

CALVILLO, ANA MARÍA DEL CARMEN (1765–1856)

Ana María del Carmen Calvillo was born in San Antonio de Bexar. María Calvillo inherited Rancho de las Cabras (Wilson County, Texas), from her father. Unlike other women who relinquished control over their assets to their husbands, and who assumed control of spousal holdings only after his death, Calvillo left her husband for unknown reasons and established economic independence, single-handedly operating her ranching enterprise. She also expanded the ranches' operations by building a granary, a sugar mill, and an irrigation system. Widows enjoyed a degree of social acceptability and were granted full protection of the law; however, a woman who abandoned her husband was a different matter. Archives demonstrate that Calvillo knew her legal rights. She kept her maiden name and maintained her property separate from that of her husband. According to her grandnephew, she dressed like a man and could shoot and rope like one. She endured the angry criticisms of her neighbors by paying tribute to rampaging Indians. She offered them beef in exchange for protection of her property. She died at the age of ninety-one. According to local folklore, her ghost still roams the countryside around Rancho astride a great white horse, her raven hair flowing in the wind.