

# TEXAS JOURNEY by Gerry Booth

We have been examining the church rolls of Sandy Run Baptist Church in North Carolina, but what is going on in Texas? Most of you have heard the expression, six flags over Texas. Besides being the name of an amusement park, it is the number of flags of the nations that have ruled over Texas. Texas was first ruled by Spain from 1519-1685 and then again from 1690 to 1821. Between the two times that Spain controlled Texas, France had sovereignty for five years, 1685-1690. When most of our families were migrating to Texas from 1821-1836, Texas was under Mexico's rule. Then from 1836-1845, Texas was the independent nation, the Republic of Texas. From 1845 to 1861, Texas was a state in the United States of America. During the Civil War, Texas joined the Confederate States of America from 1861-1865. Then again, from 1865 to the present, Texas has been governed by the United States of America



The floor in the rotunda of the state capitol in Austin, depicts the seals of the six nations that have governed Texas.

Spain was initially interested in gold, which they hoped to find in New Mexico. Often in their searches, they crossed Texas. After several failed attempts, Spain focused on its other interest, Christianity. "Spain was a crusading society, and they had acquired a keen sense of responsibility for all peoples to receive the Santa Fe (Holy Faith)."<sup>1</sup> While Texas was under Spanish rule, a system of missions and presidios were established across the Southwest and West of the United States. A mission was a religious settlement that included churches, dormitories, workrooms, barns, fields, and gardens. A presidio was a military base with storage facilities, a chapel, and quarters for officers and men. They served different purposes. Initially, the mission was to assimilate the Indians into Spanish culture, and the presidio was to protect the roadways. Originally Spain planned for one mission in an area. However, hostile Indians like Apaches and Comanches forced Spain to build some missions closer together in groups and to build presidios closer to some missions.

The following story is well documented.

In 1609, Santa Fe became the capital of Spain's northern provinces in the New World. In 1612 a mission and monastery were built at Isleta Pueblo near Albuquerque, New Mexico. In 1620 the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. In July 1623, a group of twelve Jumano Indians arrived at Isleta on a trading trip. They went to Juan De Salas, a Franciscan priest at the monastery, asking him to baptize them and to send missionaries to the Jumanos' country to continue their Christian education. Fray Juan De Salas was curious. How did they know of Christianity? They told him that they had been taught by the "Lady in Blue" who came from the sky. They said she taught them "about God and Jesus Christ in their own language. She had them build a cross and an altar in their villages, taught them how to pray, make a rosary, and other Catholic rituals."<sup>2</sup> The Jumanos described the woman and her clothing. She was a beautiful, young white woman who wore a gray robe with a blue cloak. The description of the clothing suggested a Franciscan nun, but there were no nuns in New Mexico at that time. Fray De Salas had to decline their request because there were not enough priests to send some away with the Jumanos. The Jumanos continued to return for the next six years and requested the same thing each time.



Jumanos

<sup>1</sup> Robert Plocheck, "Franciscan Missionaries in Texas Before 1690," Accessed December 4, 2020. <https://texasalmanac.com/topics/history/franciscan-missionaries-texas-1690-0>

<sup>2</sup> Paul Harden, "The Legend of... 'The Lady in Blue' (The Blue Nun), *El Defensor Chieftain*, June 2, 2012. [https://www.caminorealheritage.org/articles/0612\\_blue\\_nun.pdf](https://www.caminorealheritage.org/articles/0612_blue_nun.pdf)

In Ágreda, Spain, a nun named María de Jesús de Ágreda claimed she had visited and preached to the Jumanos. She told her fellow nuns and friars about her travels. "Between 1620 and 1623, Mary of Jesus reported that she was often 'transported by the aid of the angels' to settlements of a people called Jumanos."<sup>3</sup> She made more than 500 of these 5,000-mile "bilocation" trips even though between 1619 and 1665, she never physically left the monastery of La Concepcion in Ágreda, Spain.



Maria's stories of her spiritual journeys spread throughout Spain and into New Spain. Some people doubted her stories and called for an investigation. María de Jesús was interrogated by priests, a bishop, and the Franciscan Minister General in 1622. The Franciscan Minister General "was so taken with her details, sincerity, and spiritual insight that he gave his blessings in 1626 for the convent's padre to write a letter to the archbishop of Mexico,"<sup>4</sup> Francisco Manzo Zuñiga to see if her descriptions and events could be verified.

At once, Manzo Zuñiga understood the importance of the report. He knew that Spain, having failed to find treasure in the American Southwest since colonization [began] in 1598, had turned her attention to conversion of the Indians – not only as a religious mission but also as a national obsession – and to expansion of empire. He knew that miraculous journeys like those claimed by Senora María would serve as powerful inspiration for his missionary priests in the Southwest and would likely prompt increased support from the crown. He knew that he had to verify the story, if he could.<sup>5</sup>

In turn, the archbishop sent an inquiry to Father Alonso Benavides, The Superior of the Franciscan Mission of all New Mexico. The letter was hand-carried from Mexico City to New Mexico by a personal emissary of the archbishop, Fray Esteban Perea. Fray Perea had already been scheduled to travel to the Isleta Pueblo because he had been chosen to replace Father Benavides. Fray Perea arrived in New Mexico with a caravan of 30 priests and military escort on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1629. Coincidentally, the annual trek of the Jumano Indians to New Mexico arrived on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, this time with a delegation of more than fifty. The chief of the delegation presented himself as Captain Tuerto. This Indian was blind in one eye, and the word Tuerto translates in Spanish as "blind in one eye."<sup>6</sup>

This time the Jumanos were more insistent than ever that the missionaries accompany them back to their tribe. Father Benavides asked the Jumanos where they had come from and who had sent them. They told him "that they had come a long journey from the southeast, from a kingdom called Titlas or Texas, which had not yet been visited by the white man."<sup>7</sup> Father Benavides "related this scene in very few words when he wrote his memorial to Pope Urban VIII:

We called them [the Jumanos] to the convent and asked them their motive in coming every year to ask for baptism with such insistency. Gazing at a portrait of Mother Luisa<sup>8</sup> in the convent, they said: "A woman in similar garb wanders among us over there, always preaching, but her face is not old like this, but young." Asked why they had not told us this before, they answered, "Because you did not ask us, and we thought she was over here, too."<sup>9</sup>

With this information, the friars were eager to go with the Indians to baptize them and "to investigate their claims to having been instructed by a strange woman who traveled among them."<sup>10</sup> Father Benavides sent Fray Juna De Salas, who

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<sup>3</sup> "Mary of Jesus of Ágreda," last edited 26 October 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary\\_of\\_Jesus\\_of\\_Agreda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_of_Jesus_of_Agreda)

<sup>4</sup> Jay W. Sharp, "The Blue Nun – Maria Jesus de Agreda Mystical Missionary to the Indians," *DesertUSA*, Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.desertusa.com/desert-people/lady-in-blue.html>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Ashmore, "Ancient Jumano Indians meet the Lady in Blue," posted July 4, 2016: 4. <https://silo.tips/download/ancient-jumano-indians-meet-the-lady-in-blue#>

<sup>7</sup> James A. Carrico, "Lady in Blue," *Michael For the Triumph of the Immaculate*, posted August 1, 2016, <https://www.michaeljournal.org/articles/roman-catholic-church/item/lady-in-blue>

<sup>8</sup> The reference is to Mother Luisa de Carrion, a nun who lived in Mexico, and who was noted for her saintliness.

<sup>9</sup> William H. Donahue, "Mary of Agreda and the Southwest United States." *The Americas* 9, no. 3 (1953): 296. Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/977996>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 297.

could speak the Jumano language, Fray Diego Lopez, and three soldiers, to protect the missionaries, back with the Indians to their tribe's home range.

The meeting place was probably between Lubbock and Amarillo in what is now Caprock Canyon State Park. The village celebrated the priests' arrival by carrying two wooden crosses covered with flowers. The Lady in Blue had helped them with their preparations. The most amazing thing for the priests was that the Indians came up to genuflect and kiss the crucifixes.

When the excitement and rejoicing settled down, the priest began to teach the Faith to the Indians. The priests found that in many instances, the Indians were well-instructed and-in-all-instances, they were eager to be taught. One day, Fray Salas asked the Jumanos who desired to be baptized. All hands went up, from the chief down to the children and even the infants whose mothers held their little hands up. The priests baptized 10,000 Jumanos.

The priests remained for several weeks. Each day they gave two masses. The word spread quickly, and soon more Indian tribes came, saying they too were sent by the Lady in Blue. With supplies beginning to run low, the priests decided to return to the San Antonio Mission at the Isleta Pueblo in New Mexico for more supplies and to report back to Perea and Benavides. On the last day, at the last mass, the Indians brought their sick to be healed. The priest had not expected this. They preached the Gospel of Luke, telling how Jesus healed the sick, and they moved among the sick, making the sign of the cross. Fray Salas and Lopez worked from three o'clock in the afternoon until ten o'clock the next day. According to Friar Salas, "more than two hundred...were cured in this manner."<sup>11</sup>

After the priests returned to New Mexico, Fray Benavides questioned the Fathers wanting to know everything about the Indians and their trip. Benavides was confident that God had intervened in the conversions of the Indians. These events had to be reported, so he wrote a report on the state of the missions and the state of the colony, entitled *Memorial of 1630*. This report was the first confirmation of the story of the Lady in Blue. (A copy of this report is in the Library of Congress.) Fray Benavides' report impressed Archbishop Manso Zuñiga so much that he sent Fray Benavides to Spain. Benavides reported the miraculous story to church leaders and King Phillip IV in person and secured additional funds for New Mexico. Then, he traveled to the Poor Clares' Convent of the Immaculate Conception at Ágreda to interview the "Lady in Blue." Benavides questioned María de Jesús for three weeks and confirmed that she was the Lady in Blue

That Ágreda really and truly visited America many times is attested to in the logs of the Spanish Conquistadors, the French explorers, and the identical accounts by different Indians a thousand miles apart. Every authentic history of the South-west of the United States records this mystic phenomena unparalleled in the entire history of the world. As Father Benavides aptly put it: "We should consider ourselves fortunate in being protected by the blessed soul of Mary of Jesus."<sup>12</sup>

Benavides wrote another report, *Memorial of 1634*, which he presented to Pope Urban VIII in that same year. The next year the Spanish Inquisition visited María de Jesús and found nothing to discredit her testimony or writings. On July 10, 1643, King Phillip IV visited María de Jesús for her counsel; and thus, began their friendship.



**Bluebonnets**

In 1631, María de Jesús asked God to release her of the ecstasies. The Lady in Blue made her last visit after the Jumanos received the sacraments. She bid farewell to the Indians and faded away beyond the hills. Everywhere the hem of her blue cloak had touched the ground, she left behind an area covered in deep blue flowers, bluebonnets. The bluebonnet is the state flower of Texas.



**Nuns at Monastery in Ágreda**

<sup>11</sup> Ashmore, "Jumano meet Lady in Blue," 6.

<sup>12</sup> Carrico, "Lady in Blue."

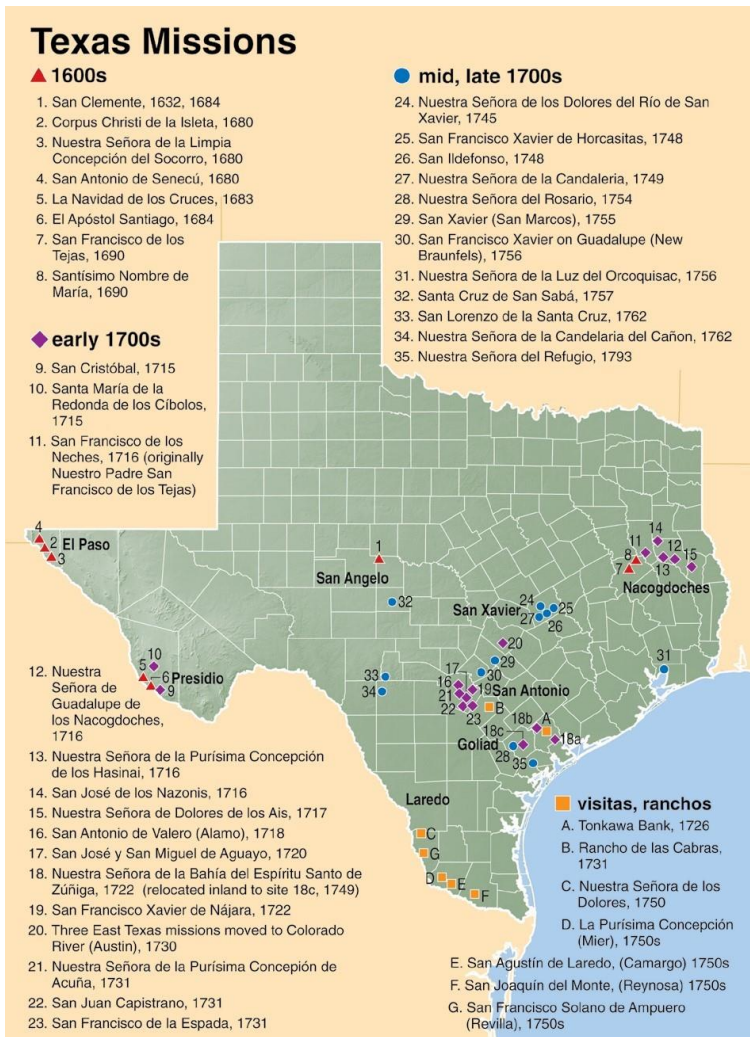
The story of this Spanish nun was a phenomenon of the southwest and west and its echoes were heard from Texas to California. Sor María de Jesús was a factor in the thinking and activity of the Franciscans throughout the American borderlands. In spoken and written accounts, the friars testified that their efforts were aided most remarkably by a Spanish nun who was transported into pagan lands to prepare Indians for the reception of the Gospel message."<sup>13</sup>

In 1665, after María de Jesús died, Pope Clemente X declared María a "Venerable." Twice María de Jesús has been considered for canonization as a saint. "In Roman Catholicism, if a body is judged as incorruptible after death, this is most often seen as a sign that the individual is a saint."<sup>14</sup>

In 1909 her body was exhumed and found incorrupt. Dr. Medina told investigative journalist Javier Sierra in 1991: "What most surprised me about that case is that when we compared the state of the body, as it was described in the medical report from 1909, with how it appeared in 1989, we realized it had absolutely not deteriorated at all in the last eighty years."<sup>15</sup> Today her body is on display in a glass-lidded coffin in Ágreda.



Venerable María de Jesús de Ágreda



In downtown San Angelo, along the Concho River, there are statues to honor the Lady in Blue. "Historical markers have been placed at the confluence of the Concho and North Concho rivers in San Angelo, near where it is believed she appeared."<sup>16</sup> Pictographs made by the Jumanos depicting a María-like figure are still visible today in Paint Rock, 31 miles east of San Angelo.

María's visits to the Indians stopped in 1831, but she continued spreading Christianity. She was a spiritual writer, writing 14 books, including her best-known work, *The Mystical City of God*, an eight-book narrative about Mary, mother of Jesus. In addition to these writings, María de Jesús corresponded with King Philip IV of Spain, giving him spiritual and political advice for over twenty-two years through letters. More than 600 have survived. María de Jesús is considered to have begun Christianity in the New World, and she is given credit for encouraging the expansion of the mission system.

Some of the missions, including some inspired by María de Jesús, still exist in Texas. Of the remaining missions in Texas, some are museums, and some are active churches. For example, there are five missions in and around San Antonio today: San Jose (1720), San Juan (1730), Concepcion (1731), Espada (1731), and the most well-known, San Antonio de Valero (1718), which was

<sup>13</sup>Francis J. Weber, "The Blue Lady of the Plains," *The Branding Iron*, no. 152(1983): 15. Accessed November 23, 2020.

<http://www.lawesterners.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/152-SEPTEMBER-1983.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> "Incorruptibility," Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incorruptibility>

<sup>15</sup> "María de Ágreda," Accessed December 3, 2020. <https://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/1085608>

<sup>16</sup> Bishop Emeritus Michael Pfeifer, OMI, "Lady in Blue," *The Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo*, Accessed December 3, 2020.

<https://sanangelodiocese.org/lady-in-blue>

originally named Mission San Francisco de Solano and was located on the Rio Grande. Today, San Antonio de Valero, better known as The Alamo, is a museum; the other four missions remain active parishes. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a bill creating the San Antonio Missions National Park.

The final mission built in Texas was Mission Nuestra Senora del Refugio in 1793. Then Spain began to focus on the missions in California.

The mission system had a lasting impact on Texas. Some of the mission settlements became cities in Texas: Menard, Socorro, El Paso, Goliad, and San Antonio. European livestock, fruits, and vegetables were introduced at the missions. Vocational skills like farming, blacksmithing, masonry, carpentry, and more were taught at the missions. One of Texas's most important industries was started by the Spanish missionaries who brought cattle from Mexico, the Texas cattle industry.

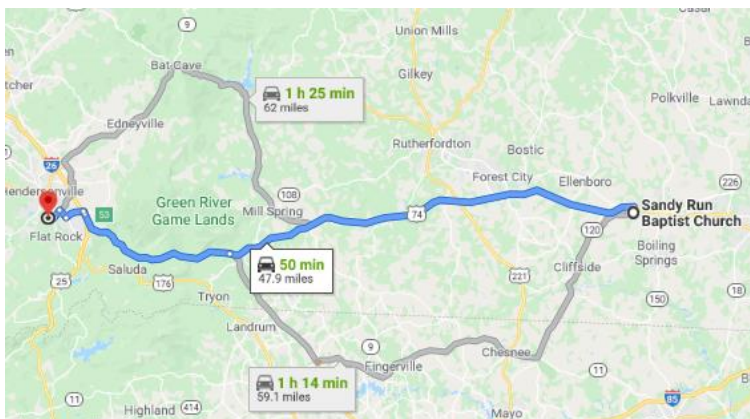
Returning to the east coast and the thirteen colonies, on September 3, 1783, King George III declared the colonies "free and independent." The United States of America's western boundary was extended to the Mississippi River. In one year, 50,000 Americans crossed the Appalachian Mountains. These settlers finding it difficult to cross back over the mountains, began looking to the Spanish colonies of Louisiana and Texas to find markets for their crops. At the Sandy Run settlement, our families were starting to look westward.

Abraham Kuykendall's family was one of the first to leave Sandy Run. When we looked at the members of Sandy Run Baptist Church, we noted Abraham Kuykendall (1719-1812) because he was the father of one of the "Sarahs." His daughter was Sarah Jane Kuykendall Shipman Saling. Abraham Kuykendall's great-grandson will become one of the most renowned Indian fighters in the Republic of Texas. Burlesons know Abraham Kuykendall was General Ed's great-grandfather.

There has been confusion about who Abraham Kuykendall married. Some have listed Elizabeth Burleson as his wife. However, it is now widely accepted that he married Elizabeth Fidler (1728-1800). Documentation of this marriage was found in the Dutch Reformed Church in Kinston, New York. Abraham and Elizabeth were married about 1743, and they had eleven children. Even though Abraham was about 75 when Elizabeth died, he remarried a young lady named Bathsheba Barrett Oxford, a widow, on January 1805.

On October 10, 1779, Abraham Kuykendall requested a land grant in Flat Rock, North Carolina. While waiting on this request Abraham and his brother Peter moved with their families to Washington County, North Carolina (now Tennessee) before 1782. Peter died in 1783. After Peter's death, Abraham, the executor of Peter's estate, settled the estate and moved most of his children and Peter's younger children back to North Carolina.

Abraham's request for the land around Flat Rock was finally made official in the 1790's. Abraham served in the Revolutionary War as a member of the North Carolina Militia in 1770. He also was a member of the Safety Committee for Tryon County in 1775. For his service, he was granted six hundred acres by the State of North Carolina in an area of virgin timber. Over time Abraham acquired over one thousand acres, in the Flat Rock area, owning most of the land in the town.



He started many businesses in the area, including an inn, a tavern, and a mill. His tavern accommodated travelers driving herds of livestock down the Old State Road. He provided good lodging and holding pens for the livestock. The accommodations were better than the typical pioneer inn of those days. The tavern made Abraham a rich man. Abraham insisted on being paid in gold or silver coins, and he only accepted gold when he sold large tracts of land. Since there were no banks, the coins were kept in trunks made of thick white oak and held together with pieces of iron and locked with padlocks.

These precautions did not satisfy the aging Abraham, particularly since his young wife had a habit of spending her husband's treasure on frivolous goods. Family tradition maintains that Bathsheba liked fine clothes and jewelry that she purchased from itinerant peddlers who served as traveling department stores, bringing all kinds of goods to frontier women in isolated areas. They quickly learned that Bathsheba was a good customer.

One dark night, old Abraham secretly transferred his gold and silver coins from his strong box to a large iron wash pot, an item common to pioneer households. He then awoke two of his servants to help him. He blindfolded them and ordered them to carry the pot down the road and into the forest with only a pine knot torch lighting the way. He guided them through the dense forest where he removed their blindfolds and had them dig a hole under a bent white oak tree near a clear sparkling branch. When it was deep enough to satisfy him, Abraham buried the pot, covering the spot with leaves and brush. He then blindfolded the young men and led them back to the inn.

On pain of death he warned his servants never to tell a soul a single word of what they had done for him that night. Sometime after, when Abraham was 104 years old, he set out alone to get some of his treasure for a business deal. Taking a shovel, he left the inn, never again to be seen alive. When he failed to return, a search party found him dead, lying face down in a mountain stream that flowed through the forest. Those who found him concluded that he had stumbled or tripped while trying to cross the branch, probably hitting his head. Either badly dazed or unconscious, he had rolled into the stream and drowned. Only then did it become common knowledge that Abraham had buried his wealth in a large iron pot. The two frightened servants told the family what they could of that strange night, but all they could tell was that the money was beneath a large bent white oak near a mountain stream.

Thus, began frantic searches along the banks of Pheasant Branch where Abraham was found, and some still search today.<sup>17</sup>

His fortune has not have been found. Abraham did donate the land where the Mud Creek Baptist Church and cemetery are located today. He died in 1812, at the age of 93 (not 104, like the story above), and was buried somewhere near his home. Although Abraham died in North Carolina, his descendants will make the journey to Texas.

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<sup>17</sup> "Abraham Kuykendall Story and Legend," Accessed December 4, 2020. [http://www.ncdar.org/AbrahamKuykendallChapter\\_files/html/story.html](http://www.ncdar.org/AbrahamKuykendallChapter_files/html/story.html)