

Mamie Aguirre (1844 – 1906)



Mary Bernard Aguirre, known all her life as Mamie, (1844-1906) was born in St. Louis, MO, grew up in Baltimore, MD, and moved to Westport, MO, when 14 years old during the turbulent Civil War. It was in her father's trading store that she met and subsequently married Epifanio Aguirre, a prominent Mexican freighter. In 1863 Mamie embarked on her first of 4 - 5 trips down the Santa Fe Trail, traveling on to Las Cruces, NM, and then to northern Mexico, where her husband's hacienda was located. Mamie's story was unknown until Annette Gray wrote *Journey of the Heart* in 2001.

They were married only 7 1/2 years when Epifanio was killed in 1870 during an Indian ambush in south Arizona. Mamie took her three sons back to Westport, but after five years she realized the southwest was her home, and again headed west. She settled in southeast Arizona where she taught in rural schools until Apache threats forced her to abandon her post and move to Tucson, which was to be her home, for the most part, for the rest of her life. However, her heart and that of her family was in Arivaca, a lovely village south of Tucson, surrounded by mountains, where they ranched and were merchants. Mamie taught in the village school, which today is the oldest standing school building in the state.

As the University of Arizona's first woman professor, Mamie was appointed head of the Spanish Language Department in 1896. In 1983 she was inducted into the Arizona Women's Hall of Fame. A circular memorial of stone columns stands in honor of the women inducted on the campus mall.

Mamie died May 26, 1906 from injuries incurred in a train accident. Reputedly, her last words, spoken faintly to her brother, Noah, at her side were: "I fancy I can hear wagons . . . It's the freight wagons; they're loaded and ready to leave. I must go with them."