

edition of the song was published in New York. The cover states the song was "Composed and Arranged Expressly for Charles H. Brown by J.K." It was common in the nineteenth century to keep "ghost" composers secretive, especially if the songs had slave folksong origins. Hence, we don't know who "J.K." was, nor are we certain he was even the composer. And we're not likely to find out.

Soon after it was published, the song increased in worldwide popularity and was sung by minstrels both in this country and Europe. As the American Civil War began, it was adopted as a marching song by soldiers everywhere - most often, as you might expect, by those soldiers from Texas. But since it referred to (and was to be sung by) a black American soldier, the song's lyrics were changed. By the early 1860's, the term "darker" [sic] was replaced with "soldier," and the first line of the chorus was changed to "She's the sweetest little flower...."

So then, who was Yellow Rose? The answer comes from historical records which tell us the song's original title was "Emily, the Maid of Morgan's Point."

Emily of Morgan's Point refers to an indentured servant, somewhat forgotten in history for her heroism during the Texas war of independence from Mexico. Some contend the legend is a myth - not a part of history. The historical evidence, however, indicates otherwise.

The legend begins in 1830 with the immigration to Texas of one James Morgan, an entrepreneur from Philadelphia with extensive holdings. Morgan was eager to capitalize on the cheap land and business opportunities in the Mexican colony which would ultimately become Texas. He formed several partnerships with New York speculators for land deals in the fledgling colony. However, Texas did not permit slavery and Morgan had 16 he wanted to bring with him. So to circumvent the law, and he converted his slaves into 99-year indentured servants.

In the years that followed, a scheme was conceived to flood Texas with non-Mexicans from the United



States. To capitalize on that movement, Morgan returned to New York in 1835 to recruit more workers for his settlement. One such émigré was a twenty year old woman named Emily D. West - "an eastern import with extraordinary intelligence and sophistication."

Emily West was mulatto and possibly from Bermuda, since Morgan brought many of his workers from this Atlantic island. According to some records, West volunteered to be indentured, most probably to escape the prejudice against her mixed race. And, as was the custom for an indentured worker at the time, she changed her last name to that of Morgan's.

By the following year in 1836, the war for Texas' independence from Mexico was fully engaged and led by General Sam Houston. James Morgan's now successful settlement, New Washington, was strategically located near the mouth of the San Jacinto River. He freely gave his famous oranges, various grains and fattened cattle to Houston's men. One particularly strategic parcel of land named Morgan's Point (so called to this day) extended into San Jacinto Bay. From Morgan's Point, flatboats were loaded with supplies for Houston.

Thus established as a "friend of Texas," James Morgan was appointed a

Colonel. And in March, 1836, he was assigned to the Port of Galveston (some 30 miles away) to guard Texas refugees and fugitive government officials. So that Houston's supply line would continue, he left Emily West Morgan in charge of loading flatboats destined to feed the army.

By the afternoon of April 18, 1836, General Santa Anna had moved his men into position to attack the Texas rebels he knew to be nearby. On his approach was New Washington - now mostly deserted as its inhabitants fled before his marching army. One of those that remained behind, however, was Emily, and Santa Anna was immediately struck by her beauty.

The next morning, after his men helped themselves to the crops and cattle, Santa Anna set about securing one more "spoils of war" - Emily. He captured her and a young "yellow boy" named Turner loading yet another flatboat headed for Houston's army. Santa Anna cajoled Turner to lead his Mexican scouts to the Houston encampment. But as they were departing, Emily convinced Turner to escape from Santa Anna's men and rush to Houston's camp to inform him of the Mexican general's arrival.

General Santa Anna believed himself quite the ladies' man. And