



# **Ella Elgar Bird Dumont: An Autobiography of a West Texas Pioneer (Barker Texas History Center)**

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Ella Elgar Bird Dumont

A crack shot, expert skinner and tanner, seamstress, sculptor, and later writer—a list that only hints at her intelligence and abilities—Ella Elgar Bird Dumont was one of those remarkable women who helped tame the Texas frontier. First married at sixteen to a Texas Ranger, she followed her husband to Comanche Indian country in King County, where they lived in a tepee while participating in the final slaughter of the buffalo. Living off the land until the frontier was opened for ranching, Ella and Tom Bird typified the Old West ideals of self-sufficiency and generosity, with a hesitancy to complain about the hard life in the late 1800s.

Yet, in one important way, Ella Dumont was unsuited for life on the frontier. Endowed with an instinctive desire and ability to carve and sculpt, she was largely prevented from pursuing her talents by the responsibilities of marriage and frontier life and later, widowhood with two small children. Even though her second marriage, to Auguste Dumont, made life more comfortable, the realities of her existence still prevented the fulfillment of her artistic longings.

Ella Bird Dumont's memoir is rich with details of the frontier era in Texas, when Indian depredations were still a danger for isolated settlers, where animals ranged close enough to provide dinner and a new pair of gloves, and where sheer existence depended on skill, luck, and the kindness of strangers. The vividness and poignancy of her life, coupled with the wealth of historical material in the editor's exhaustive notes, make this Texas pioneer's autobiography a very special book.

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