



# Henrietta King: Loving the Land (Texas Heroes For Young Readers)

*Mary Dodson Wade*

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The daughter of a Presbyterian minister in Brownsville, Henrietta lived on a houseboat when it was nearly rammed by steamboat captain Richard King. The experienced frontiersman and prim seventeen-year-old schoolteacher married four years later and moved to a hut made of mud on King's newly claimed land. As the ranch grew, Henrietta dealt with every threat known to the frontier— Indians, lawless men, violent weather— and the Civil War. When her husband died in 1885, Henrietta took over the management of the ranch. In widow's black, she continued to care for the health and education of the Mexican ranch hands. With the help of her son-in-law Robert Kleberg she expanded the ranch's holdings to more than one million acres and developed a new breed of cattle that could withstand Texas heat. Henrietta was a major influence in the development of South Texas as she donated churches, schools and land for railroads. At her funeral, two hundred cowboys from the King Ranch rode around her grave in salute to "La Patrona."

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