



Sam Houston Is My Hero (Chaparral Books)

Judy Alter

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Fourteen-year-old Cat Jennings lives—and works—on a hardscrabble farm outside Bastrop, Texas, with her parents, an older brother Charlie, and three younger children—Holly, Benjie, and Susanna. But her father has gone to fight at the Alamo, and Charlie has left to join him. When Cat learns that the Alamo has fallen with no survivors, she takes off on horseback to ride across South Texas and urge volunteers to join Sam Houston's army. She soon runs into Johnny Jenkins, who is both her nemesis and her first love. Johnny is on his way to join Houston, even though Cat tells him he's too young.

As she rides from cabin to cabin, Cat meets fascinating characters, like the gentle widow Polly who won't believe that her son died at the Alamo. And she has near misses with a Mexican brigade and roughnecks who try to kidnap her. Disguised as a boy, she runs into the Texian army—only to find that they are retreating! She also finds Charlie and Johnny with Houston, but when she wants to leave for home, General Houston won't allow it.

So Cat joins the Runaway Scrape and follows Houston and his army to San Jacinto, arguing all the way with Johnny and Charlie, who think Houston is a coward for retreating and cruel for burning the towns he marches through. Cat argues that he is the hero who will save Texas.

According to her great-granddaughter, the real Catherine Jennings did make such a ride after her father, Gordon Jennings, was killed at the Alamo. The rest of this story is fiction based on historical research.

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