



# Tales of Texas Newsletter



May 2026

This issue of Tales of Texas is about saving the Alamo for future generations. The photo above represents a part of our heritage that was nearly lost.

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## Remember the Alamo! What Are *You* Willing To Protect?

In the long story of Texas, certain names rise quickly to the surface—Houston, Travis, Bowie. Others, just as essential, stand quietly behind the scenes, holding the past together so it is not lost to time. One of those names is Adina de Zavala.

She did not command troops or sign declarations. Instead, she fought a different kind of battle—one waged against neglect, indifference, and the slow erosion of memory. Because of her, some of Texas's most sacred places still stand today.

Adina de Zavala was born in 1861 in Harris County, Texas, into a family already woven into the state's founding story. She was the granddaughter of Lorenzo de Zavala, a key figure in Texas independence.

That heritage shaped her deeply. Texas history was not an abstract subject to her—it was personal. It lived in family stories, in the land itself, and in the buildings that still stood as witnesses to earlier days.



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After spending part of her childhood in Galveston, she moved with her family to the San Antonio area, where the presence of missions, plazas, and aging structures stirred something lasting in her.

She became a teacher by profession, but her true calling soon revealed itself elsewhere.

In the late 1800s, Adina taught school in Texas, shaping young minds in the classroom. Yet even as she taught, she recognized a troubling reality—Texas’s physical history was disappearing.

Old buildings were being torn down. Historic sites were being neglected or repurposed. The memory of Texas, she believed, was at risk of fading.

So, she did something bold for her time. Along with a group of women, she helped form one of the earliest patriotic and preservation-minded societies in Texas.

These women were not merely interested in nostalgia. They understood that history required stewardship. If no one stepped forward, the landmarks of Texas would be lost to commerce and time.

## The Battle for the Alamo

Adina de Zavala’s most famous—and dramatic—contribution came through her work to preserve the Alamo Mission.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Alamo was not yet the carefully preserved shrine we recognize today. Parts of the complex, especially the long barracks (or *convento*), were in danger of being sold, altered, or even demolished.

Adina believed these structures were not just old buildings—they were integral to the story of the 1836 battle. Through research, interviews, and historical investigation, she argued that the long barracks had been part of the original Alamo compound.

Not everyone agreed.



Field Trip  
Adina: back,  
center



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Adina de Zavala

A faction within the preservation community wanted to remove the structure, believing it was not historically significant. The disagreement grew intense, even public.

Then came one of the most remarkable acts in Texas preservation history.

In 1908, Adina de Zavala barricaded herself inside the long barracks to prevent its destruction. For three days, she remained inside, refusing to yield, determined to save the structure at any cost.

Her stand captured national attention. Newspapers covered the standoff. Crowds gathered.

In the end, her efforts helped ensure the preservation of that portion of the Alamo. Later restoration work confirmed what she had argued all along—that the structure was indeed part of the historic site.

It is no exaggeration to say that without her, part of the Alamo might not exist today.

Adina de Zavala's work did not stop at the Alamo.

She understood that Texas history stretched far beyond a single site. In 1912, she founded the Texas Historical and Landmarks Association, an organization dedicated to identifying and marking important locations across the state.

Through this effort, dozens of historical sites received recognition and protection. Many of these places might otherwise have disappeared without record or remembrance.

She also played a key role in preserving the Spanish Governor's Palace, one of the most significant colonial-era buildings in Texas.

Her work extended to missions, homes, and landmarks tied to Texas's diverse past—Spanish, Mexican, and early Texan alike. She saw Texas history not as a single narrative, but as a tapestry of cultures and influences.

Adina once described herself as a “jealous lover of Texas history.”



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It was an apt phrase. She guarded the past fiercely, not out of nostalgia, but out of a belief that identity depends on memory.

When she died in 1955 at the age of 93, Texas honored her as one of its great preservationists. Her funeral procession passed the Alamo—a fitting tribute to the place she fought to protect.

Today, visitors to the Alamo rarely realize how close parts of it came to being lost. They walk through preserved spaces, read markers, and experience history in ways made possible by her efforts.

## Why Adina de Zavala Still Matters

In a modern world that moves quickly, it is easy to overlook the importance of preservation. Progress often demands change, and change can come at the cost of memory.

Adina de Zavala reminds us that the past is not a burden—it is a foundation.

Her life raises an important question for every one of us: What are *you* willing to protect?

In my new novel *Isobel's Song*, I place fictional characters inside these very days. The protagonist is a young woman. This in and of itself is unusual because the story is not a romance, Hallmark movie formula, or “chick lit.”

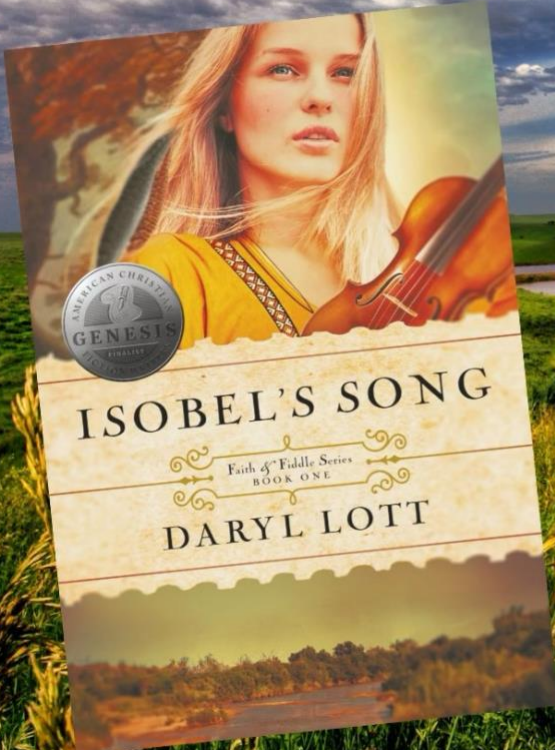
The story springs from my own family’s history as well as yours. Our female ancestors were not who we think they were. They were much stronger. They did not adhere to tropes and modern-day stereotypes. They didn’t have time for such nonsense. They were too busy trying to survive. We stand on the shoulders of giants.

Most of the characters are actual historical figures, including the females of the era.

Another thing about so many of our ancestors is that they relied on their Christian or Jewish faith to guide them through the hazards of life.

The novel is available in Kindle, paperback, hardback, and audiobook (Amazon & Audible). We are not trying to sell a book so much as we are trying to get a message out that our ancestors sacrificed much to leave Texas to us. Regardless of our race or gender, we can be proud of Texas, the First Texans, and all those who came to Texas thinking about the future.

The illustration following is from *Isobel's Song* and includes the link to the Amazon listing.



Isobel's Song  
Faith & Fiddle Series  
Book #1

#HistoricalChristianFiction #ACFWGenesisFinalist2026