happy could the De Zavala home have been? That two beautiful daughters never married and instead, ended up sharing a home, and that two sons each would disappoint their mother, suggests a degree of rigidity and unhappiness that the De Zavala siblings would try to rectify in their own ways.

The difficult relationship Julia had with her children, and perhaps her husband as well, offers a strong explanation for why Adina did not form close attachments in her adult life.

For Adina, reciprocal romantic love proved elusive. However, she wanted such an attachment, as one of the most touching letters in her archives indicates. Within one journal kept in those years, drafted letters suggest that she cared for someone very deeply but wanted that affection to remain secret. In barely legible script, written in pencil, Adina scrawled several draft letters to "Boy," where she waxed eloquent about quotidian affairs as well as deeply religious sentiments, only hinting at her deeper feelings. "Dear Boy... We can never be happy unless we learn His will and obey it. All can of the world serve, and esteem themselves happy in serving the great and mighty Lords of the earth. Then truly ought His greatness be happy to serve the greater Master of the Universe. We were placed on earth for this intent, and the moment God created us

he stamped on our very being, and engraved in our souls, these words, ‘The Lord, thy God that thou adore and Him only shall thou serve,’ she wrote.¹⁵⁴ After a two-page treatise on God’s will—perhaps expected of a morally upright female, but surely not the way to win a young man’s heart—Adina hinted at deeper interest. “First, so, you have a good young friend there to who you are much attached, and I am glad to hear it and hope she will take good care of you, and give you good advice. And you must take it. Have you told her about me? Hasn’t she blue eyes like mine? I (am planning) to get some more pictures taken next Saturday, if the weather isn’t severe, and will send you one of them, at least, to look at.” Later, she scolded him for his tobacco use, which she called “the main trouble.” If he would “loosen the bonds of that fierce master that you may find you a free man indeed,” she wrote, “If you realized how much I desire it and how deeply I love you and it would be one of the deepest, truest pleasures of my life.” It is unclear if she was referring to his smoking cessation, or his understanding of her feelings for him. Her awkwardness—hoping for remembered personal features, but with an authoritarian resolve—continued in their short correspondence. In another draft letter, she wrote of her attempts to help him find work in Terrell. She had spoken with a man named Dulling, she wrote, who said, “Numbers of young men who live here offer to work for nothing until they thoroughly learn the business.” Regardless, Adina wrote, “I want you here and intend to ‘try and try again.’”¹⁵⁵ In one of the final notes to Boy, she gave a uniquely personal view of her own self-motivation. “It grieves me my dear to know that you do not feel happy or rather satisfied is the correct expression. Of course you cannot expect to make a fortune immediately,” she wrote. “It is generally true that unless you keep to some one thing and bring all your energies to it you will not succeed. The truth of the matter my boy,” she postulated, “is that you are not satisfied with yourself. Is it not?” And in a very prescient and revealing sentence, she offered this glimpse of herself: “Rest is not quitting the busy career. *Rest is the fitting of oneself to one’s sphere.*”¹⁵⁶

Eloquent or awkward, Adina's efforts to sustain this relationship failed. Convincing evidence indicates that the "Boy" to whom she wrote extensively in her journals was Burns Durham. Two letters in 1894 suggest that she had made a strong impression on him, and that he married someone else. On June 1, he thanked her for sending him the "little book" that caused him to "raise his standard of personal living" and that he "thinks of her often when he is smoking and wishes he had listened to her about quitting."¹⁵⁷ On October 16, he reported he had married on August 28 to "the best and smartest woman in Fort Worth and I am very happy in my new condition."¹⁵⁸ He apologized, writing that "I did not keep my promise to tell you some months before I got married, but while we had been engaged for a year or more we had not settled on the date until about a week before we married." One can imagine how painful this letter was for Adina to read. "I miss you, and wish you could meet my wife for I am sure you would love her as you do me if you were only acquainted with her." Romantic love, then, would not be the sphere to which Adina would fit herself. Her key would be to find the sphere that suited her.

Meanwhile, Adina's brother, Thomas, left Texas for Los Angeles and corresponded with Adina only to beg for money. "If I had \$20 I could leave this town and try to get a job in some country town or in the country," he wrote her in 1899. "If I had money I think I could get a job from one of the employment bureaus here. If you would rather have me wait and get work in town send me some money at once. I will pay it back. Don't send less than \$20 for I want to get a good place near town (out of the small pox district)."¹⁵⁹ In the same letter, he employed guilt to make his point. "I want to make a man of myself," he wrote, but "I guess I will have to be a common bum." A few weeks later, he sent her another letter, this one more urgent in tone. He wanted to "learn the cyanide process" and if Adina would only agree to loan him \$10 per month, he could repay her \$50 for every \$10 she loaned him. "The people I met here are all rich and 'tony' and I want to make them think I have something if I haven't," he confided. Nowhere in the letter did Thomas inquire about Adina or the rest of the family. Presumably, Adina was shrewd enough to

reject Thomas's "deal." It is unclear how Thomas's life progressed, though he did stay in California, married, and had children. Another suggestion that the family dynamics were troubled, Thomas ultimately abandoned the family in a most dramatic manner, legally changing his last name to "Dailey" after his mother's death in 1918. (San Antonio paper, date) For him, the De Zavala name and all that it implied must have been a hindrance, if not a liability, to his new life in southern California.

While Thomas detached himself from the family name, he—like the rest of the De Zavala heirs – was keenly interested in keeping the De Zavala land in the family. When Thomas died in 1921, his will deeded his land holdings back to Adina; once Adina died and her will was in the process of being probated, Thomas's sons, Thomas and Michael, filed suit to challenge Adina's estate for what they believed belonged to them.¹⁶⁰ It is unclear how this was resolved. What is clear, however, is that the family's land – not just what they owned, but what they believed had been taken from them – wielded a powerful psychological force in their lives. Over her lifetime, Adina made sure to protect almost obsessively those family assets she could.

Lands and Lies

The most important generator of that return to the land issue was a family member not discussed earlier: Lorenzo de Zavala's adopted son, Henry. Despite his key role, Adina saw him as more of a liability than an asset to the family. A practicing attorney in New York, Henry apparently began a correspondence with Adina around September 1879, when she was not quite eighteen years old. Along with news about his wife and children, he referred to her father's "rheumatic troubles," which she must have shared with him. He then stated he was glad his own family was well because if they were not, "I do not know what we would do, as I can hardly make enough money to live now,"¹⁶¹ a curious bit of information to share with a young niece he had not yet met. But references to financial worries peppered his correspondence and undoubtedly informed his later machinations to find the "missing" de Zavala monies.

Henry spent his life in New York, seemingly estranged from the rest of the de Zavala family except for Adina. A letter from Henry to Adina in 1882, after his mother's death and his own recovery from an illness, outlines many of the unpleasantries that would characterize continued correspondence with him. He started with a complaint. "I wrote to none of my family, and now just as matters began to be brighter, I have to mourn my beloved mother, and it all seems like fearful dreams."¹⁶² The rest of the letter conveyed the good fortune he believed would be his as the result of a seven-year long suit against the government, the welfare of his family and his promise to send pictures once he could afford to have them taken. It seems his mourning of his mother occupied less emotional space than his financial affairs. His physical separation from his half-siblings was not the only distance he experienced. He wrote to his half-brother Augustine in 1889, lamenting his diminished position in the family and surprise at the circumstances that left him there. Transcribing in this letter a portion of another letter he had sent to his other half-brother Ricardo, Henry wrote,

You remember, some years ago, you wrote me that in several suits on your father's estate, my name was not put in. Well, I wrote to our dear Mother about it, and finally a little while before her death I received a letter which stunned me, in fact my long serious bilious attack followed it – in this for the first time I learned that when Mother married your Father she was a widow with me, a child, also that he promised (and she supposed it had been done) that I was legally adopted. I had been given his name and at times put out to school and always everywhere acknowledged and put forward by your Father verbally and in his letters, as his son, but it not have been by process of law I could only take his name – but inherit nothing. Of course that makes no difference – but now after 5 years hard work with the aid and services of other good lawyers I can see a way to get considerable money, which we have almost dug out, for the benefit of your Father's children or heirs and it pleases me mightily.¹⁶³

His disingenuousness is evident given his bitterness that he could not inherit anything, but he appeared to be weaseling his way into family significance if only by dangling the promise of fortunes to come. In the same letter, he expressed his interest in his mother's estate as derived from Lorenzo De Zavala "being her only prenuptial son, that is, born before her marriage to your

Father.” Finally, he wanted an agreement from the other heirs as to “what I can have,” believing that for his shares and services he should be entitled to fifteen percent of the net amount recovered.¹⁶⁴

Henry, by all accounts, was a greedy man on a mission. He kept this mission alive for years and involved Adina just as she was searching for an identity and trying to build a life of purpose. In a letter to Adina in 1889, he wrote that he had not heard from anyone in the family, except for her, in many years and in fact, had learned about his mother’s death not from family but from Mr. Hutchinson (his mother’s son-in-law).¹⁶⁵ Again, he complained about his financial affairs: “I have had 8 years of terrible distress, hard work, heavy expenses, sickness and impossibility to collect, my family have had to suffer privations, but I have kept up the struggle and thank God I can now see daylight ahead, the government at last in honest hands the claims I represent are being gone over and soon will be paid, when I will get all back in a lump that will make me easy for the rest.” Finally, he confirmed his estrangement from his family by writing that he was unaware of his brother, Ricardo, having had lost two of his sons, or of his having a daughter besides the one who was getting married. Clearly, Adina was his only connection with the De Zavala family. But her ears were enough to hear his promises and pursue his dream of landed wealth.

Was it her idea to involve him as a lawyer in efforts to recoup the missing assets? In September 1890, Henry’s tone had changed from a self-pitying uncle to a hungry attorney stalking its prey. “I asked you to find out certain things, but as yet have received no answer,” the letter began. Based on a decision by the U.S. Circuit “at the instance of the Haggerty heirs,” Henry wrote, “We are immensely hurt.” According to Henry, they were not likely to get their cash outlays back. Henry’s references to a lack of cash were compounded by Adina’s family’s weak position *vis-a-vis* other, more powerful claimants. The saga became even more complicated. Although he hoped that the suit would settle by the following February, another lawyer from

Galveston, Mr. Street, was representing the interests of a Mrs. Perry (descendant of Stephen F. Austin) to whom General Burnet had deeded his entire estate. His suit apparently sought the same lands as Henry's. "So you were right when you supposed they were working on the same lands I was," Henry concluded, and then urged her to keep Augustine from signing anything. "They have no foothold yet, and they must be kept at arms [sic] length. Let me hear at once any offers or requests made as the fight must be here as we are already in the U.S. Circuit Court – send them always to me. I have the contracts they want to know about, but General Burnet has already signed away everything and these lands (Tellman) wants belong to the estate of your Grandfather if we can only find them." In closing, he urged her again not speak of their efforts outside of the family, and to try to locate a copy of the schedule originally filed on Lorenzo De Zavala's estate.¹⁶⁶ Henry seemed to feel no compunction about putting Adina to work as his "go-for," researcher, and audience to his incessant complaints and excuses.

On occasion, Adina acted for herself though, exhibiting a confidence (if not bravado) that would carry her through many struggles where her social marginality left her weakened. Despite Henry's request that she not share information with anyone, Adina was not deterred. Her correspondence with Robert Street, the attorney representing Burnet's heirs in a claim against the New York parties, was one example. That attorney informed her that Burnet, "together with Vice-president de Zavala and Vehlein, entered into certain contracts in New York City on the 16th day of Oct., 1830."¹⁶⁷ According to Street's understanding, "absolute assignments or transfers of their contracts were made by the empresarios, but they each received back at the same time separate instruments from the parties to whom they assigned, showing what interest they retained." Such a record, if it could be found, would go a long way toward proving their claims. While Burnet's copy was lost, he was seeking "to find this instrument executed to Ge. De Zavala by Anthony Dey, George Curtis and William H. Sumner, that I may morally satisfy myself as to the merits of this claim."¹⁶⁸

Adina did not repeat to Henry what she learned, but also revealed that she had begun her own sleuthing. While attending a teacher's convention in Galveston, she decided to meet with Mr. Tellman, who had placed a local advertisement seeking information about the De Zavala grant. "They seemed to think me very harmless and I am sure I could find out a great deal of how they are working if it should be desirable," Adina wrote. Apparently, the Tellmans claimed possession of a letter written by Mr. Lee from Washington D.C. in 1867 to Judge Bailey of Galveston "in which he states that he encloses as proofs all original contracts, but that the former must be immediately returned as they belong to the Zavala heirs and he has promised to restore them to the administrator of the Zavala estate." Efforts to locate Mr. Lee, Adina wrote, had been unsuccessful. While much of the letter, which appears to be a draft, is illegible, she indicated that Mr. Street had talked to the neighbors at Zavala Point. "There is something strange going on," she wrote. "I think they consider us quite 'country backwoods' folks and therefore harmless. I like the idea. If I had only known how to act while in Galveston I might have accomplished more."¹⁶⁹ Presumably, the neighbors' opinion of Adina's family originated from prejudice, though Adina would not have articulated as such because she believed it far from the truth.

Henry clearly believed that his father had been cheated, but he also seemed to have believed his efforts merited greater consideration. His letters became more petulant. "I have been working on this matter for a long time and just as we begin to see daylight, the other parties are trying to make complications whereby they would get the fruits of my long labors and considerable money I have spent," he wrote to Adina.

After your grandfather's death, certain parties in N.Y. tried hard to steal all his large interests and after I found an award of \$50,000 by the U.S. to the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Co and had all the papers prepared and sent to Washington, I found that one 'Anthony Dye' had in 1856 made an application for all the right title of interest in and to said award by Lorenzo de Zavala – as a stockholder in said co. and was paid over \$7,000 in cash, as such interested. I also find on record an assignment by Lorenzo de Zavala to said Anthony of his interest in and to said shares. Of course I am satisfied it was a plain robbery, but no one of the Zavala heirs or administrators ever knew of said interest and even Lorenzo your uncle in Yucatan knows

nothing. Further, Dye has since died and only his grandchildren survived him. They are very poor tho' they could not be made to repay his stealings.¹⁷⁰

All that remained, then, was de Zavala's land, some of which the Tellmans had claimed and which, though to be conveyed back to the company, likely would not revert to the family. Henry believed he could still recover the one thousand shares in the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, eighty-five of which would go to the de Zavala heirs. "Even what I have got safe, will be of great benefit to us all," he wrote. Apparently, Lorenzo de Zavala and William Burnet had transferred land back and forth. Unfortunately, clear records did not exist to support what the de Zavala heirs had come to believe belonged to them. Henry, though, would continue to stir the pot.

During this time, Adina's father's health continued to decline, emphasizing for Adina her family's precarious economic situation. His imminent death seemed to be of less concern to Henry than the fact that he needed Augustine's signed power of attorney to continue representing their (but primarily *his*) interests. "I much regret your Father's sickness for now I must ask an adjournment til I can get his power or be compelled to state I am not empowered to represent, after commencing the suit in his, Lorenzo and Ricardo's names, but as I have their powers a settlement will be made with all represented. I hope by this time he is better and will hurry up his power as I cannot stand being placed in a false light right now."¹⁷¹ Henry then transcribed part of a letter Augustine had sent to him in 1889, in which Augustine expressed doubt that Henry's efforts would be successful. "I was surprised to hear that we had the slitest [sic] chance to recover anything from the Washington Bay Association and I doubt very much if it is worthwhile trying," Augustine wrote. Augustine was reluctant to risk any money up front, but agreed to give Henry fifteen percent of what might be recovered.

After sharing his frustration that Augustine did not send him the correct power of attorney, he told Adina that if he did not receive Augustine's power of attorney, he could not

represent him. Understandably, this veiled threat would have concerned Adina since without Augustine's involvement, his heirs would receive nothing. Assuming they won the suit, Henry explained that a condition of the settlement with the current landowners required the de Zavalas to repay them for the taxes that had been paid on the property. He wanted them to hurry, before other claimants entered the suit, "as the more stockholders left out, the larger would be our division." Finally, Henry told Adina that once this suit was resolved, he then would file suit against the State of Texas "for quite a handsome sum and as all the decisions so far are in our favor we think we shall get an award."

In Adina's papers, there is a copy of a power of attorney document for Augustine dated 1890, but it is unclear if her father ever sent a signed copy back to Henry. Henry wrote to Augustine directly, a few weeks before his correspondence with Adina, again urging that he sign the power of attorney and that while their first claim would be heavily reduced given the back taxes the trustees were to have paid (but didn't), "this first dividend is only the first fruits."¹⁷² In the next suit, Henry planned to "(represent) the Republic of Texas and Mexico where grants of land were originally made and afterwards annulled by Texas, thus cutting off our rights." In a letter to Augustine just one year earlier, Henry expressed his belief that the family had been cheated. "I say I feel perfectly sure of some good results, but Father's estate was badly swindled, nobody was dreaming of his rights, had I studied law in 1855 instead of 1875 you would all have been wealthy today, but now we will try to pick up the crumbs left."¹⁷³ Henry's plans were quite grandiose and, obviously, driven by his desires not to help the family, but to line his own pockets.

As the family began to express frustration with the process, Adina took it upon herself to contact state legislators requesting their assistance. This move was quite bold for anyone, but especially a woman of this time. Although the draft letter Adina sent to Governor Oran Roberts was not dated, she likely sent it in the spring of 1891, nearly seven years after he had counseled her to achieve her highest calling by getting married. In the letter, she expressed gratitude for the

Governor's interest in helping her family. "You have done immeasurable good and I feel our claim will go through next term which without your calling attention to it would have been (extremely?) doubtful," she wrote.¹⁷⁴ "I shall try to have everything ready to take advantage of any opportunity that may arise at the called session." Further, she attached a copy of a letter she sent to Colonel Andrew Todd McKinney, a Texas legislator representing Huntsville and a member of the Sam Houston School Board of Regents whom she had implored to provide help or suggestions that might move legislation forward. He responded to her on March 6, 1891, assuring her that he would "do what I can to secure the passage of a bill to afford the desired relief," but he expressed doubt as to the feasibility of such an effort given that the session was near its close.¹⁷⁵

He was right. "The bill, which I (illegible) to amend failed to pass – and no appropriation of the five million of acres was made," he wrote.¹⁷⁶ "There will be no difficulty, I think, in securing favorable action in the memorial – if you will have several hundred copies printed so that each member of the (illegible) can fully understand it. If this had been done in the early part of this session a favorable result could have been attend. I must suggest that the reason for the delay in presenting the claim be fully set forth. This is important in my judgment. If in the preparation of this supplemental memorial you should deem my opinion of value, I will carefully examine same when prepared and suggest any changes or addition to may occur to me. I have talked the whole matter over with Gov. Roberts, and we agree fully about the matter."¹⁷⁷ While Adina had successfully interested a few influential legislators in the family's cause, their climb would continue to be uphill and, based on the land the family owned by the time of her mother's death in 1918, it would appear the family was not successful in its efforts.

In June 1891, Adina wrote to George W. Gibbons in New York, presumably an attorney, sharing her concerns that Henry was working to obtain family members' powers of attorney, but keeping the family ignorant about how the assets would be divided. She suggested they may have to consider revoking the powers of attorney, as they did not know where the suit was filed or if

any judgment had been rendered.¹⁷⁸ That same month, Lorenzo Jr. wrote to Adina about her efforts to get the Texas Legislature to remunerate the De Zavala heirs for services Lorenzo De Zavala rendered as empresario. “I am glad however that you entertain some hopes that the bill in our behalf will ultimately pass favourable to our claim which is a very just one, as has been declared by all the members who so far have examined it,” Lorenzo Jr. wrote.

His confidence in Henry, however, had diminished considerably and it appears he suspected Henry’s motives. “Uncle Henry has not written to me since last November. He did not even acknowledge the receipt of the power of attorney I sent him, as I told you in my last letter. I really don’t know what to make of it. We shall, of course, through [this man], ascertain what Uncle Henry has accomplished in regard to the business he has in hand and which interests us. I very much fear that we may have very little to expect from that quarter. I am of your opinion on that subject.” Then, in a profound statement that illustrates not just the family’s reduced circumstances, but Adina’s fundamental motivations, Lorenzo Jr. closed the letter: “Well, my dear Adina, such is our luck to live on hopes and expectations that perhaps are never realized. You suffer much, I perceive, from the anxieties and disappointments this world is filled with. But we ought never to despair. We must pray and trust on the Almighty that we will one day be relieved from the sad condition in which we are at present.”¹⁷⁹

The family’s “sad condition” most certainly was financial, though Adina’s immediate family still owned the land at Zavala Point as well as the farm at Shavano (Locke Hill). But perhaps Lorenzo Jr. also was hinting at the larger issue of Tejanos being denied that to which they were entitled under earlier governments. He lived in the Yucatan at this time, but arguably would be aware of the race- and class stratification that now characterized relations between Anglos and Texans. Well into the 1930s, the De Zavalas still were trying to resolve what had happened to the lands and money they believed they were owed, but two new twists appeared in the form of letters to Augustine Peter De Zavala, by then working as a banker. First, Augustine Peter received a

letter in 1934 from Carlos Gutierrez Zavala in Mexico, who presented himself as the nephew of don Albert de Zavala, whose family were “direct descendats [sic] of don Lorenzo de Zavala.”¹⁸⁰ His uncle, Zavala wrote, had been “engaged in investigating the extent of our rights on the aforementioned property,” the Victor Blanco Grant in Harris County. Since his uncle’s death, Zavala wrote, nothing had been done on the matter. However, the Mexican government had become involved to “further the claims of Mexican Citizens on property lost at the end of the war in 1847.” Interestingly, Zavala stated that the matter was proving difficult to resolve because “according to the majority of historians, our ancestor aforementioned was responsible for the loss by Mexico of the State of Texas.”¹⁸¹ Accordingly, the government “might think itself justified in appropriating any indemnity which might be obtained with the aid of the documents which my late uncle worked so much to compile.” He recommended that Augustine Peter, who purportedly had been sharing information with Alberto de Zavala, “continue the investigations in private” and agree to work with Carlos Zavala to determine if other heirs in the United States “have taken any further steps on the matter, and who are the present proprietors of the land.”¹⁸² No other correspondence with Carlos Zavala could be found in Adina’s papers. According to this exchange, the Mexican government essentially blamed Lorenzo De Zavala in part for the country’s loss of Texas, meaning his reputation might be sullied in his own country. For Adina, who recognized in Lorenzo’s achievements the seeds of her own identity, the work of showcasing his statesmanship to both Texas and earlier, to Mexico, likely took on even greater importance. After all, her legacy and identity were dependent upon his.

In a second twist just five years later, Augustine was contacted by an attorney from Houston inquiring if there was a Pedro De Zavalla related to their family, as this man had claimed he was the sole heir to property that had been deeded to Lorenzo De Zavalla Jr. “The facts seem to be that this Pedro, while he may be the son of a Lorenzo de Zavalla, is not the son of Lorenzo de Zavala, Sr., or Jr., above referred to, but aside from the fact that all interest and title in this

property of the true Lorenzo de Zavalas was conveyed many years ago, as shown by our public deed records, this recent conveyance by said Pedro de Zavalla casts a cloud upon the titles of the holders under the true Lorenzo de Zavalas until it is shown that said Pedro, although he may have been the sole heir and son of some Lorenzo de Zavalla, had no connection with the original de Zavalas above referred to.”¹⁸³ While the obvious clue that Pedro is in no way related to the Lorenzo De Zavalas can be seen in the spelling of his last name (with two Ls), the attorney requested family information about Lorenzo De Zavala and his heirs “so that it can be definitely shown that there was no Pedro who was the son or heir of either of the Lorenzos.” He concluded the letter with the reassurance that the family, of course, would “not want this confusion and uncertainty as to relationship between this Pedro de Zavalla and your family and ancestors to be given, or have a place in the public records of this county.” A draft letter from Augustine to Mr. Graves, with Adina’s edits, confirmed that the family had no knowledge of “Pedro.” “I am inclined to believe that there is something ‘rotten in Denmark’ about ‘Pedro’ and if he did so state that he is the sole and only son and heir of Lorenzo de Zavala...then he is an imposter.”¹⁸⁴ Further, to “see these things cropping out from time to time – convinces us that there was little or any of this land sold or properly and legally disposed of but still belongs to we heirs.”

Though it is unclear how this situation was resolved, the fact that someone was seeking to capitalize on the de Zavala name—even when the name was spelled differently—perpetuated Adina’s anxieties about threats to their financial security. Further, it suggests that the issue of land grants and subsequent conveyance, transfer and inheritance of those grants remained a very murky issue. And, a very enticing one to those who hoped to profit from family ties, dubious and even fraudulent though they may have been. Adina’s trust had been betrayed by her uncle, by Burns Durham, and quite possibly even by her father who had left the family in a financially weak position. Knowing other people were attempting to claim part of the legacy that belonged to her family surely exacerbated her worries about a secure future.

Legacy

At the same point that financial pressures pushed Adina to look for new sources of income including the protracted fight to recover lands and monies purportedly owed to Lorenzo de Zavala's heirs, her own curiosity about her family's past and rising statewide interest in the unique history of Texas pulled her into a new preoccupation with Lorenzo de Zavala's past.

During the years in which Adina was searching for a way to make a living, and perhaps dealing with her own decision not to follow the typical path of women in her era, the new history fad prompted a number of inquiries and thus, indications to Adina that her grandfather's contributions played an important role in the state's history. The same year as her father's death, Adina fortuitously received a letter from Parma Fisk telling her that a Mr. Corner (William Corner) of Bainbridge and Corner wanted Adina to provide a history of the Lorenzo De Zavala family for a book he was writing.¹⁸⁵ (This book, *San Antonio de Bexar: A Guide and History*, was published in 1890.)¹⁸⁶ This renewed interest in Texas's rich history in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries stemmed from Texans' "distancing themselves from the memories of the Civil War era – memories associated with slavery, defeat, military occupation, and poverty."¹⁸⁷ By emphasizing Texas's heritage as a "quintessentially *American* state whose identity sprang from the hardy pioneers who tamed the wilderness and defeated the Mexicans in the Texas Revolution," the state could detach itself from its Southern heritage¹⁸⁸ and take its rightful place as another chapter in America's Manifest Destiny narrative.

Growing interest in Lorenzo de Zavala signaled to Adina that his past would prove the ticket to her future and give her an identity of which she could be proud. Another letter arrived in 1894 from William Gwinn Scarff, publisher of the *Texas Magazine* in Dallas, who was working on "A Comprehensive History of Texas." He asked her advice as to who should author the section about Lorenzo De Zavala, and requested that she send him any photographs or images she might have of him.¹⁸⁹ A second letter from Scarff one year later indicated that Adina had procured and

sent two images, which “will be engraved at an early date and the originals promptly returned to you.”¹⁹⁰ Interestingly, the illustrated images of Lorenzo de Zavala as saved among Adina’s papers reveal a man of very light complexion, lighter than her father seemed to be in his photographic images.¹⁹¹ At a time of a growing racial divide between Anglos and Mexican immigrants, the fact that her grandfather looked North European, rather than Mexican, would fit with the growing emphasis on “Spanish” heritage.

Initially, Adina did not know much about her grandfather. He had died when her own father was just four years old and his widow, Emily West de Zavala Foch Hand, kept occupied with new family responsibilities and died herself in 1882, apparently without passing on many family stories. Beginning in the 1880s, Adina initiated an extensive correspondence with her paternal uncle, Lorenzo de Zavala, Jr., who lived in Mexico. (His mother, Lorenzo de Zavala’s first wife, had never left Mexico when her husband left to explore diplomatic and economic opportunities in Texas and New York.) Early in their correspondence he admonished her gently. “You must also bear in mind that I am writing in a language which is not my own and of course I have to be more careful and to work a little more. But no matter; I feel perfectly happy to write you and to receive letters from you.”¹⁹² In the same letter, he shared that he, too, had become the subject of some interest; he wrote that H.A. McArdle, “painter and sculptor residing at Independence, Texas, has also written to me stating that having been commissioned by the surviving veterans of San Jacinto to paint the surrender of Santa Anna, on which I acted as interpreter as well as my being, in his opinion, otherwise, a conspicuous figure, it becomes all important that I should appear on the canvas. What do you think of this, my dear niece? I think it is giving me more than I deserve. Mr. McArdle earnestly requests my picture and I will try and send him one, besides the one I here enclose for you.” Although he chided her for her own distance from her Spanish-speaking heritage and felt obligated to remind her of his own part in Texas’s history, by 1889, Lorenzo, Jr. promised to “give...all the information you are desirous to

have in regard to my father, your grandfather's public life, chiefly that part in connection with the events that brought about the Independence of Texas."¹⁹³

Of particular importance is Adina's awareness that both research and imagination would be required to create the past Texans now wanted. The emerging interest in the stories of Texas's founding proved a timely opportunity for Adina to position herself and her family as rightful members of "Texas royalty" and ignited her passionate and near-obsessive work to document her version of family history. As represented through the hundreds of personal papers she left behind, Adina wrote copious notes on every scrap of paper at her disposal, and in every manner of penmanship, direction, and format imaginable. On the back of the initial particular letter from Parma Fisk, she had scribbled notes not about Lorenzo de Zavala, but about her grandmother, Emily de Zavala, suggesting she had grown up hearing more about her grandmother's life and adventures, than of Lorenzo's. Adina described Emily de Zavala as "above medium height, beautifully long dark hair and gray eyes. Her figure is superb. At the court of St. Cloud, anywhere she accompanied my grandfather when he was Minister of the Plenipotentiary to the Court of France, she was considered the most beautiful woman there and many were the enemies she deceived. She was always cheerful."¹⁹⁴ These fanciful phrases, perhaps drafts of an article she hoped to write, indicate a willingness to see her grandparents in a romantic light.

For Adina, whose father must have seemed average, if not completely lackluster, in comparison to Lorenzo, information about her important ancestor as well as the lands to which his heirs may have been entitled provided important ingredients in the identity she would create for herself. Her family legacy, as she discovered and leveraged it, opened possibilities that would not otherwise have existed for Adina given the limited options available for women at this time, not to mention women of ethnicity. She had worked as a teacher, first in Terrell, Texas and subsequently in San Antonio, and correspondence suggests she was not particularly fulfilled or happy.¹⁹⁵ Lorenzo De Zavala's contributions purportedly helped legitimize the Texians' quest for and

realization of independence from Mexico among Tejanos. Now, his contributions – as Adina learned about them, edited them, and then helped to propagate them – could help secure the family’s future while giving her an identity for which she had been searching. Or so she hoped.

Adina’s concerns about how she and her family were perceived by those she believed more elite seemed to permeate everything that she did. Aside from the family’s focus on recovering land and money, the issue of Henry’s adoption would represent another source of anxiety for Adina, who visited him and his family in 1900. By this time, Adina had immersed herself not just in the legal and legislative efforts to recover family lands, but in her work to preserve the heritage of Lorenzo de Zavala as well as her leadership of the De Zavala Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, a group she organized in 1889.¹⁹⁶ She sought cultural currency, necessary for an unmarried woman with a Mexican last name but social aspirations living in a racially divided San Antonio. De Zavala’s legacy, then, would need to be spotless even if it is evident from some of his choices that his perceptions of morality varied according to circumstance.

As a devout Catholic, Adina surely was aggrieved to learn that Lorenzo had betrayed his first wife with Emily West, purportedly a “widow” with a young son, but whose first marriage cannot be proven. Not only did he enter an extramarital relationship; they conceived a child the same month his wife died in Mexico. Clearly, this was not behavior befitting a hero, at least not in Adina’s eyes, so she was motivated to explore “the truth.” From New York, she shared her findings with her sister Mary. “Poor Uncle H. I really am sorry for him, but he need not fear. I shan’t do anything to make him nervous,” she wrote. “He really is a lovely man. Has a fine disposition and kind and generous as can be. He is very fine looking too. They intend I should see everything. I saw Erasmus Hall where he and papa went to school.” Then, she hinted at the nature of her investigation. “Does Grandpa’s diary say where he and Grandma were married or when? This is for my own private use.”¹⁹⁷ She concluded the letter with a request that Mary send

a picture of their home in San Antonio “if the picture of the house isn’t ‘tacky.’” Sadly, even as she was in New York to investigate her uncle’s credibility, she still worried about impressing him and his family.

A few months later, Adina – still in New York – sent another letter to Mary, written on letterhead from R.H. Macy and Co.’s Ladies Parlor. “Enclosed my latest find. Take care of these don’t even misplace them. Not even the priest knows I found this as I told him I did not find anything I wanted. I don’t believe everything as it is there. I know how the whole thing was now. I hope no one else will find what I have. Guess they won’t bother but Jack [Henry’s grown son] is terrible! He is quite unstoppable but I think I can satisfy him by telling him there is nothing.”¹⁹⁸ She had attached to this hurried correspondence her transcribed record taken from page 131 of the church register, written in Spanish. In the record, she found (if she did not already know) that her father was born just two months after Emily West and Lorenzo De Zavala married. More importantly, though, the record showed that Henry, born in 1828 and baptized with Augustine on May 11, 1832, was the “adopted son of D.L. Zavala and Emilia West.” This finding may suggest that Emily was not Henry’s birth mother. Adina also may have concluded that Henry was Emily’s bastard son, casting her grandmother in an even more unseemly light than the pre-marital conception of her father already had.

The possibility that Lorenzo de Zavala’s name and, by extension, Adina’s name could be sullied if the “truth” emerged about his marriage and children inspired Adina to carefully shepherd his legacy, even when that meant obfuscating some facts and embellishing others. The most obvious example is her decision, after her father’s death, to change the spelling of the family’s last name from de Zavala to De Zavala, believing that capitalizing the “D” reinforced Lorenzo De Zavala’s aristocratic image.¹⁹⁹ In another example, Adina claimed that Emily West De Zavala “gave up her home to those sick and wounded at San Jacinto, in 1836, and after the return of the De Zavalas from Galveston, often visited and cheered the sick and wounded in the home.”²⁰⁰ In

actuality, the De Zavalas had fled their home and hid at William Scott's home after hearing that Santa Anna and his troops were in neighboring Harrisburg, "intent on capturing Burnet and Zavala."²⁰¹ They remained there until after the Battle of San Jacinto and upon their return, found that "Texas army doctors had appropriated Zavala's house for a hospital."²⁰² In a draft of what appears to be a petition to deed the site of the De Zavala Cemetery at De Zavala's Point to the State of Texas, Adina glorified her grandparents' "sacrifice" even further. "Whereas V. President De Zavala, who died November 17, 1836, lies therein, And Mrs. De Zavala, who gave up her home to the sick and wounded at the battle of San Jacinto and camped in the fields with her husband and little children in order to be near to assist the suffering, is also buried therein..."²⁰³ From what has been written about Mrs. De Zavala, she most certainly would not have camped in a field. According to Henson, she was described by William Fairfax Gray, a visitor to their home, as a "fine beautiful woman with black eyes, a 'tall, dignified person' with 'ladylike manners.'" Gray had learned from a neighbor, however, that "Zavala was losing his popularity in the area since Emily's arrival."²⁰⁴ Gray noted in his journal, "Unfortunate woman, she is too refined a lady for this sphere." By Adina's version, however, the "De Zavalas" were well-respected, charitable, and courageous.

She worried also about Emily West de Zavala's legacy. Not only did Emily engage in a relationship with a married man, gallivanting with him to Paris while his first wife suffered in the Yucatan, but she also conceived a child out of wedlock. Adina also knew that her grandmother shared a name with a famous mulatto courtesan, who had traveled with Captain Morgan on the same boat from New York to Texas as the de Zavalas. While the debate is too lengthy and detailed for the purposes of this paper, some historians have grappled with the existence of two Emily Wests who came from New York to Texas at approximately the same time. The first Emily West was married to Lorenzo de Zavala. The other Emily West, to whom the moniker "Yellow Rose of Texas" was given in tribute to her supposed seduction of General Santa Anna just as the

Texian troops were waging their surprise attack, was mulatto. Journalist Denise McVea launched a detailed investigation into mystery of the two Emily Wests and in her book, *Making Myth of Emily*, she provides evidence to assert that there was only one Emily West, married to Lorenzo de Zavala and most decidedly a mulatto. As part of her investigation, she found it “necessary to take a good hard look at Adina,” McVea wrote, because Adina was the self-proclaimed family historian and had quite likely altered documents, or destroyed them altogether, to “obscure her grandmother’s race, and additionally, her life.”²⁰⁵

Among the items that could have shed light on Emily West’s family background was Lorenzo de Zavala’s diary, McVea contends, and while Adina had the diary in her possession, it somehow was not included in the inventory of family papers Adina donated to the University of Texas.²⁰⁶ “It is impossible to know how much Adina altered, destroyed or falsified in her zeal to protect herself and her family,” McVea wrote.²⁰⁷ While McVea’s thesis that Emily West de Zavala was the mulatto who seduced Santa Anna has been discounted by most historians, her analysis of Adina’s efforts to manipulate what would remain of the family records supports the idea that Adina carefully edited how her family would be portrayed.

In protecting the family by “padding the resume,” Adina decided to give Lorenzo de Zavala a more impressive title to substantiate his importance to the Republic of Texas and began referring to him as “General Lorenzo De Zavala” in her papers, as well as a chapter of her book, *History and Legends of the Alamo and Other Missions in and around San Antonio*, titled “General Lawrence De Zavala. One of the Makers of Texas, Honored in London, Paris, Madrid, and America, for Whom De Zavala Chapter was Named.” The “sketch,” as she called it, was read in 1915 to students at the De Zavala School in San Antonio as part of a ceremony in which a portrait of Lorenzo de Zavala was presented to the school. Interestingly, but not surprisingly given her clear desire to distance her family from that which was “Mexican,” she chose to Anglicize his first name. One can see the internal debate that must have plagued her: the sanctity of historical truth

and education versus a personal need for acceptance from the Anglo community. Ironically, she wrote that Lorenzo's "colleagues in the first Congress of the Republic of Texas, over whom he presided as the vice president of Texas, were constantly addressing him by one title or another to which he was properly entitled, but as a Democrat he opposed all distinctions and titles and it was distinctly distasteful to him to be addressed by a title."²⁰⁸ Adina must have believed that referring to him as "General," even as he neither fought nor was officially granted the honorary prefix, gave his legacy greater weight considering his extremely brief tenure as interim vice president. This story represents another fabrication, as Lorenzo de Zavala was too ill to attend any legislative meetings for the Republic of Texas and, in fact, resigned shortly after he was appointed.

What mattered more to Adina than absolute historical truth, however, was the identity she now had created for herself and her family. Heirs to extensive lands, ancestors of a Texas hero and international diplomat, and children of a patrician Irish woman and a Confederate blockade runner could not be marginal. By her careful cultivation, the De Zavalas were, in fact, socially on par with any of the other genteel Texas blue bloods whose names represented Texas royalty; the Houstons, Austins, Burnets, Traverses, and Lamars. At least, that is what she hoped. She would be proven wrong.

Chapter 3

An Identity Tested: “To Be Great Is To Be Misunderstood”

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, women across the nation began organizing historic preservation groups to give voice to their concerns about explosive industrialization and the social price it was exacting. Primarily from the upper class, these women believed their social position and gender required them to maintain and perpetuate traditional values that were at risk of obsolescence amidst so much radical economic and social change.²⁰⁹ This context greeted Adina De Zavala, a woman quite different from her peers. She was the main financial support of a family in decline, unlucky in love, and willing to brook authority as evidenced by her future actions on behalf of the Alamo’s preservation and her subsequent censure in 1907 by the San Antonio School Board for her “independent and insubordinate attitude toward the rules and regulations of the Board and her superior officers.”²¹⁰ Each of the major projects she undertook including the preservation of the missions, the Alamo and the Spanish Governor’s Palace, along with her writing, must be understood in the context of a solitary woman working to forge a meaningful identity and to lead a life of service, as she was encouraged to do by the nuns at Ursuline Academy in her formative years.

Many middle-class women of this era found a path to social relevance by organizing with other women to make a positive difference in society. Armed with information about her grandfather’s important contributions and infused with a desire to forge a future by saving the past, Adina made use of the women’s club movement to amplify her own personal interests. Unlike most women comprising this movement, Adina in no way could be called a “progressive” or a “reformer” as her focus was on preserving the past, rather than tangibly improving social conditions in the present or the future. While during this same era their middle-class counterparts tackled urban problems connected to rapid industrialization and immigration, immigrant assimilation, city beautification, and prohibition, Adina’s group often turned toward resurrecting

the national and local past. By restoring and preserving historic sites important to the nation's formation, these women were honoring and elevating the values they believed to be essential and timeless, regardless of a new social order: American exceptionalism, and an "outside other" against whom American traits of sacrifice, bravery, and service to a higher good could best be illustrated and sanctified. As Alice Ames Winter wrote in an essay in 1921 called "Women's Clubs To-Day,"

Women's clubs are distinctly all-American in their constituency; ranging geographically from the big city organization with its thousands to the little body of isolated farm women or the ranchers' wives who drive sixty miles across the waste to attend a meeting, and sell one of the cows to get money to go to a convention; ranging intellectually from the Ph.D. to the shut-in woman who, in her middle age, is groping toward 'culture'; ranging socially from the wage earner to the anathematized parasitic wife...²¹¹

By her description, "all-American" equated to "all Anglo." In another essay called "The Work of Women's Organizations," Lucetta C. Chase wrote in 1923 that women needed to organize as a way of adapting to a new social order in which women's relevance had been diminished since 1866 by industrialization and public education. "But at about that time men with their labor-saving machines for spinning, weaving, sewing, and manufacturing took the industries out of the home. The school took her children and she was left for the first time in her history with leisure – leisure in which to think and act. What was she to do then?" Many women seized the opportunity to work in the factories, though clearly these were not women of means. "Some merely sat in their beautiful homes and were content," Chase wrote, "while others, women who realized that with leisure comes responsibility, were the founders of the Women's Club Movement."²¹²

Women's organizations provided upper-class women with an opportunity to leave their homes and work on meaningful causes with like-minded women, while remaining true to their "sphere" as the keepers of morality. By involving themselves in the creation of a national narrative as illustrated and punctuated by the heroism and sacrifices of past generations, these women were inserting themselves into the world as political activists, thinkers and "doers" at a time when opportunities

for upper-class women outside of the home were limited.²¹³ In essence, they were demonstrating their political agency and relevance to nation-building beyond “producing more babies.”²¹⁴ According to historian Diane Barthel, women’s organizations enabled women to “create a new basis for community activity and identification.”²¹⁵

However, to suggest that all women who were involved in these voluntary organizations shared a single vision for society would be a mistake. The social elites saw the past as a way to “legitimate their present power and to maintain it in this new context” while social progressives sought to provide “an alternative to the human and natural costs of industrialization.”²¹⁶ Both groups, according to Barthel, opposed “the new industrial bourgeoisie, whose enterprises were destroying both the traditional countryside and the traditional social hierarchy.”²¹⁷ Yet, each would use the past to serve their present class interests.

Although Adina began her historic preservation work with modest and poorly funded efforts to restore the Mission San Jose, her commitment to save an important section of the Alamo (and the divisive, nationally publicized feud that ensued) served her best interests by allowing her to dismiss gender expectations, which called for her to marry and manage a household, and make a name for herself through association with the area’s cultural elite. That she was not of the same privileged background as most of the women she worked with (and against) did not seem to discourage her though her actions and words sometimes appeared hyperbolic, a common characteristic of those unsure of their own worth.²¹⁸ That her surname was Mexican did not overtly hinder her, at least not initially. In fact, the small group of women she organized in 1889 to explore and discuss Texas’s history and preserve the dilapidated missions would become the De Zavala Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in 1892, named at her urging for her esteemed grandfather.

Adina described her early organization as a “band of patriotic women” who “met occasionally to keep green the memories of the heroes, founders and pioneers of Texas” and to

“formulate methods of arousing the dormant patriotism of the majority of their fellow-citizens.”²¹⁹

These women would act “on belief that patriotism, like charity, begins at home.” Interestingly, Lorenzo De Zavala had had no association with San Antonio during his brief time in Texas, but Adina believed her grandfather’s name carried important historic weight and should be attached to the DRT chapter in San Antonio. His legacy alone, however, would not prove influential enough to give Adina the *carte blanche* she expected when trying to galvanize support for her vision.

Understanding the difficult road Adina De Zavala travelled to gain recognition for the heritage she valued requires examining the controversy over the Alamo, a fight for which De Zavala is most commonly remembered, though her grandfather was never there. Along the way, she both courted the help of her wealthy Anglo counterpart, Clara Driscoll, and then publicly challenged that counterpart’s legal authority when it became clear that her money and status would enable her vision – categorically different than Adina’s vision -- to be realized. This “Second Battle for the Alamo” enabled Adina De Zavala to make a name for herself. Unfortunately, it also served to alienate the very women with whom she wanted to be associated: “Texas royalty.”

De Zavala’s interest in the Alamo emerged from the building’s sacred role in the Texas Revolution, which had a disproportionate influence on the history she hoped to resurrect. Interestingly, as Michael Kammen wrote in *Mystic Chords of Memory*, while the Battle of San Jacinto gave Texas its victory over Mexico, “a far more important battle than the massacre at the Alamo, San Jacinto has never captured the public imagination as the Alamo has.” He attributes this to American’s “reputed reverence for success.” In shaping a national narrative, Kammen suggests that people believed it was necessary to illustrate cases of failure or defeat because they “not only are more honorable, but in many instances become more memorable than conventional victories.”²²⁰ Or, perhaps, because the exception disproves the rule: to be American means to ultimately triumph, no matter the price.

Built as the Mission San Antonio de Valero in the late eighteenth century, what is now known as the Alamo was the first of a series of Spanish missions built to “civilize” the natives. It joined a civilian settlement (the Villa de Béxar) and a military outpost (the Presidio de Béxar) as among the first foundations of Spanish colonial presence: San Antonio. Best known as the site of the Mexican army’s dramatic, bloody defeat of the legendary “insurgent” “Texians” fighting to make Texas a separate republic, the Alamo not only hosted one of the truly legendary battles in American history, it served as the subject of another equally aggressive battle between two warring forces, each dedicated to preserving some semblance of its legend, as well as its fact. What unraveled to become an acrimonious fight from 1905-1913 between two factions of the Daughters of the Texas Republic (DRT), led respectively by Adina De Zavala and Clara Driscoll, the wealthy heiress to a South-Texas land- and banking fortune, had started quite earnestly—or so it seemed—and with the best of intentions: to protect the Alamo from demolition.

Relatively little has been written in depth about this “second battle of the Alamo,” perhaps because the final outcome was a good one: the Alamo was preserved, as was the story of its place in Texas’s struggle for independence from Mexico. Yet, the emotionally charged feud between De Zavala and Driscoll bears studying for what it represents—far more than two distinct sides of the same preservationist coin. On a superficial level, this fight could be interpreted as nothing more than a battle of competing priorities—commercial interests versus historic appreciation and sanctification. The battle, however, was deeply rooted in what is a continued debate over what the Alamo represented and a number of related questions: Did it mirror the “Anglo” notions of courage, bravery, and desire for freedom? Or was it more properly a historically accurate but unpopular reflection of past defeats? Should Texans value the ideas of economic development (who we want to become) over history (how we got here)? And, at its ugliest and most covert, should Anglo memories supercede Mexican?

This “second battle of the Alamo” becomes all the more significant when studied within the historical context. In his article, “Public Visions, Public Culture: The Making of the Alamo,” Richard Flores contends that at this time of increased immigration and expanding capitalist economies requisite to modernization, people were searching for icons that could suit their ideological purposes. For Clara Driscoll, whose family of wealthy landowners and bankers represented one of the “founding Anglo families in South Texas”²²¹ and who had amassed their impressive land holdings throughout Texas²²² with a sense of Anglo entitlement manifest in physical force against the Tejanos,²²³ the prevailing ideology was capitalism trumping sentimentalism. For Adina, who spent the better part of the late 1880s and early 1890s trying unsuccessfully to prove her family’s rights to certain Texas lands granted to Lorenzo de Zavala, the battle over the Alamo’s preservation was, in fact, a fight to protect the existence of the Spanish influence in the past and relevance to the future of South Texas. She did not want that heritage erased, but carefully attempted to define it as somehow separate from Tejano or Mexican culture. In many respects, the commercialization and industrialization that fueled Texas’s explosive growth had left her family behind. Landowners but not manufacturers, professionals, or titans of industry, an increasingly commercialized future would render her family irrelevant in modern society. Preserving the past would mean that Adina and her family would still have a place in the new order. Accordingly, the dispute over the Alamo’s preservation can be viewed as a fundamental conflict over the direction of South Texas culture and whose priorities would prevail.

To those who even regarded the Alamo at that time, enveloped by ugly warehouses as it was, the Alamo was a polarizing place. For some, it represented “the symbol of the Texan and, by extension, American identity”²²⁴ or a “shrine to white patriotism.”²²⁵ To others, it was a sacred historic site where Tejanos fought alongside Anglo-Americans.²²⁶ This mixed mythology provides the background as well as the ongoing context for the impassioned fight from 1905-1913 between these two competing ideologies.

Interestingly, the story of the Alamo's preservation neither began nor ended with the Driscoll/De Zavala feud. In its 200-plus-year history, the Alamo has served myriad functions and purposes. One constant remains: since the dramatic defeat of the insurgent "Texians" by Santa Anna's Mexican army in 1836, the Alamo has held a place of iconic, if not dubious, honor not only as a seminal battleground, but as a popular tourist destination within just years of the fateful battle. As the result of failed orders by Santa Anna to his troops to raze what remained of the Alamo battle site, it languished as an ever-growing eyesore used only for the most utilitarian of purposes, for nearly seventy years before the Daughters fought for its preservation. But even in its deterioration, it was a compelling moneymaker—a drawing card for tourists, serving as a convenient golden goose for the locals by providing a poignant backdrop for colorful stories exchanged for hard cash. By the 1840s, the trade of historical mysticism quickly enveloped the Alamo, turning the Alamo into a destination that represented the southern-most point of the U.S. "Grand Tour" even as it proved difficult to reach.²²⁷ Plenty of local guides made their living telling tall tales of the battle of the Alamo and, as Bremer writes, "...the eventful history that visitors heard at the Alamo often differed in its details depending on who told the story."²²⁸

Tourism put San Antonio on the map as a target for capitalist expansion and only accelerated once the same changes reshaping the U.S. landscape swept into Texas. By 1877, the railroads enabled commercial expansion that drove the development of Texas's large-scale commercial agriculture. Many people believed these changes conspired to erode the "traditional, family-based, cattle ranching society of South Texas and reshaped it to the needs and logic of a market economy."²²⁹ Suddenly, telling tall tales for pennies paled in comparison to the allure of development money. But eventually, increased railroad traffic to San Antonio, inspired in part by the compelling historical mythology surrounding the Alamo, highlighted the fact that an important piece of history was being left to rot while the people of San Antonio stood by idly.²³⁰ What kind of people could allow that? San Antonians wanted the rewards tourism could yield, so they

needed to take action. While they recognized they could not catch up to other cities in terms of modernity, they realized they could rely on the city's "quaintness"—abundant in the form of antiquated missions including the Alamo—as a selling point.²³¹

Yet, this realization seemed mostly devoid of any sentimentalism or historical aesthetic. According to journalist Richard Harding Davis in 1892, "The citizens of San Antonio do not, as a rule, appreciate the historical values of their city; they are rather tired of them."²³² It seemed no one really appreciated the Alamo, yet no one wanted to destroy it either. In 1883, the Catholic Church transferred the Alamo church to the State of Texas but as time lapsed, the Alamo remained as it was, with no restorations completed.²³³ The building continued to be used for various purposes including military outpost and police station, but it was falling further into disrepair, casting a negative light on the image of a new American city that the burgeoning economy made possible. People who had visited the city expressed outrage over the condition of the Alamo.²³⁴ In 1882, a tourist wrote indignantly of his "amazement and disgust upon this my first visit to the old church fortress of the Alamo at finding the structure, so famous not only in the annals of history but the annals of liberty... filled with sacks of salt, stinking potatoes, odorous kerosene and dirty groceries."²³⁵ He went on to scold the people of San Antonio for permitting "a historic building like the Alamo, once consecrated to deity and latterly baptized in blood of heroes like Travis and Crockett, slain for the cause of liberty and democracy to become a grocery warehouse." As a result, in 1895, city leaders appointed a committee to clean up the site, as best they could.²³⁶ Yet, this effort would not stand on its own, particularly in the face of potential economic development in a city lacking any real form of industry.

Meanwhile, with more immigrants flooding into the United States and greater investments in capital to modernize industry,²³⁷ historical activism began to sweep the nation. People were looking to create a new nationalistic narrative by cherry-picking people and places from the past and repositioning them as patriotic props in a racially homogenized narrative about

what it meant to be an American, punctuated by themes of courage, freedom and opportunity. Adina joined this project with enthusiasm, writing that “the greatest heritage of the children of Texas and America is the noble example of its great men and heroes. Let us not forget their deathless deeds, for the moment we begin to ignore the sublime virtues exemplified by the noble souls of our race, our degeneration has begun.”²³⁸ Interestingly, she was not referring to the Tejano or Hispanic race, but alluding to the American—i.e., white—race. According to Fisher, “Adina De Zavala’s determined pursuit would not be derailed by controversy or insurmountable obstacles as she single-mindedly sought to instruct all Texans on the nobility of the character and sacrifices of the Texas patriots who had gone before.”²³⁹

Looking to substantiate her identity as a rightful member of “Texas royalty,” Adina had at least two personal stakes in the battle: her grandfather’s (tainted) legacy as an empresario and her sense as a devoted Catholic that these sacred buildings should be preserved. Already, she had worked to uphold her family’s legacy by seeking to prove the de Zavala family’s rightful ownership of lands throughout South Texas purportedly obtained through Lorenzo De Zavala’s empresario grant. If Lorenzo’s lands had not been commandeered by Anglos, Adina believed that they had been as evidenced by the years she dedicated to her campaign to reclaim family property. One also can surmise that this ill-fated personal campaign may have informed her later and more aggressive efforts to protect the memory of her grandfather’s and great-uncle’s efforts on behalf of the Republic of Texas. Moreover, as a devout Catholic, Adina could not countenance the continued decline of the historic missions, despite efforts by the Church to preserve these blessed buildings.²⁴⁰

Bolstered perhaps by her own passions for her family’s legacy and the preservation of an important church, Adina began her fight in 1889 when she organized a group of like-minded women who would work to uphold Texas’s history. As she wrote in her 1917 book, *History and Legends of the Alamo and Other Missions in and around San Antonio*, she organized a group of

women who were “the most prominent women of Texas, socially, intellectually, morally and patriotically.”²⁴¹ According to her own description of this group’s lofty purposes: “... a band of patriotic women in San Antonio associated themselves and met occasionally to keep green the memory of the heroes, founders and pioneers of Texas; to formulate methods of arousing the dormant patriotism of the majority of their fellow citizens; to devise ways of circulating and disseminating a wider knowledge of the history of Texas; and of instilling a love and proper pride in town, city, county and state...”²⁴² Hers was a near obsession to ensure that the history of Texas’s independence and its culture – both spiritually as well as politically – would not be left to deteriorate as surely as the walls that proved its existence.

Simultaneous with the formation of Adina’s group, a Houston group of wives, daughters and lineal female descendants of the men who served the Republic of Texas organized in 1891 to become the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. In 1892, Adina’s organization of women in San Antonio joined the Houston group and became the De Zavala Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.²⁴³ At last, Adina had achieved the first rung on her ladder toward memorializing – if only through name and association with other noble families – the memory of her grandfather and others whose efforts had helped secure Texas’s independence.

The De Zavala Chapter focused its early efforts on saving the missions and specifically, Mission San José, putting the Alamo and its old convent (“convento”) building squarely within Adina’s sites. The old convento *cum* long barracks had served many masters since 1836 and was purchased ultimately by Honore Grenet, who in 1878 framed the stone structure with wood to resemble a fortress. Following his death, his estate sold the modified *convento* to the grocery firm Hugo & Schmeltzer in 1884,²⁴⁴ which further modified the structure for use as a wholesale warehouse with attendant offices. Their alterations were such that many forgot that the original structure of the long barracks were still extant, only covered over with another framework. Such a fate was hardly a fitting existence for the site where the Battle of the Alamo’s bloodiest combat

occurred. Adina's belief that the old barracks were within, grounded in her own extensive research, was doubted by more powerful advocates of the Alamo though Adina would ultimately be proven correct. Adina dreamed of establishing a Texas Hall of Fame in the old convento, leading her to approach Gustav Schmeltzer in 1892 and secure a promise to give the De Zavala Chapter first right of refusal on any future sale of the Alamo property.²⁴⁵ At the time of their discussion, the building was still owned by the Hugo & Schmeltzer Company while the chapel was owned by the State of Texas.

Beginning in 1889 and continuing through her appointment to the DRT's Executive Committee in 1902,²⁴⁶ Adina led her like-minded sisters in the De Zavala Chapter with an equal measure of passion and ancestral righteousness, seeking to cast a permanent and respectful light on the early, positive Spanish influence on Texas via the Catholic missions, and eventually evolving to include the Texians' sacrifices for freedom from repression (as the popular narrative would perpetuate). But what her organization's efforts boasted in the form of spirit and passion, they lacked in actual financial and political muscle.

Meanwhile, a young ranching and banking heiress from South Texas had just returned to Texas from her Grand Tour in Europe, where her appreciation for the romantic allure of historic buildings wrapped in an evocative narrative of bravery and valor had been awakened. Clara Driscoll came to San Antonio and upon seeing the Alamo, found a project befitting her social standing and eventual political aspirations. She penned a righteously indignant and somewhat scalding letter to San Antonio's *Daily Express* in 1901 expressing her views on the condition of the Alamo:²⁴⁷ "There does not stand in the world today a building or monument which can recall such a deed of heroism and bravery, such sacrifice and courage, as that of the brave men who fought and fell inside those historic walls. Today, the Alamo should stand out, free and clear. All the unsightly obstructions should be torn away."

She was referring to the Hugo & Schmeltzer building, and many shared her view that the building (on top of the long barracks/old *convento*) should not be preserved. It was only the church, she (incorrectly) asserted, that had any significance historically – the barracks were merely a new addition, and an unsightly one at that.²⁴⁸ Shortly after Clara Driscoll’s impassioned letter was printed, Adina learned through friend and Italian-born sculptor Pompeo Coppini that a group from St. Louis had purchased the lot in the rear of the *convento* on which to build a hotel which they desired to face Alamo Plaza. They offered to “bear the expense of tearing down the walls and helping to build a park.”²⁴⁹

Reacting to this insider knowledge from the artist who had been commissioned to sculpt a piece for this future development, and whose wife had accompanied Adina to call on local merchants for contributions of cash or goods to repair Mission San Jose,²⁵⁰ Adina knew something needed to be done to prevent this development. As such, she joined Coppini to meet with Clara Driscoll, who was staying in the neighboring Menger Hotel, and to plead her case for the preservation of the Alamo. Believing she had found a powerful sponsor (while perhaps avoiding any detailed discussions of what the preservation efforts might involve, in her zeal to find an ally), and after hearing that the *convento* building was to be placed for sale, she and Clara arranged a meeting with Charles Hugo in 1903 to discuss purchase,²⁵¹ as per Adina’s agreement with Schmeltzer in 1892.

At first, the union of Adina’s passion and Clara’s connections, not to mention her fortune, seemed like an indomitable combination to save the Alamo and perhaps other historically significant sites throughout San Antonio. Clara accepted Adina’s invitation to join the De Zavala Chapter as treasurer and to lend her influence to the fight to save the Alamo. On the surface it seemed their visions for an Alamo monument to the Alamo’s heroes were aligned. But at the same time, Clara was “covering her bases” (or “double-dealing” depending upon one’s perspective). She used her financial investment as leverage with which to negotiate, behind the scenes, with the

powerful DRT executive committee in Houston and be named temporary custodian “as a small favor”²⁵² thus taking the custodianship of the Alamo from the arguably rightful hands of the De Zavala Chapter, even as she became publicly associated with that organization.

As the public quickly learned, Clara Driscoll was a force unto herself as a later commentator intoned: “Driscoll had enamored many in the DRT by her wealth and ability to work her way through bureaucratic obstacles.”²⁵³ This talent was particularly troublesome for Adina, as Clara’s actions soon revealed that the two were divided on the most fundamental of questions: what part of the Alamo should be memorialized? For Adina and her sisters in the De Zavala chapter, tearing down the old Hugo & Schmeltzer building was unconscionable because it had been constructed on the ruins of the Alamo mission’s convent, which originally housed nuns and priests but was later known as the long barracks during the Battle of the Alamo. They also stood firm in their statement that it was the long barracks where the most “Texian” blood had been shed. “The fighting and dying on March 6, 1836, after all, had taken place in the long barracks. Little blood had been shed in the Alamo chapel,” Adina wrote.²⁵⁴ She proposed instead that the Daughters would “carefully remove the building’s roof, rip off the external woodwork, and restore the exterior to its original condition.” These tasks complete, the De Zavala Daughters would turn the first floor into a museum and library, and establish a Hall of Fame honoring Texas’s heroes on the second floor.

Yet, this vision conflicted with the desires of the potential hotel developers, who wanted their hotel’s entrance to face their vision of an Alamo plaza, enhanced with a lovely garden and area for reflection. Clara Driscoll shared this vision, which decidedly did not include the long barracks. Clara’s interests appeared to be more focused on beautification that might enhance tourism than historical preservation. With apparent ambition, Clara would only fight a battle she could win as part of building her political foundation.²⁵⁵ According to Flores, “For her, the preservation of the Alamo was neither an act of restoration nor about recapturing or reestablishing

a link to a Spanish and Mexican past, but about remembering the past through a particular heroic code.”²⁵⁶ That code was one that served to strengthen the case for the economic growth of South Texas and its self-sacrificing Anglos. Before long, Clara had publicly deviated from Adina’s premise that the long barracks were worthy of preservation and focused instead on saving the church and developing a garden, as the hotel developers would appreciate. Clara’s change of heart created a philosophical wedge between herself and Adina – the two women most vocal and committed to the Alamo’s preservation.

Eventually, the DRT became an organization divided, with the Driscoll and the De Zavala factions of the DRT waging a bitter feud over custodianship of the Alamo and the proper presentation of its historic significance. Adina was defeated not only in the fight for custodial care over the Alamo, but she was essentially rendered irrelevant in the popular legend of the Alamo and its “savior,” Clara Driscoll. Although after eight long years Adina’s efforts would be validated when recovery work allowed the long barracks again to become a part of the historical site, her battle still was not over. To this day, Driscoll is lauded as the (singular) “savior of the Alamo” on a historical marker at the site, which also misrepresents her as motivated by concern for the long barracks, when in fact she never fought to save that part of the historical structure.

Follow the Money

Adina had exacted the first right of refusal from the Hugo & Schmeltzer company to purchase the land north of the chapel where the long barracks stood. Yet, when the time came for her to act on this agreement, the De Zavala Chapter was caught without the financial means to execute this agreement. Fortunately, Adina had shrewdly recruited Clara’s involvement in the cause and invited her to lead the Chapter’s fundraising efforts. Ultimately, the De Zavala Chapter’s efforts would hinge on the financial power Clara brought to the organization. Hugo & Schmeltzer wanted \$75,000 that the DRT did not have, so the owners agreed to give the women a one-year option to purchase the building—thus giving them more time for fundraising efforts—in

exchange for \$5,000, with an additional \$20,000 to be paid when the option expired plus another five annual installments of \$10,000 at 6 percent interest.²⁵⁷

Led by Clara Driscoll, the De Zavala Chapter began its fundraising efforts. But the proverbial plot thickened when another interested party offered Hugo & Schmeltzer more than \$5,000 for the one-year option. Clara, along with Judge James B. Wells of Brownsville and Clara's attorney, Lloyd McGown of San Antonio, called on Charles Hugo (the only surviving partner) and urged him to consider their efforts, leading him to agree to a short-term solution: he would give the DRT a 30-day option for \$500 plus another \$4500 to be paid in 11 months. Clara footed the bill. With a little bit of breathing room, the De Zavala Chapter then began statewide fundraising efforts to raise the \$4500 by April 17, 1903 (when the 30-day option expired).

It was at this point that Clara's political ambitions began to materialize. She led a delegation to the legislature and pushed for an amendment to be placed on an appropriations bill that would provide the DRT the \$5,000 for the option (and thereby reimburse Clara for her out-of-pocket investment, thus negating any true "philanthropic" motive for her involvement in the Alamo's preservation). In the process of stretching her political wings, Clara met Hal Sevier, successor to John Nance Garner's state representative seat, whom she would marry and with whom she eventually would rise to a position of significant political influence as a Democratic fundraiser and, ultimately, as Democratic Committee Chairwoman for the state of Texas. Through her involvement with the Alamo's preservation efforts, Clara had adroitly created for herself a valuable political dowry. What aspiring Texas politician would not want to be married to the savior of the Alamo?

Time expired on the option before a bill was passed, so Clara again paid the remaining \$4500, keeping the property safe from development for at least a year. The bill to reimburse Driscoll eventually passed, but Governor Samuel W. T. Lanham vetoed it. As a result, Clara was out the \$5,000 and that still left the DRT with the challenge of raising another \$20,000 that would

be due in a year, plus the additional \$10,000 per year for the next five years to complete the purchase.

By February 1904, the DRT had raised \$5666.23, far from the \$50,000 it needed. Again, the clock was ticking; the option was soon to expire, with the development company waiting greedily in the wings, banking on its own patience (as well as the DRT's insolvency) while planning to purchase the *convento* out from under them. Clara again paid to give the DRT more time -- \$14,333.77. She also signed five notes for \$10,000 each at 6 percent interest per annum to complete the payment, putting her on the line for another \$50,000 plus interest...but giving her clear title to the building. It is interesting to note that the deed of transfer read, "this property is purchased by Clara Driscoll for the use and benefit of the DRT to be used by them for the purpose of making a park about the Alamo, and for no other purpose."²⁵⁸ While she bankrolled the De Zavala Chapter's dream of owning the Alamo to keep it safe for posterity, in the final hours of negotiations, she did not fully represent their vision. Arguably, she was investing in her commercial vision for the future of San Antonio by creating a park that could help future downtown development, with a symbolic nod to what the Alamo actually had represented in the form of a potential "grand monument" to fallen heroes. In other words, hers was less a battle for the preservation of history than an investment in the availability of authentic "quaintness" as a centerpiece for downtown San Antonio development.

By August 1904, and thanks in large part to the public visibility of Driscoll's efforts, the Democratic state convention made the purchase of the Alamo property a plank in the party's platform. On January 26, 1905, the 29th legislature appropriated \$65,000 to complete the purchase of the Alamo property, and Governor Samuel Lanham signed the bill stipulating that the statewide DRT organization—not the De Zavala Chapter of the DRT—would be custodians of the property.²⁵⁹ Reimbursed by the State of Texas for all but the interest on her options on the Alamo, Clara formally transferred the property to the DRT, which by that time had raised and contributed

about \$10,000 toward the purchase of the Alamo. The money she had paid, then, can be viewed as little more than a deposit, not the great sacrifice or investment that certain accounts—including plaques still displayed at the Alamo—have portrayed. Consider, as an example, the “Lest We Forget” plaque that reads, “Title to the Alamo mission property, acquired through her efforts and her personal fortune, was conveyed by Clara Driscoll to the State of Texas.”²⁶⁰ Adina’s contributions were not noted until 2008, when a plaque was placed in the garden by the old *convento* lauding her and Clara for their work on behalf of the Alamo.²⁶¹

Throughout this process, Adina matched Clara’s financial investment in the Alamo’s preservation with pure sweat equity: lobbying, writing, persuading and most likely, waiting for the moment when she would be rewarded for the nearly thirteen years of effort she had invested in saving the Alamo by appointment to the official custodial role. She did not have money, but she had passion borne of her belief that it was her birthright to be the protector of San Antonio²⁶² and that it was just a matter of time before she would take her rightful place. Sadly, for Adina, this public recognition would not come to pass. On October 4, 1905, Governor Lanham transferred possession of the Alamo by official letter to the DRT. The president general and chair of the executive committee of the DRT, Mrs. Mary Anson Jones (widow of the Republic’s last president) gave temporary custodial rights of the Alamo church and surrounding property to Clara Driscoll.²⁶³ In a letter to Adina, the powerbrokers of the DRT attempted to soften the blow:

Mrs. Jones, Mrs. McKeller and I decided to consent to Miss Driscoll’s request which she asked ‘as a little return for my work in this matter’ and gave into her hands the appointment of temporary custodian for the Alamo Mission (illegible -- lands?) and Chapel. We felt that we could not do otherwise and I hope you will not oppose Mrs. Drought or Miss Eager when she places them in charge. You can not underestimate the debt we owe to Clara Driscoll and there was a time when you would have granted any concession to her to get her help.²⁶⁴

The letter goes on to diminish Adina and her involvement further, suggesting in a condescending fashion that her self-interest in the Alamo’s custodianship must be suppressed while alluding to

the alienation of her De Zavala sisters through the campaign. “I trust your patriotism will sustain you above all self-made plans in what we all realized is its supremacist (sic) test. Show yourself now mostly your ancestry by being nobly self—of what you [illegible] along with your deserted chapter. Consider as yours by right of inheritance and retire gracefully content with the everlasting laurels you have already now. Leave the burden to be borne by others a short while, at least until you have some respite.”

Such a letter undoubtedly crushed a woman whose social position was marginal, but who had always shown confidence and courage in her public work. One could interpret this letter as painfully “ladylike” notice that Adina had worn out her welcome with the DRT and that she no longer belonged. Adina, however, would not be relegated to the sidelines. She knew that left in the hands of the DRT, whose Houston faction had outmaneuvered her, the long barracks would be leveled, rendering the “truth” about the Alamo and her place in history as irrelevant to San Antonio’s future. As she wrote in 1917, “The main building of the Alamo fortress, of which they had just secured purchase, and the CHURCH OF THE ALAMO were delivered to the custody of the De Zavala Daughters, and immediately, a set of selfish and ambitious persons, caring nothing for the good of the people of Texas, or children of Texas, or of the proper keeping of the Alamo, began a plan to secure control of the sacred shrine.”²⁶⁵

But Adina fought anyway. Scrappy, and with an aggressive style more accepted from a man, she found supporters. She knew how to write letters, to research, to make salient arguments. She knew how to use her passion to incite a reaction in others. What she did not have in money, she compensated for with passionate energy. But that alone could not help bring her dream to life; she needed not just the passion and philosophical support of others, but she needed their financial resources as well. She did not realize that that kind of allegiance does not come freely and that inevitably, one must compromise if one wants to continue to work the system. She was naïve in her belief that history for history’s sake—that historical authenticity for authenticity’s sake—was a

belief shared by her sisters in the DRT. Moreover, she was ignorant of the reality that the fight for the Alamo's preservation neither transpired in a vacuum, nor while time stood still. And because of the involvement of money, reputations ("the most prominent women of Texas, socially, intellectually, morally and patriotically"²⁶⁶), and politics, it would never be a transparent or seamless process. Yet, she was not one to quit. Instead, she retained the one thing she still possessed: the keys to and relics from the Alamo.²⁶⁷ By refusing to turn over either, she embarked upon a very public and highly emotional battle over the rightful preservation and corresponding custodianship of the Alamo.

No More Kid Gloves

Without the keys to the Alamo, the DRT was in a difficult position. It could not assume custodial responsibilities, as granted by the governor, and they were being forced into a public relations battle *extraordinaire*. Despite her aggressive tactics (or perhaps because of them), Adina had established quite a following, particularly among men who were impressed by her courage and tenacity, so the DRT elected to take its battle with Adina from the public stage directly to the courts, filing a civil suit²⁶⁸ to force Adina to relinquish the keys to the chapel. On November 13, she blanched in the face of superior legal power, and turned the keys over to Clara and only Clara. At that time, Hugo still had possession of the long barracks.

The divide between Adina's dream and Clara's insistent reality widened further. In Adina's long-held view, the De Zavala Chapter should serve as guardian and protector of the Alamo. Yet, the DRT's executive committee in Houston, which had sided with Clara Driscoll (and her money), did not share this view. Adding insult to injury, Clara had begun using her newfound celebrity status as the "savior" of the Alamo to meet her own political and social agenda, announcing her intentions to align with the San Antonio faction of the DRT in favor of tearing down the walls of the mission and establishing a park on the site.²⁶⁹ In many respects, it appeared she was seeking to provoke, or at least publicly diminish, Adina and her convictions.

Clara began to challenge, very publicly, Adina's assertions about the historical integrity of the Alamo's components, as indicated in a telegram to the head of a citizens' group who favored a park. "I strongly favor the immediate removal of the unsightly building that obscures the Alamo chapel, and I am confident that the building of a park, as suggested, could be accomplished without disturbing a single stone of the mission proper." She continued: "Reconstruction of the missions proposed I do not consider justified by any accurate and authentic information. It is therefore impracticable and impossible that funds would be used for the preservation of the Alamo as it was known to exist." A velvet gauntlet had been thrown.

Adina continued to prove a thorn in the side of the DRT with her efforts to raise public awareness – as president of the De Zavala Chapter – of the DRT's intentions to lease the old barracks as a revenue source once Hugo & Schmeltzer finally vacated the building,²⁷⁰ as well as their support of leveling the long barracks altogether. Meanwhile, the executive committee had circled the wagons and seemingly, conjured a plan to get Adina out of their way. Their plan became apparent at the DRT's annual convention in 1907, where through manipulating some of the finer points of Roberts Rules of Order, they passed a motion surreptitiously, thus appointing a new executive committee that did not include Adina or members of her faction. Recognizing she had been formally ostracized by the DRT, Adina activated her greatly shrunken network of DRT followers to provide affidavits as to what really transpired at the convention to prove she was still a member of the DRT's executive committee, since the motion had not been presented until after the meeting had officially adjourned. As penned on April 22, 1907, by Mrs. Wharton Bates, a De Zavalan, "To the best of my recollection no aye and no vote was ever taken on adjournment and I listened particularly for this vote, as I have stated before if such a vote was taken I did not hear it."²⁷¹ And another from E. F. Elkins on that same day, "I further certify that Mrs. Alford, was presiding; that she repeatedly refused to put a motion made by Miss De Zavalla (sic); that Mrs. Fisher, stepped forward and declared the meeting adjourned Sine Die and left the rostrum."²⁷²

Adina would not be eclipsed or excluded. In a political move that would provoke legal action later, she seized the opportunity to restate her official position as decision maker and financial steward of the DRT by sending a letter, on June 27, to the Planters and Mechanics National Bank in Houston on DRT stationery where she named the members of the executive committee not as decided at the annual convention, but as they had been previously (when Adina still had some control). She boldly wrote, “Kindly honor no checks or orders on any certificates, notes or funds whatsoever, or contents of boxes, belonging to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, without the signatures of the proper custodian and legal officers as cited above.”²⁷³ She concluded the letter with a thinly veiled threat, “Any such funds or property now in your care, delivered or paid out without such signatures, after receipt of this, will be delivered and paid at your risk. Trusting that nothing will arise to cause you embarrassment in this regard, Very Sincerely, The Executive Committee, D. R.T. acting for Daughters of R. Of Texas by Adina De Zavala.”

It is unclear whether Adina really believed she was still a rightful member of the executive committee and still entitled to the rights and privileges of the position, or if she was capitalizing on the uncertainty of what transpired at the DRT convention to maintain “control” over the Alamo’s assets just a bit longer. Amidst the controversy this maneuver engendered, Driscoll resigned from the DRT but this did not make the situation any easier for Adina who, on August 31, 1907, filed a petition claiming she was the chairman of the DRT Executive Committee and that the other defendants (in the injunction filed by the DRT against De Zavala and her supporters) were duly elected members of the Executive Committee as well. Ultimately, Texas Attorney General R. V. Davidson had to issue an opinion stating that an elected executive committee – not Adina’s committee – was the only body authorized by the Legislature to take care of the property.²⁷⁴

Six months later, Hugo finally vacated the building that had been the long barracks, and Adina saw one last chance to make her case about proper guardianship of the Alamo. On February 10, 1908, Adina entered the building, had its locks changed, and barricaded herself inside,²⁷⁵ refusing to recognize the injunction issued by Judge Kittrell of Houston to dispossess her. “Attempt was made to serve the injunction this afternoon by Sheriff Tobin, but Miss de Zavala locked herself inside the Alamo and refused to give possession.” At midnight on February 11, possession of the long barracks was scheduled to pass to the DRT. But not if Adina could help it. In a media stunt that made headlines around the country, Adina barricaded herself in and refused to be served papers.²⁷⁶ Four days later, she finally emerged from the building as the result of a court order, having lost the battle but still confident she could win what had now become a war. While many of the De Zavala Sisters had resigned and formed a new Alamo Mission Chapter of the DRT,²⁷⁷ she marshaled what was left of her troops and filed a civil suit in an attempt to recover the property from control by the DRT.

This move proved a final and very public blow to De Zavala. Not only did Governor Thomas Campbell decide to hold the land until litigation was over, but the Courts ruled against the De Zavala Chapter and Adina, stating they had no claim to membership in the DRT whatsoever (having been essentially written out of the organization at the convention) and could not associate themselves in any way,²⁷⁸ putting the De Zavala Chapter out of existence. For Adina, who was obsessed with preserving the De Zavala name as fundamental to Texas’s metaphoric DNA, the dismantling not just of her efforts, but of an entire organization that bore her surname, was a mortal wound. Despite the drama surrounding the DRT feud, there were those who continued to support her, as evidenced by letters she received including one written anonymously and urging her to “keep up (her) grit.” The letter continues, “Keep up respect for yourself and your chapter and be a true daughter of the Republic of Texas. You have more friends and admirers especially among the gentlemen than you think or know of in San Antonio and it is strange that you are not

even more bold and valiant when you are backed up so well.”²⁷⁹ Even with this support, from a public standpoint and certainly, with regard to any direct affiliation with the Alamo, Adina was for all intents and purposes “old news.”

On March 10, 1910, the State released the old *convento* property to the DRT. The Driscollites, as Clara’s faction had become known, would finally realize their dream of clearing the former warehouse—which Adina had argued housed the original long barracks—to begin developing the park, when Governor Oscar Colquitt aligned with the De Zavalans, who had continued to argue that the original walls predated the Texas Revolution.²⁸⁰ In an unexpected stroke of power, the governor seized the title of the Alamo back for the state and ordered an immediate restoration of the old *convent*.²⁸¹ Careful deconstruction of the warehouse revealed that Adina had been correct all along and that indeed, behind the modern walls awaited the *convento*’s original Spanish stonework and second-story arches. The DRT went back to court and in 1912, the Texas State Supreme Court returned the property to the DRT²⁸² with a caveat that restorations must be continued, but as is typically the case in private preservation efforts, funding once again evaporated. In a slippery maneuver in 1913, the lieutenant governor—who apparently agreed with the faction that believed the view of the chapel should not be obstructed, and that there was not enough of the *convento*’s second story to salvage—took advantage of Governor Colquitt’s absence out of state and issued a decree to remove the upper story walls.²⁸³ Once again, Adina had lost a battle with the destruction of the second story, but she enjoyed the greater triumph of saving at least part of the long barracks, previously disregarded by most as an inconsequential and terminal cause.

The battle between the De Zavala and the Driscoll factions of the DRT came down to “radically different perceptions about history and society itself.”²⁸⁴ According to Flores, “Adina De Zavala was much more likely to define the Alamo in terms of all those who tread through its historical doors; Clara Driscoll, on the other hand, was intent on interpreting it as a place that

legitimated the ensuing social transformation and economic development.”²⁸⁵ According to letters written by De Zavala, she absolutely believed her legacy was preserving the “truth” about how Texas won its independence as a way to inspire future generations to greatness through sacrifice and bravery. For Driscoll, it appears her involvement in the preservation of the Alamo was but a first public step on her journey to become an important figure in political fundraising for the Democratic Party.

Yet, while Adina needed a platform for her efforts, she did not require an organization to inspire her passion. It had been hers from birth. She was both blessed and cursed by her surname. Despite its historical weight, if people did not acknowledge her Tejano family’s role in the history of Texas independence, and her personal role in preserving important landmarks, she would be just another Mexican (albeit with blue eyes). For so many, who continue to view the Alamo as an ethnic binary conflict between absolutely good (Anglo) and absolutely bad (Mexicans), the Alamo was a powerful symbol of tragic but necessary sacrifice on the Anglos’ path to eventual redemption at San Jacinto, and moral victory in the form of Texas’s independence – its triumph over evil.

Adina fought to preserve the “enchanted founding” and story of “Tejas,” free of the very class stratification in which Driscoll reigned supreme. Ultimately, though, did her peers see her as “just a Mexican” trying to change the minds of the Anglo? Was she just like all the other Tejanos and Mexicans, frozen in the past and thwarting those looking to build a prosperous future? Conversely, it seems that Clara’s eyes were on the future, looking short-term at the promise of a beautifully preserved chapel—just enough of the Alamo (in its first incarnation as mission) that it would continue to draw tourists for whom a more modern, developed San Antonio would be waiting. While Clara’s efforts have been mistakenly memorialized, it was Adina’s unshakable vision that truly made a difference in preserving even a hint of historical accuracy about the Alamo. With nearly fifty more years of work until her death at the age of 55, her efforts on behalf

of the Alamo would prove the one thing she got “right,” if only to be misconstrued by her peers as the act of an egomaniac. Yet, she would not stop working. She could not stop working.

As part of her efforts to create and sustain a sphere for herself, Adina carefully crafted and cultivated her own public persona. Any time her name was mentioned as part of or the full focus of a newspaper or magazine article, she ensured it included the phrase, “granddaughter of Lorenzo De Zavala, first vice president of the Republic of Texas.” She couched her historic preservation efforts as being work for the children of Texas, though there is no evidence to suggest that after she left the teaching profession, she attempted to improve the nature of or access to public education for the children of San Antonio. By giving her fledgling women’s organization, formed in 1889 as a “band of patriotic women” who would meet to “keep green the memory of the heroes, founders and pioneers of Texas,”²⁸⁶ the name “De Zavala Daughters,” she was ensuring that her name would be intrinsically connected to anything they accomplished. Similarly, once the De Zavala daughters united with the Daughters of the Republic of Texas shortly thereafter, the first San Antonio chapter was called the De Zavala Chapter, with her election as president.²⁸⁷ In her chapter on “The De Zavala Daughters,” Adina delineated all that these women did to preserve gravesites (specifically, Ben Milam’s), to produce and place tablets on key battlefields, to preserve San Antonio’s missions, to collect historical artifacts, and to secure a resolution from the School Board of the City of San Antonio to rename public schools with the surnames of Texas heroes.²⁸⁸ Though many women were united in these efforts, that they were pursued under the De Zavala name meant that Adina would be credited in some or large part for their successes. “Numberless other things were done by this society working always toward the highest ideals, and the uplift of present and future generations of the citizens of Texas,” she wrote.²⁸⁹

When the DRT disbanded the De Zavala Chapter, Adina decided to form a new organization, the Sons and Daughters of the Pioneers and Heroes of the Republic of Texas, that would evolve into the Texas Landmarks and Historical Association and that she would run until

her death in 1955. She pursued membership in several organizations that would increase (at least in her mind) her social and cultural currency: the Texas Women's Press Club, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the prestigious Philosophical Society.²⁹⁰ Even in her estate planning, Adina's sites were focused on her name living in perpetuity: she bequeathed to Incarnate Word College, "for the purpose of establishing a De Zavala Boy Town similar to Father Flanagan's Boys' Town, 137 acres, more or less, on which said De Zavala Boy Town is to be established."²⁹¹ Similarly, she bequeathed her lots on Rusk Street, Blum Street, and "other lots which I may own" to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word College to establish a Mary Katherine De Zavala Girls Vocational School. While it is interesting that she did not insist that her own name be given to the potential school, she may have been compensating – in a move to protect her reputation – for the fact that she had petitioned the court to order Mary, as executor of their mother's will, to agree to sale a land to benefit the family coffers.²⁹² Adina had proven herself more than willing to employ the courts as she deemed necessary to exert her will; that she would sue her own sister and, arguably, her best, if not only real friend, to liquidate assets could suggest, to someone unfamiliar with Adina, a mercenary person only concerned with money. As an aside, neither of Adina's last wishes came to fruition. She had specified that if after five years from the probate of the will, building De Zavala Boy Town and the Mary Katherine De Zavala Girls Vocational was deemed unfeasible, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word College could sell the assets and use the proceeds to establish the Mary Katherine de Zavala Girls Vocational School.²⁹³ She did not get her wish.

Nor did she get her wish to lead the restoration of the Spanish Governor's Palace in San Antonio, despite her loud and dramatic efforts over nearly ten years to persuade the City of San Antonio to purchase the property and restore it to its original grandeur. Her idea was not unique, though she would impose her name on the project. While she obviously was aware of the Spanish Governor's Palace and its dilapidated condition, given her efforts beginning in 1915 to bring

attention to the “ramshackle building” that had once been the palace of the Spanish Governor, her motivation to take charge of the campaign for its preservation likely was amplified by a letter from Prentice Duell, an esteemed architect who in 1916 had begun researching Spanish mission architecture in the Southwest prior to enlisting in the U.S. army and shipping out to Paris.²⁹⁴ “I have been notified that my help is wanting in restoring some of the old missions and best of all, my book is about off the presses,” he wrote from Paris, where he was studying at the American School of Fine Arts. “I am still interested in the old ‘Governor’s Palace’ – hope to restore it some day.”²⁹⁵ Adina and the members of her Texas Historical and Landmarks association had announced their plans in 1917 to “restore the San Antonio building and use it as a school and meeting place for soldiers stationed in San Antonio.”²⁹⁶ They believed, incorrectly, that raising money for this ambitious project would be easy and accordingly, they had begun planning how the building would be restored and preserved.

Despite Adina’s impassioned and heavily embellished stories about the historical significance of the Palace, they were not able to raise the funds needed. Their assumption must have been, though, that even if the city were to purchase the property, the decision makers would bestow on Adina’s organization the privilege of leading the project. They were banking on her name and her reputation. Both would be questioned, though, in part because of her inaccurate sketch of the building that she had imbued with historical significance that had no basis in fact. She contended that the palace was Spanish, not Mexican, illustrating her thrall with “royalty and empire.”²⁹⁷ Pointing to the keystone, which she claimed “represented the armorial bearings of New Spain (Mexico) as conferred by Charles V, King of Spain and Emperor of Germany,” she contended that “it was the residence of the representative of the King of Spain.”²⁹⁸ As part of her campaign, she emphasized its unique status as possibly “the only representation in existence of Spain’s imperial power on American soil.”²⁹⁹ As she imagined it, “the occupants of the palace were ‘descendants of aristocrats,’ that ‘the army officers were generally men of polished manners,

as they often came from the vice regal court of Mexico,' and that 'the priests were men of learning and refinement.' The palace was thus an 'old relic of Imperial Spain' and of 'the old days of refinement and culture.'³⁰⁰ By her vision, "the old walls of the palace will ring again with laughter as in the old days when the representatives of the Court of Spain held their entertainments, either formally or otherwise."³⁰¹ As Hafertepe noted in his article, however, there are no records of any Spanish diplomat ever having visited San Antonio. Additionally, the building had never been called the "Spanish Governors Palace" before 1915.³⁰² Instead, it was referred to in only one surviving document, a 1766 map where the building is called the "Casa del Capitan," the home of the presidio commander.³⁰³ Adina had fabricated the myth, starting with her March 1915 article in the *San Antonio Express*.

After a ten-year campaign, the city finally agreed to purchase the old building in 1928 and named local architect Harvey P. Smith to lead the restoration.³⁰⁴ Meanwhile, one of Adina's fellow preservationists had begun to distance herself from Adina's efforts on behalf of other missions, writing in 1928 that "I am thinking very strongly . . . of going ahead with my local organization of the Pioneers. Then, when the weather gets warmer later to have you come. It would be better to have things going before you visit us. The reason I prefer the 'Pioneers' is because I think that would appeal to the people more than the [Historical Landmarks]. If we took up new Mission work, the Protestants would say, 'Ah, it is all Catholic' and that would be the end of it."³⁰⁵ Adina was losing supporters even within her own circle of preservationists.

In a move that incited Adina to near riot, a group of women (primarily artists as well as members of the social elite) established an organization that would be given disproportionately greater influence and control over the restoration of the Spanish Governors Palace: the San Antonio Conservation Society.³⁰⁶ When Adina learned that this organization, founded by Emily Edwards and Rena Maverick Green (herself the descendant of a Texas hero), dared to step in her exclusive domain of historic preservation, she "called Edwards and told her that preservation was

'her field,' and that 'there was just room for nobody else.'"³⁰⁷ Mrs. Perry Lewis, well acquainted with Adina and her tactics, interceded; after a "long and sometimes tearful discussion" with Adina, Lewis told the Conservation Society that they "will be permitted to exist."³⁰⁸ However, though Lewis proposed that the two organizations collaborate on this and other important preservation work, since they "stand practically for the same things," such a paring never transpired. At this point, Adina still seemed to believe the organization she led would be handed custodianship of the Spanish Governors Palace and authorized to direct all restorations. Instead, Mayor Chambers named a committee of nine people representing the "various women's organizations interested in the building."³⁰⁹ He appointed Rena Maverick Green as the chairman of the committee.³¹⁰ Adina was relegated to the sidelines, but she would not be muzzled on the issue. Just before the Advisory Committee's first meeting in February 1929, she told members of the press that "I think the mayor has made a mistake" and while the two groups had "worked together before the World War, and they started the movement," she was "sorry [the Texas Landmark and Historic Association – Adina's organization] were not chosen to manage it."³¹¹ In her own notes, her outrage was more explicit. "I want a jury of my peers. I want on this board men and women with vision with knowledge, and with love in their hearts, not with hate over the door...Do you suppose for one minute that I would have asked the city to buy that ugly pile of stones that is nothing but an ugly pile of stones to keep it ugly – No."³¹² In this commentary, she was referring to the Conservation Society's greater prioritization of beautification over historical authenticity, though clearly, her vision was every bit as romantic and her desire was to pay further homage to Spanish roots in Texas.

The actual reconstruction did not begin until early 1930. The newly restored building opened on July 6 of the same year. Although working on the periphery and still arguing with the architects as to how the original building must have looked and how the restoration should be designed, Adina received the credit she believed she deserved. One day before the building was

opened to the public, the *San Antonio Express* gave her credit for her work, if not the actual restoration project itself. Beneath her portrait, the newspaper included the caption, “Launched Palace Movement.”³¹³

In 1938, her Texas Historical and Landmarks Association rendered the last word by placing a plaque outside the building, declaring the palace “WHERE TRADITIONS OF GLAMOROUS DAYS, ROMANCE, AND TRAGEDY STILL LINGER.”³¹⁴ Through her plaque, Adina ensured that people would appreciate the Spanish Governors Palace against a context she had imagined but that could not be substantiated by any historical documentation. And she did so through an organization that she controlled, rather than one with which she would have to collaborate and compromise. For all of Adina’s passion and ambition, she was unable to work well with others in a collegial rather than condescending fashion. Once her name appeared in headlines nationwide after her Alamo PR stunt, it is likely that she believed herself to be the authority on historic preservation in San Antonio. As Lewis Fisher wrote in the endnotes to *Saving San Antonio*, noting commentary by Robert Ables in his doctoral dissertation about Adina, “Miss De Zavala’s difficulties appear to have been, instead, largely self-inflicted – ‘her forthrightness, her tendency toward stubbornness which bordered upon intractableness if she thought she was right, a quick tongue.’”³¹⁵ Ables also noted that “it is an anomaly in the history of the State of Texas that a woman of Spanish-Mexican ancestry should have such an intense desire to preserve and illuminate Texas history while many of her Anglo contemporaries did little or nothing.”³¹⁶

The obvious response to Ables’ assertion is that her Anglo contemporaries did not need a platform on which to prove their cultural relevance or social worth, as they were on the “right” side of the ongoing Anglo-Tejano binary. Joining a women’s organization and working on interesting causes provided an opportunity for social interaction and the chance to do interesting work outside of the home, but for most women, it did not represent the single legacy they wished

to create. With exceptions, to be sure, they did not transfer onto their work as club women the same passion and focus they would have invested in their husbands and children. For Adina, however, her “intense desire” stemmed from a fundamental need to create a legacy that would distance herself and her name from Tejanos and Mexicans and would, instead, be viewed as fundamentally Texan. In Texas, that meant fundamentally Anglo-European.

Despite the political bridges she burned with the San Antonio School Board, women in the DRT and, presumably, members of the San Antonio Conservation Society, Adina had attracted a fair number of admirers who would support her efforts over the course of her life. Bernard Woollett, who may or may not have been a romantic interest in Adina’s early life, wrote to her in 1892 that “I am not acquainted with a single unmarried girl in this vicinity and what is more I am not a bit anxious to know them and judging myself at par. I do not think they are worth knowing. There are none up here like you...What a business like girl you are; if I had a wife like you what a jewel I should have. You always had a knack of adapting yourself to circumstances.”³¹⁷ Emma C. Smythe, a former student whom Adina must have influenced, wrote Adina in 1895 with her best wishes. “I wonder if all your old pupils love you as I do! It seems to me that I never loved another with the same devotion that I bestow upon you and, not to flatter, I do not think I could bestow it on a more deserving person. But were I to tell you of all my love for you possibly you will think I have grown to be a flatterer, but I assure you there was never a person who disliked that more than I.”³¹⁸

After her “last stand” at the Alamo in 1908, a flood gate of correspondence opened. “Yesterday morning we were startled in reading the News by the report that you had taken possession of the Alamo single handed,” wrote L. de Tuttle. “...Tuesday brought the news about your heroic deed, capturing the Alamo. I had fever all day, after reading about it. I imagined your mother being with you and her distress. You certainly are made of the stuff that martyrs are made of. Is it possible that you staid [sic] there alone all night? In a place infested by rats? Without a

comfortable bed? Without the accustomed comforts of life, without food or drink?”³¹⁹ Another letter from Mary Briscoe praised Adina’s character. “You were a true Daughter and as always a perfect lady. I wish I had as much charecture [sic]. Excuse my compliments. I had to say them.”³²⁰ And by a Confederate veteran, Adina was lauded for her bravery. “After seeing your brave defense of the last shattered links of the Alamo connecting yourself so prominently with same I feel that you should have some raise from an old Confederate Soldier who also defended the lost Cause.”³²¹ From an anonymous writer, Adina was praised for her valor. “Hooray for you. That’s right, keep up your grit and your valor. Keep up respect for yourself and your chapter and be a true daughter of the Republic of Texas. You have more friends and admirers especially among the gentlemen than you think or know of in San Antonio and it is strange that you are not even more bold and more valiant when you are backed up so well.”³²²

Though Adina was not a feminist, Mrs. Olive Yarbrough clearly believed Adina’s valorous acts could serve as an example for women to stand up and claim greater agency. “Read an account of your valiant deffence [sic] of the old Alimo [sic] all alone and must say couldn’t help envying just a wee bit as have been trying for years to get our sex to educate themselves and come boldly to the front and contend for their rights. We are held down and back by the stronger sex and have [illegible] or chance whatever excep [sic] to slave day in and day out,” she wrote. “Your influence Dear Sister to help us to free ourselves that we may have an equal show with our stronger Brothers we will have a hard struggle for freedom but we will get it – in the end our sisters are already getting it in some parts of Europe... The poor slaves will have to wake up and they are beginning to realize that they must do something. You can never realize the good it did me to read of what you did.”³²³ Interestingly, Adina did not work on the women’s suffrage movement, despite a very active organization in San Antonio;³²⁴ perhaps, as a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which opposed legislation granting women the right to vote, she believed this movement to be antithetic with her traditional upbringing and beliefs.

Well after the Alamo fight and when Adina had turned her sights on preservation of the Spanish Governors Palace as well as her continued work to publish stories about the Alamo and other missions, N.M. Wilcox, a photographer with whom Adina was working, sent a particularly poignant letter. “Your letter sounds a little pessimistic. I often feel that way myself. If there is a way to remedy [sic] it, I haven’t found it. Let’s not git it up, lets still continue to do your little bit. A little spark of light can be seen a long way in the dark,” Wilcox wrote.³²⁵ Then, in a paragraph that Adina must have held dear, he wrote, “I know you get discouraged, and would like to do more. You know you have already done more than any other woman in Texas, in keeping alive our love and reverence for all that is sacred and patriotic in Texas, you know the history of the ‘Holy of Holies’—the Alamo can never be written without mentioning your name, through your influence the ‘Long Barracks’ was saved, that alone seems almost enough for one woman.”

For Adina, however, her fight for the Alamo was just the most public example of a life she spent fighting. She fought to protect her family. She fought to ensure the family name would live in perpetuity. She fought legislators. She fought family members. Most assuredly, though, she fought with herself as a woman with interests in several camps, but who would never truly belong in any of them.

Shortly after Adina lost her campaign to spearhead the restoration of the Spanish Governors Palace, she became seriously ill with what was apparently a gastrointestinal disorder. “I am very, very sorry to hear of your serious illness,” wrote her friend, J.D. Welder. “I rejoice over your recovery, and sincerely hope that you have continued to improve. A lady in Liberty, who was very frail, had the same operation, you underwent, a new passage to the stomach. And now, she is so stout, and looks so well, I failed to recognize her on the street.”³²⁶ This brush with mortality informed the final two decades of Adina’s life. Most notably and not unexpectedly, she focused on getting her affairs in order and with the exception of the Texas Centennial celebration in 1936, stepped out of the public light. She worked with a law firm in New York to prepare her

will³²⁷ and also began keeping copious notes and records about the value of her estate, her annual income from the properties she rented and the corresponding taxes she needed to pay. On one piece of paper, printed with the words “Secret” at the top and bottom, Adina scribbled an inventory of her property in 1944. It appears she and Mary owned eleven tracts of land, for which they earned rental income.³²⁸ On another scratch piece of paper, she calculated her total annual receipts from her properties as \$2773.74.³²⁹ This amount equals \$36,579.34 in 2013, hardly a stable economic position.³³⁰ Yet another scribbled document suggests her total estate was worth \$39,500.³³¹

So concerned did she seem to be about her financial situation that apparently she challenged the tax valuation on her property in Channelview. A letter from the Channelview Independent School District in 1940 scolded her for her intractability: “As you know we have to have so much money to run our school and we have about five-hundred school children to educate and the only source we have of getting money is from our school taxes so we feel that you and every American citizen is willing to pay taxes so that we might have better educated youths who will in the future be our leaders. I imagine that if your grandfather were alive today and could see the improvement around the tract that he bought years ago he would be more than willing to pay the small amount of taxes on that cherished piece of land.”³³² As part of her estate planning, Adina sought every source of income she could, including litigation against the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company to secure annual payment for the “privilege for pedestrian passage only from Taylor Street [her and Mary’s home] to the north door of the D. Johnson house over the property of the De Zavala Estate...and it is understood and agreed that no liability to lessor may be attached by reason of the use by lessee of said permission for ingress and egress over the De Zavala property.”³³³ While Mary signed the agreement as executrix of her mother’s estate, Adina surely had masterminded the suit. Given her advanced age, isolation, and continued financial anxiety,

Adina shifted her focus from historic preservation to ensuring that she would not be in financial danger in her declining years. For Adina, tough times called for tough measures.

She also kept extensive records of her monthly payments to the Rectory Oblate Fathers of St. Mary's Church for the family's plots that, eventually, would be the final resting places for Mary and Adina. So dedicated had she been with her payments that T.J. Kennedy, O.M.I. Pastor, wrote to her in 1934 with a proposition. "I find that for the past twelve years you have been very faithful in keeping up the cemetery dues. Figure up what you paid out during those twelve years for the up-keep of your lot, and you will be amazed at the amount that you have contributed." Adina likely could have recited the number immediately. "My proposition is to establish a trust fund, the revenues accruing from this fund to be applied to the perpetual up-keep of your lot...I would have to ask for the sum of three-hundred dollars for a half lot, and five-hundred for a full lot."³³⁴ While there is no evidence to prove that Adina accepted this proposition, she definitely had the means and the motive to do so. Sadly, "perpetual up-keep" did not become reality—or maybe, the definition is a murky one. A visit to Adina's gravesite reveals a weedy, sticker-laden area with two family members' headstones cracked and nothing except a Texas Historical Commission plaque (installed in 2008) to distinguish it. The headstones, in fact, were very impersonal, with no dates and no epitaphs. An ignominious end for a life dedicated to the preservation of a legacy.

Adina De Zavala died at age ninety-three on March 1, 1955, a day before Texas Independence Day, which she had worked tirelessly to turn into a day of commemoration throughout the state. While Clara Driscoll, still remembered as the "Savior of the Alamo," was laid in-state after her death in 1945, Adina's funeral procession only passed by the Alamo. Her casket was draped in the Texas flag, probably due to the efforts of her friends in the Texas Landmark and Historical Commission, but even in death, she would not achieve the recognition she so craved for her life's work. On October 27, 1955, the Texas legislature adopted a resolution commemorating her work on behalf of the state, declaring that "worked faithfully through word,

deed, and action to support and perpetuate the history of the State and the highest traditions of Texas.”³³⁵

This resolution included specifications that “an appropriate plaque [to] be placed in the Alamo Shrine and Cradle of Texas Liberty in grateful recognition of her services to the history of Texas.”³³⁶ According to McVea, the legislature notified the DRT to install such a plaque, but the organization ignored this request for more than 40 years.³³⁷ It took the efforts of a local Bexar County archivist, John O. Leal, to challenge the DRT in 1996. In a letter to the editor of the San Antonio Express-News, he described the DRT women as De Zavala’s “racist, un-American enemies.”³³⁸ Despite public pressure, the DRT remained intransigent, equivocating that while Adina had done many good things, she had been lauded enough and really, how could they displace Clara Driscoll, memorialized as the Savior?³³⁹ Ultimately, the DRT would agree in 1997 to place a marker near the Long Barracks, acknowledging her work to save it. (McVea p. 201)

Another plaque was created and placed in the gardens just inside the Long Barracks. While the date of installation is uncertain, it likely was coincident to the plaque honoring Adina specifically. The design, and the message, surely made Adina roll in her grave. Adina’s name was positioned on the left, Clara Driscoll’s name was positioned on the right; each of their dates of birth and death were listed, with the DRT seal in bronze placed ironically between them. The caption below read, “Two loyal members of the Daughters of the Republic, each in her own way responsible for preserving this historic site.” For all of her efforts, Adina’s legacy would not stand on its own but rather, would be inextricably tied to her greatest rival.

Conclusion

It may well be doubted whether human ingenuity can construct an enigma... which human ingenuity may not, by proper application, resolve. (Edgar Allan Poe)

For Adina, who spent her life defying spheres of race, class and gender to establish and preserve the legacy of Texas's heroes, most notably her grandfather's, to create relevance for herself and her family in a world focused only on progress, certain principles were inviolable. Sacrifice, in particular, seems to have been most resonant with her. She celebrated San Antonio's missions as sites where natives would become civilized, learning of Christ's sacrifice for their eternal salvation. She glorified Texas's pioneers and soldiers in the war for independence, heralding the Alamo as the site where nearly two hundred men sacrificed their lives for Texas's freedom – "the scene of the sublimest sacrifice recorded in modern history."³⁴⁰ Most notably, she herself had sacrificed much to stand for her convictions. "We measure a life by its service," she had penned on a lyric sheet to Sam Houston's College Song.³⁴¹ So she would choose to be judged.

She also valued knowledge and, beyond the formal schooling she completed, would prove herself a lifelong student of history, Catholicism, law, and numerous other topics, as evidenced by the collection of 320 books she bequeathed, as part of her estate, to the Sisters of Charity of Incarnate Word.³⁴² She likely developed her sense of justice by reading *Commentaries on the Laws of England* by Sir William Blackstone, or *Introduction to American Law* by Timothy Walker, or even *The Laws of Nations* by Monsieur De Vattel, all of which she possessed in her collection. She substantiated her own knowledge of Texas and U.S. history through her massive collection on both subjects, as well as through her myriad books about genealogy, sociology (primarily, the "Negro Problem") and the Spanish language. Interestingly, she did not begin to learn Spanish until she was in her thirties, despite other historians' assertions—like Flores—to the contrary and she was self-taught even at that.³⁴³ That she was intellectually curious would be an understatement. She penned a quotation from J.A. Langford in a section of her journal called

“Golden Thoughts” and seemed to live by its message: “The only jewel that will not decay is knowledge.” (Adina De Zavala Journal, Briscoe Library) From a different perspective, Adina surely knew that “knowledge is power” and that the better she was educated, the greater cultural currency she would have.

Clearly, she was aware of racial prejudices and perhaps that is why she aspired and held others in judgment to a higher moral code that transcended race, gender, and class. She wrote that “the greatest heritage of the children of Texas and America is the noble example of its great men and heroes. Let us not forget their deathless deeds, for the moment we begin to ignore the sublime virtues exemplified by the noble souls of our race, our degeneration has begun.”³⁴⁴ While this statement may suggest that she viewed herself as Anglo-European, given that she included no Tejanos in the list of heroes that followed, it also can be interpreted as her conviction that the “human race” should be valued by behavior, not by background. In the same book, Adina published a poem she had written that suggests historic sites and symbols could help people aspire to greatness.

Dear is thy flag, its red and white and blue,
And dear thy “Lone Star,” ever pointing true.
Dear are thy Landmarks, -- every stone and tree
That tell of love and hearts’ blood poured for thee
That Race, and Heir, might ever still aspire –
Their hearts, and souls and minds reach upward! Higher!
Oh may this sacred heritage of martyrs brave,
Demand response, and shame each knave!
Until thy empire, known the wide world o’er,
A Haven prove till time shall be no more.

Despite the obstacles she continually faced, Adina’s deepest faith called her to be “of service” though the reality of her life as a spinster and, arguably, the “man of the family” after her father had died, required that she be productive. Her family name gave her the platform upon which to claim social credibility, and she believed her work would give her family a relevance

they did not have in the latter part of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries—a relevance that would transcend class, race, and gender and that ideally would stand the test of time.

Throughout her life, she had to carefully maneuver the interesting dichotomy between promoting the importance of Texas’s history through the restoration of Spanish missions, and being relegated by the racial stereotypes that an Anglo-dominated society would impose on those with Hispanic surnames. To capitalize on Lorenzo De Zavala’s legacy would mean being tied to that legacy – one that was for all intents and purposes “Mexican.” Yet, she believed herself to be as Anglo as the people with whom she interacted in the DRT, the UDC, the Historical and Landmarks Association, the Philosophical Society, the Women’s Press Club, and myriad other organizations to which she belonged.

Historian Richard Flores suggests that by focusing on her Texan identity in conjunction with the preservation of Spain’s and Mexico’s “artifactual past,” and “holding little value for her partial Mexican heritage,” she was engaging in a form of ethnic displacement and reattachment.³⁴⁵ He contends that she was repressing the various forms of domination imposed on Mexicans, and she searched for the “‘lost realms’ of Spanish and Mexican Texas” because her own “ethnic sense of self had been displaced by Texan subjectivity.”³⁴⁶ Her work on the Alamo, he contends, emerged as a response to her and other Tejanos’ impotence in challenging the forces that had displaced Mexicans, and served as a means to “(emplot) [sic] them as the historical rationale of the Alamo.” Further, he believes she was castigated by the DRT in large part because she was an “ethnic other,” though her “brash, confident, outspoken” behavior clearly played a role as well.³⁴⁷

By his analysis, Flores suggests that Adina’s singular motivation was racially based, an assumption that Hispanic and Tejano historians, preservationists and activists have since embraced as part of their celebration of Adina as a Tejana and/or Hispanic leader. Yet, an exhaustive analysis of her personal papers including private musings, correspondence, drafted manuscripts, original research and other ephemera does not support the premise that she ever perceived herself

as Tejana, nor that had she experienced any overt racial prejudice, she recognized it as such. While she certainly was aware of the racial binary that permeated San Antonio culture, it did not preclude her from gaining audiences with influential legislators, reporters, historians, artists and even members of San Antonio's social elite. That she punctuated her own name with the predicate phrase, "grand-daughter of Lorenzo De Zavala, first vice president of the Republic of Texas," at every opportunity indicates that she was seeking to fill a void—she was only important as a lineal connection to Lorenzo and needed to ensure people remembered that connection. Her blended heritage—three-quarters Anglo, one-quarter Spanish—made her Texan and American in her view as did her involvement in organizations that were Anglo dominant, such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Further, Adina never became involved in the League of United Latin American Citizens, an organization founded as an advocacy group in 1929 when "Hispanics were denied basic civil and human rights, despite contributions to American society."³⁴⁸

Adina could not escape racism, even if she believed it did not affect her directly, but of even greater importance to her was class and, even more, cultural currency. She elevated examples of morality and sacrifice in an almost proselytizing fashion to honor her Catholic faith, and to distinguish herself as someone of good breeding. She educated herself so that her expertise would be recognized and credited; she involved herself in historic preservation because it was a unique sphere in which she could differentiate herself not from Tejanos or from Mexicans, but as someone of service who worked on behalf of the people and children of Texas. She stood up to opposition with a degree of bravado, if not outright impudence, that was uncharacteristic for women at the time. She sought support from the press well before public relations had become a profession, exhibiting a savvy for grassroots campaigns and fomenting public support that was quite revolutionary and through which she made a name for herself. She hoped that the cultural currency she spent her life cultivating would pay dividends in the form of a lasting legacy for herself and her family. While she lived her life in a society characterized by palpable racism, and

likely recognized the potential for such prejudice to limit her, her behavior indicates a woman who would initiate the battles of her own choosing—namely, historic preservation—rather than fall victim to real or perceived racial prejudice that would exclude her.



Figure 4-1 Adina De Zavala at the Texas Centennial Celebration, 1936

A complex woman, Adina did not fit neatly into any particular category and as such, is somewhat enigmatic. She was unmarried and acted, for all intents and purposes, as a feminist, yet she did not involve herself with the suffrage movement in Texas. She worked on behalf of the children of Texas, as she wrote numerous times, but not in the way of social progressives of the era, who sought to improve public education, access to health care, and job opportunities for the downtrodden. She was an aggressive lobbyist, a prolific writer, a determined financial planner, and a savvy strategist; yet, she was deeply traditional in her religious beliefs. She was an Anglo with a Mexican last name, yet she did not completely fit in either group. Adina could not have fit into San Antonio's Tejano culture had she wanted to; her blue eyes, education, rudimentary Spanish, and lofty aspirations would have alienated those Tejanos who struggled against all of the racial stereotypes that had been foisted on them for nearly one hundred years.

Yet, she did not fully fit into the upper echelons of Anglo society either – at least, not the well-heeled blue bloods of the DRT -- because of her name and her relatively limited financial status. If she did not know how “these women” managed their social currency, she learned in 1911, thanks to a letter from an “anonymous friend” providing potential blackmail information Adina could use against one of her DRT foes. “Wrote you some days ago regarding some members of the Alamo Chapter – Daughters of the Republic of Texas – and of a John Smith – hero of the Alamo. According to what I hear direct from some members of the true descendants of the old hero John Smith says he never was legally married to anyone in Texas for he had his real legitimate family out of Texas. I hear he lived with a Mexican woman here whose daughter afterwards married, a Tobin... Was shocked to learn the President of (the Alamo Mission Chapter) is a “Mrs. Tobin” and that she is the legal connection of John Smith, the hero. This is a lie.”³⁴⁹ The letter’s author told Adina that while living with the Mexican woman out of wedlock, Smith had several illegitimate children and seems to be suggesting that the Mrs. Tobin who led the Alamo Chapter was, in fact, the descendant of his relationship with the Mexican woman. The author also revealed information about another DRT member, “A Mrs. Roach, who is rather respectable but who has been divorced from a man out of Texas and who (she) is not connected or a descendant of another hero named ‘Deaf Smith.’” Mrs. Roach, according to the author, “Comes from New Orleans originally and says she is French, but she forgets that she is Mexican, not Spanish.” The author urged Adina to “tear this up for your sake so you will not get into any trouble.”³⁵⁰ This letter surely reminded Adina, if she did not already understand, that secrets about one’s heritage and certainly, the presence of “Mexican-ness” in one’s background would be anathema to the women of the DRT.

Despite her many obstacles, though, Adina did what she could to create a sphere for herself and to leave a lasting mark on the world. Her accomplishments, the greatest being her work on behalf of the Alamo, should be studied not as a statement of her ethnicity or her

commitment to political activism, but as her path to creating a life of meaning for herself. To celebrate her as a Tejana heroine is to diminish not only who she was, but what she accomplished, because it suggests that her work was racially motivated as a way to uplift Tejanos and Hispanics. Further, elevating Adina as a Tejana icon undermines the important work that is being done, and should continue, to depict those truly invested in empowering Tejanos economically, socially and culturally, such as Jose Navarro or Juan Seguin, both of whom worked actively in post-Republic Texas to improve the lives and opportunities of their Tejano brethren. Instead, the best way to celebrate Adina De Zavala as an historian, teacher, and woman is to acknowledge the complex woman she was, and the example she continues to be, for the very principles of morality, sacrifice and bravery she spent her life trying to honor.



Figure 4-2 Plaque displayed outside what remains of the Alamo's Long Barracks,
San Antonio, Texas

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Biographical Information

Suzanne Seifert Cottraux entered the graduate program in history in January 2008 and since then, has juggled her full-time career in corporate communications with the demands of the program as well as parenting her young daughter. With a successful career in corporate communications, public relations and public affairs well underway, Suzanne embarked upon her graduate studies in history to gain a deeper understanding of the role propaganda and public opinion have played in shaping and sustaining the U.S. narrative. Once immersed in the program, her research interests evolved to include a focus on U.S. race, gender, and class issues in the nineteenth century. During her graduate career at the University of Texas at Arlington, Suzanne was honored as a University Scholar in 2011. That same year, she was inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, for which she served as the UTA chapter's graduate vice-president. Additionally in 2011, her paper, "Dangerous Secrets, Dangerous Women: How Crazy Bet and Wild Rose Transcended Women's Sphere to Redefine True Womanhood During the Civil War" received the George Wolfskill U.S. History Essay Award (Graduate Division) from Phi Alpha Theta, the History Honors Society.

Suzanne earned her B.A. in English and American Studies from The University of Texas at Austin in 1987, where she wrote for *The Daily Texan* and served as a research assistant to Hal Rothman, PhD and was credited in his book, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments*, (University of Illinois Press: 1989).

Suzanne plans to continue her research about Adina De Zavala in preparation to write a more in-depth biography about her. She hopes to pursue her doctorate in the coming years.