



Student Name:
Class Period:
Date:

Meet the Originals

Texas Originals is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Elisabet Ney. Then, answer questions about it.

Elisabet Ney 1833–1907

In the south foyer of the Texas State Capitol stand two life-sized statues: one of Sam Houston, the other of Stephen F. Austin. These men helped shape the state of Texas, but their marble likenesses were shaped by the hands of Elisabet Ney.

Ney was born in Prussia in 1833, when ladies were expected merely to dabble in art, certainly not study it as a career. But Ney became the first woman admitted to Munich's celebrated Academy of Fine Arts to study sculpture. She quickly achieved fame as an artist, traveling through Europe sculpting royalty, politicians, and celebrities.

When the Franco-Prussian War erupted in 1870, Ney and her husband fled to the United States, eventually settling on a plantation near Hempstead, Texas. There, she scandalized her neighbors, wearing bloomers around the plantation grounds and using her maiden name. In Texas, just as in Europe, Ney forged her own path.

In the early 1890s, Elisabet Ney, almost sixty years old, received the commission for the now-famous Capitol statues. She opened a studio in Austin, which became a salon where important Texans discussed art and politics. After Ney's death in 1907, that studio became a public museum. And in her memory, friends founded the Texas Fine Arts Association—the first organization dedicated to promoting art throughout the state.

Elisabet Ney left a legacy for all Texans—in the statues she carved and in the institutions that honor her life's work.

Check for Understanding: Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Elisabet Ney. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. How did Elisabet Ney gain fame as an artist in Europe prior to moving to Texas?
2. Two of Ney's best-known sculptures stand at the state capitol. Who were the subjects of these sculptures?

Going Further: Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Making Inferences.** According to the episode, Ney "scandalized her neighbors" by wearing bloomers (pants) and using her maiden name. Why would this have been considered scandalous?