

Molly Goodnight: First Lady of Palo Duro Canyon

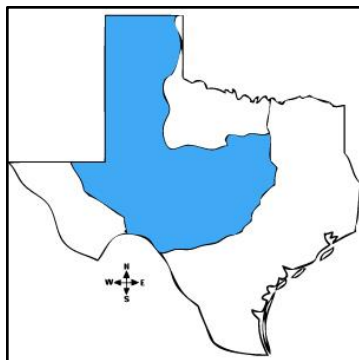
Mary Dyer was known by most people as Molly. Molly was born in Tennessee in 1839. In 1854, she moved to Texas with her parents. After their deaths, Molly was responsible for taking care of her five brothers. As she took care of her brothers, she also served as a teacher. Teaching allowed her to support her family.



In 1870 Molly met and married, Charles Goodnight. The couple moved to Pueblo, Colorado where they ran a ranch with the help of one of Molly's brothers. The ranch operated for seven years but, after periods of serious **drought**, the Goodnights, along with their entire herd, moved back to Texas. They settled their herd and built a house along the Palo Duro Canyon.

How did drought affect the Goodnights' ranch?

The Palo Duro Canyon is located just south of Amarillo, Texas. It is located in the **great plains** region. Known for its dust storms, the great plains are home to several different landforms. These include **plateaus**, **canyons**, **basins** and **plains**. While the land is ideal



for ranching, it does not have many trees. The animals in this area feed off of the short prairie grass or eat feed supplied by ranchers.

As the Goodnights' **settled** in Texas their herd of cattle continued to grow. Molly's importance to the ranch was significant. She played a key role when most women did not directly involve themselves in ranch work. Not only did she enjoy



working on the ranch, she also rescued and raised orphaned buffalos. Her herd of rescued buffalo became known as the Goodnight Buffalo Herd. Also, as the area around the Palo Duro Canyon became more **populated**, Molly extended her service activities. She volunteered at local churches as well as for other organizations. A lifelong learner, she helped establish Goodnight College in 1898.

Though Molly passed away in 1926 her **legacy** lives on. Her headstone reads, "One who spent her life in the service of others." Molly's impact on the great plains region continues to be seen in the cowboys that ride the cliffs of the canyons of Palo Duro. This was where Molly served her ranch and those who crossed her path.

Why do you think Molly was referred to as "the first lady of Palo Duro?"