

I AM MARY PARKS SWEENY

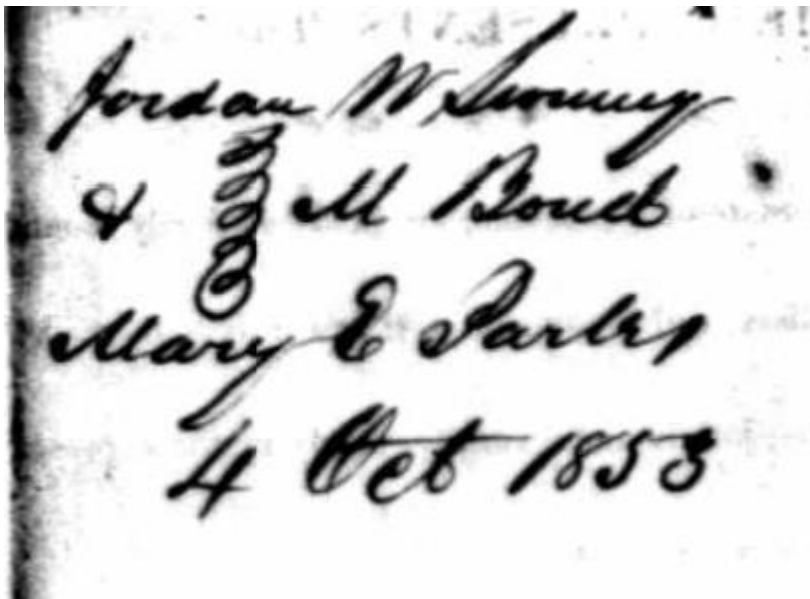
Transcription BCHM.org. Comments in red Basil Shannon basil_shannon@yahoo.com

Mary Parks Sweeny (1833-1874) was the 2nd wife of Jordan Woodson Sweeny (1822-1875), son of John Sweeny Sr (1783-1855) for whom the City of Sweeny is named.

Original text by Catherine Holland Bannister, based on family materials. Spelling left as it appears in the original document. Created as a presentation for groups. Date unknown.

I am Mary Parks Sweeny.

It is mighty nice of you sweet ladies to call for me, and I will be mighty proud to tell you all about my sweet, turbulent and serene life, as mistress of a Brazoria County plantation way off down here in Texas, before during and after the Civil War. I was married to Mr. Jordan Sweeny Oct 15, 1852 (Oct 4, 1853?) in Tenn.



A photograph of a handwritten entry from a church marriage record book. The text is written in cursive ink on aged paper. It reads: 'Jordan W. Sweeney & Mary E. Parks 4 Oct 1853'. The entry is written in four lines.

ancestry.com Tennessee marriages

this is our wedding picture.

show picture. permit to be passed.
(Hope to find this picture)

Since my father had given me some nice household furniture, some horses and some slaves. We had to make the trip from Tenn. to Texas by covered wagons, over well traveled roads. Since this

was my first experience of this sort, I found the trip highly enjoyable. Mr. Sweeny's plantation was somewhat larger than I had expected, and while the house was not pretentious, it was very nice. It consisted of six large rooms, large gelries and a stranger's room. The trees were simply magnificent. I was indeed happy to be home in Texas. After my slaves were quartered and my furniture placed, I truly felt at home. Mr. Sweeny whose love for his plantation, was superceeded by his love of medicine, in which he had had considerable training, but, had not finished as a doctor. So, operated, on his plantation a rather large apothecary shop since he loved to have me with him, he begged me to help him in his shop it was such a pleasure for me to be with my beloved husband that I was pleased to accept.

the house slaves were well trained the cook was excellent the washwoman and other servants performed their duties with quiet perfection, so I found I was not required to attend to any house hold duties at this time.

Mrs. Sweeny's two small daughters by his first marriage (1) were perfect dears, but they too needed little from me, as they had their own mammy. One of the horses my father had given me was my own pony, so I accompanied Mr. Sweeny and Moses, body*servant and helper, on most all of his trips to other plantations to visit and take care of the sick. By doing this, I was able to learn how to administer to the ailing folks. And this training stood me in well at a later date.

(1)1st wife Mary G. Tinsley (1827-1852) buried Sweeny cemetery

Daughter Anna Della Sweeny (1849-1904) buried Brazoria cemetery

Daughter Sophia L. Sweeny (1850-1858) buried?

After a happy year, our son **(William L. Sweeny 1855-1923)**, was born, a darling little blonde curly headed baby. Oh, how, I loved him, but in a short time his nurse took over, and I was free to join E. Sweeny again.

Mr. Sweeny, since he was so interested and so occupied with his medical work, would not take care of his plantation himself. So he had to have the services of two overseers. Here I was called upon again to make many decisions in regards to the operation of the plantation. So by the time my little black haired molly (2) joined our family, I was deep in outside work, and again her nurse took over.

(2) Mary "Mollie" Virginia Sweeny (1862-1936) buried Richmond TX

For a short seven years Mr. Sweeny, our son William and three daughters (3) led a most prosperous, pleasant, happy and often enjoyable life.

(3) Son William L. by Mary & 2 daughters Anna Della and Sophia from 1st marriage and Mary "Mollie" Virginia.. Conflict: No mention of a 2nd son? The death certificate of J. W. (J.

Walter?) Sweeny (1861-1917) shows he was son of J. W. Sweeny and Mary E. Parks. Also, Mrs. E. P. Andrus (Mary "Mollie" Sweeny) is listed as informant which also suggests that they were brother and sister. Jordan Woodson Sweeny & Mary Parks had other children:

Beulah H Sweeny (1863-1881) Buried Sweeny cemetery

Mussetta Sweeny (1874-1925) Buried West Columbia cemetery. Her mother Mary Parks died in childbirth.

Mr. Sweeny's only sister, Sophia McGraw lived on her father's old home place, just a few miles away, and we truly loved visiting with her and her family. Our days were so full of happiness. Our church was on the McGraw Place, and was known as the McGraw Bend Methodist church. Here we had visiting preachers from Matagorda, Brazoria and often from far away places. Our church social affairs were well attended and most enjoyable.

The family cemetery was just across from the McGraw home, and here Mr. Sweeny's mother and father one sister, little Sarah Elizabeth Moody Sweeny, and two brothers were buried. I knew and loved Mr. John Sweeny (Sr), my father in law, very much, he was a very fine Virginia gentleman. He died, at home Jan 7, 1855.

This saddened us all. Mr. Sweeny's mother had died some twelve years earlier.

Mr. Sweeny's brothers all lived on their own plantations, and we visited with each other regularly.

Not a stone's throw from us, lived sweet Sam Sweeny, an inventive genius. With his dear sickly little wife, Agnes Ann, and his four children. (4)

(4) Samuel Pickney Sweeny Sr (1827-1864) + Agnes Ann Dial (1828-1860)

Records of 5 children to this marriage:

Eudora Pink Sweeny (1854-1934)

Ann Evelynne Sweeny (1855-)

Mary Ida Sweeny (1857-1924)

Benjamin Franklin Sweeny (1858-1913)

Samuel Pickney Sweeny Jr (1860-1871)

After Agnes Ann died in 1860 and Samuel married Katherine Fulcrod in 1863.

John Sweeny (Jr), a bachelor lived' on his large plantation, known as Chance's Prairie. Mr. Samuel Chance, also a single man, and from whom the prairie was named, lived with him. Brother John ran a large commissary and post office station on his place and here we would go to get all of our mail and supplies. The mail was brought by boat to East Columbia and then carried by man on horseback to Matagorda Texas. This mail carrier stopped at brother John's for the night and then on both the trip to and from Matagorda.

Brother Thomas, his dear but bossy wife Frances with their numerous children (5) lived down here part time on their place and part time in east Columbia. We truly mom parties and dances at their beautiful home in east Columbia.

(5) Thomas Jefferson Sweeny (1812-1869) + Diana Frances Haynie (1826-1904)

They had some 13 children between 1843 & 1865, Thomas died in LaGrange and is probably buried there. Diana is buried in Angleton.

Brother Ben and Sister (Wife) Liza(6), also lived close by, and I will declare were a real joy to all of us when they were home from Tenn. sister Liza never could like Texas, and refused to bear her three babies off Tenn. soil. I am from Tenn., but I love Texas best.

(6) Benjamin Franklin Sweeny (1829-1860) + Sarah Elizabeth Porter (1834-)

It appears that Benjamin moved back to Tennessee where he married Sarah in 1853. One of the children born there was Rees Porter Sweeny (1856-1937) who moved to Texas at some point. Buried West Columbia.

We attended lots of soceal events at Brazoria, Texas. This was really the social town. But, one of the biggest events of our lives, was our large family eccampment at the mouth of the Bernard River, where we, the family owned land on the beach.(7) We would sew and treat sacks and other materials for our tent, all winter . Then come summer set them up, and truly enjoy camping, fishing and swimming all summer if we wished.

(7) The beach land matches the 400+ acres John Sweeny Sr, bought in the late 1840's out of the Alsbury league.

The civil war and the secession fight in Texas, usher in my wee son, Walter (J. Walter Sweeny 1861-1917) in 1861. But little attention did this poor baby get. As feelings, even among the Sweeny family ran riot.

Brother Thomas, who was a great friend of Sam Houston's fought with his brothers over the issue. He did not want Texas dragged into the Confederacy, but the others were for secession. My ears rang with all of this dissention, but as you all know, Texas did join the confederate states of am. And in 1861 was plunged head on into war.

Texas conscription laws exempted Mr. Sweeny, "him being a slave holder of more than fifteen blacks" but he wanted to go, I joined by his brothers, felt that he should stay home with his family of such small children. Mr. Sweeny, reluctantly agreed, but in 1862, major John Wharton, an old friend, wrote him that due to his medical knowledge he was badly needed in the army hospitals. Now, nothing could keep him home. This plus his desire to be active drove him on.

Before, Mr. Sweeny left, he called up his overseers (one who was to go with him) and his slaves. Here he told them that I was in complete control of the plantation, and asked that all their loyalty be given me. In this they never faltered.

I at once took over, and all was going well, but demands for medical help from far and wide forced me back to work in the apothecary shop and to attending the sick. Mose, as he had attended

Mr. Sweeny went with me. Since, at this time, my supply of medicines was large, and my medical supplies sufficient. I could do well with most sick folks.

We were going along nicely, when tragedy struck. Mr. Sweeny's little daughter Sophia (8), while playing around the wash fire-with the Miller children fell and was burned very badly. I immediately dispatched a message to Mr. Sweeny, who was allowed to return home at once. Little Sophia died. The hospital at which Mr. Sweeny was stationed was blown up by the Indians. It was hard to give up Sophia, but in a way she did save her father's life.

(8) Sophia L. Sweeny (1850-) was a daughter from 1st wife Mary Tinsley.

Mr. Sweeny left shortly after, and this time was sent out of the state to a hospital in Tenn. Nine months later, in 1863, my beautiful daughter Beulah (9) was born. Into this turbulent war torn world.

(9) Beulah H. Sweeny (1863-1881) Buried Sweeny cemetery.

The plantation was running well, I had listened to the country's plea, and cut down on my cotton crops, and was raising many more food crops. My cane and corn crops were good, and my people remained true and loyal.

I managed to find the time to join the ladies in meeting the many countless demands made on us. We met at various plantations worked our spinning wheels constantly to make yards and yards of much needed cloth for our fighting men, we made all kinds of equipment such as 1. haversacks 2. knapsacks and even tents.

Sewing bees were held and we would sew the materials into wearables for our soldiers.

Funds were solicited by us. We learned to make real good coffee out of dried okra. And even extracted sugar from our abundant supply watermelon. We raised poppies, from which I taught the ladies how to extract the juice for medicines **(Heroin)** to be used in the hospitals. Some of us even learned to pack powder(gun) into paper cartridges, so that our soldiers might have additional ammunition for his muskets. Oh we were a busy lot.

This war is bad, but down here we are not badly affected. The worse fighting so far! Was at Galveston, but we did not suffer much from this. However, the federal army angered by their defeat at Galveston is cleaning up the coastal towns and now Matagorda is occupied by a large infantry company, under a colonel Davis.

Early on the first day of 1864 Mose and I were in the apothecary shop sadly checking over our heavily depleted medical supplies. A small group of northern soldiers rode up. Mose grabbed for his gun but I stayed his hand. The men approached me most courteously, and upon determining that was Mrs. Mary Sweeney, delivered to me a note from a Col. Davis, their commanding officer. I read this note. first burned with anger, then paled with fear, for this note requested that I report to Col Davis at Matagorda, and there to render aid to his many sick soldiers, since I was the only "medical person" known to be available. I was simply furious, but I could hear Mr. Sweeney's voice telling me to calm down and remember that it was my duty to render aid to any sick person, wherever and where ever they might be

After hurried consultations with the family, it was agreed that I must go, so Mose and I left with the soldiers.

We were ten weeks in Matagorda, and our work with the sick soldiers was well done, for not one man died and all were on the way to recovery.

I had marveled at their very large stock of medicines and medical supplies, so when Col. Davis offered to pay me for our services, I begged that I be paid in medicines and medical supplies.

Col. Davis who had just returned to his command told me that he would take the matter under consideration.

Several days, after our return home a military wagon loaded to the gills with all kinds of medicines and medical supplies. Mose and were completely happy over our "pay"

During the next' several months, the scalawags and deserters became our most disturbing news, for they were looting all around us. Brother John brought us more guns and amunition my eleven war old son William, who was good shot, he fully armed with orders to shoot on sight. I along with, Mr. Black, my old overseer, and some of my slaves shouldered guns with grim determination. But to our joy, we were not attacked.

The mail was slow, but I did hear from my dear husband; and learned he was faring well. As was my family in Tenn. I had to buy a \$1.00 stamp at a time for the scarsity of paper and reading matter was ill suffered, but yankee merchants were getting it thru to us, and I for one did not mind buying it, anything to relieve my lonliness and acheing heart

In 1865 news carried so slowly that we did not even know about General Lee's surrender at Appomatox. In fact when Mr. Sweeny arrived home some weeks later, I was so happily surprised. After Mr. Sweeny had a nicelong rest, and a visit with the children, Mr. Black and I briefed him own the plantation affairs. Mr. Sweeny was so proud of the way we had handle the plantation but he would shake his head sadly and continue to advise us that we were the losers, and as such would suffer the pangs of Hell when the pay*off began on June 2, 1865, Texas signed their separate treaty with the north, and we were plunged almost at once into reconstruction... carpetbaggers scalawags, and the notorious freedman's bureau

at my insistance, before he left, in 1862 Mr. Sweeny had drawn up all necessary papers to free our slaves, so I had in 1864 given my slaves their freedom do all to my pleasurable surprise , refused to accept, and begged to stay on with me. All loyal friends and coworkers

When Mr. Sweeny returned tho , he made them accept their freedom papers, and he set their wages. So, each and every one of them was able to advise the Freeman's Bureau that they did not need their services.

We did feel so sorry for Brother John (**John Sweeny Jr 1816-1899**) who had stubbornly effused to free his slaves, because he had to suffer the indignities of this disgusting bunch of cut*throats. But just as soon as every man received his freedom papers he rushed to "Marse john" begging to stay with

him it was a heart warming sight. Each and every one of them signed on at once, and the wages set by the bureau were much smaller than we paid our people.

We lost no land to the carpetbaggers and we were told that this was due to my former services to the army of the United States. I was sick and disgusted, because I asked no favor from these miserable yankees.

Brother John tho, lost several hundred acres to the only carpetbagger we had this side of the Bernard River. this made him hate the yankees even worse.

Fortunately this was such a tight plantation community that none of us actually suffered much from the scalawags. Yet, I tremble to think of the killings that could have happened.

If anything really nice could have come out of the civil war for us. We were real lucky to get the very nicest.

Sister Kate... tell story the Armstrong's *tell story.*

Now, dear ladies I have rambled on, and here it is some ten years after our horrible ordeal. And, I am going to have a baby, my fifth child. For some strange reason, I feel that I am going to die. Everybody laughs at me, and my beloved pastor thinks I am sacrilegious. But the idea stays with me

I feel this so strongly that I have given my baby, should I die) to sister Kate, and have even forced Mr. Sweeny to sign all legal papers for this.

I was well, but on the morning of March 18, 1874, a darling little daughter (**Mussetta Sweeny 1874-1925**) was born to me. Mr. Sweeny who had delivered all the babies in the community including two of my babies, became so very frightened, that he left at once for East Columbus to get Dr. Porter, but before he had returned, life had slowly ebbed out of me.....

Mary Parks Sweeny age 41 years.

Musetta's mother must have had difficulty delivering and she died the same day Musetta was born. Musetta's Uncle John Sweeny Jr and his second wife* adopted or took her in.

*** Katherine Fulcord widow of Sidney Pickney Sweeny Sr**