

RODRÍGUEZ, JOSEFA “CHEPITA” (?–1863)

Though practically no details exist of Chepita, or Chipita, Rodríguez's early life, the date of her death on November 13, 1863, is very much in the Texas public record. On that date she was executed for the alleged murder of a white horsetrader. Rodríguez, a Texas resident since her family arrived in the region fleeing political turmoil in Mexico in 1836, grew up without an education or ever learning to speak the English language. She made a meager living as an innkeeper. The horsetrader, John Savage, stopped at her place in 1863 and some time later, his body was discovered down stream by a rancher. Rodríguez, now an “old” woman was arrested for the crime although scant evidence was presented at the trial. Rodríguez offered no defense, perhaps because she was protecting her son who was believed to be the actual murderer. Many Historians and folklorists believe Rodríguez was convicted unjustly. During the 1970s a groundswell of support for a posthumous exoneration erupted from south Texas. In 1984 Senator Carlos Truán of District 20 initiated efforts to get the Texas legislature to clear her name. On June 13, 1985, the legislature adopted a resolution absolving her of the crime.