

**THE STAR DAY FOUNDATION  
FIRST PIONEERS AND LEADERS  
OF THE STATE OF TEXAS  
HALL OF HONOR**



**MARY ANN (MOLLY) GOODNIGHT  
(1839-1926)**

Accomplished Texans who serve as positive role models for young people deserve special recognition, and Mary Ann "Molly" Goodnight, Armstrong County pioneer and wife of Charles Goodnight embodied the strength and spirit that has made Texas an enduring example to the rest of the country.

Molly Goodnight was born September 12, 1839, in Madison County, Tennessee; she moved with her family to Fort Belknap, Texas, in 1854; after the death of her parents, she worked as a schoolteacher and took care of her five brothers.

She met Charles Goodnight in the mid-1860s, and they married in 1870; the couple settled in Pueblo, Colorado, where Charles had already established a ranch; drought and the Panic of 1873 caused the family to return to Texas, where Charles received backing from Irish investor John George Adair, who became his partner.

The Goodnights founded a ranch in the Texas Panhandle based in Palo Duro Canyon; Molly became doctor, nurse, spiritual comforter, sister, and mother to the ranch hands who worked there, but her most important role was wife and helpmate to the most famous rancher on the High Plains.

She became interested in the plight of the baby bison left behind by the commercial hunters who had ravaged the great bison herds that roamed the Plains; recognizing that the extinction of the bison was imminent, she encouraged her husband to establish the Goodnight bison herd, which has since become the Official State Bison Herd of Texas and is now located at Caprock Canyons State Park.

Known as the Mother of the Panhandle of Texas, Molly helped establish Goodnight College, and the town of Goodnight is named in honor of her and her husband; Molly died in 1926, and her headstone reads "Mary Ann Dyer Goodnight, One who spent her whole life in the service of others."

NOTE: The photograph (PA-653) is used with permission from the Amarillo Public Library's collection. The above text is the text of Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 10 authored by State Senator Kel Seliger and sponsored by State Representative Ken King during the 83<sup>rd</sup> Regular Session of the Texas State Legislature. SCR 10 designated September 12<sup>th</sup> as "The Mary Ann (Molly) Goodnight Day" in Texas to honor and remember her life and achievements. She is truly deserving of this signal honor for her pioneering work alongside her husband and her visionary leadership efforts of saving a herd of Texas' Plains bison that is now "The Official State Bison Herd of Texas" at Caprock Canyons State Park for the people of Texas. The bill was proposed by The Texas Bison Student Study Group (The Group) sponsored by The STAR DAY Foundation of El Paso, Texas as an after-school student enrichment program hosted by Texas schools to provide students with the opportunity to explore and discover the history and origin of the Texas Plains bison especially the Official State Bison Herd of Texas; to research and study the history and culture of Native American people who hunted bison; to study and evaluate the feasibility of the use of Texas bison ground meat as a component of school lunch programs; to investigate and propose ways and means to raise needed funds in partnership with their families and others to support the conservation, preservation and restoration work of the Official State Bison Herd of Texas management team at Caprock Canyons State Park under the supervision of the Park Superintendent; and to plan, develop and conduct "Expeditions" to visit Caprock Canyons State Park and local/regional partnering Texas bison ranches to see bison and experience bison ranching first hand. The STAR DAY Foundation shall invite Texas Junior High and Middle School history teachers, librarians, homeschooling families and others to plan, develop and conduct an annual "Mary Ann (Molly) Goodnight Day" classroom student studies activity to inspire and motivate students to explore and discover her life and achievements as an outstanding conservation, preservation and restoration historical role model as the woman who saved Texas Plains bison for the people of Texas now known as "The Official State Bison Herd of Texas, A State of Texas Treasure!" The STAR DAY Foundation invites Texans and Friends of Texas worldwide to volunteer and join the long term effort of The Group to raise donations to support the conservation, preservation and restoration work of the Official State Bison Herd of Texas management team at Caprock Canyons State Park as an annual STAR DAY birthday gift for the State of Texas.

**THE STAR DAY FOUNDATION**

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