

PAL: Perspectives in American Literature - A Research and Reference Guide - An Ongoing Project

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Chapter 5: María Amparo Ruiz de Burton (1832-1895)

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Source: [Arte Publico Press](#)

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton was the first Mexican American author in the United States to write novels in English. María wrote two novels *Who Would Have Thought It?* (J.B. Lippencott and Co.: Philadelphia, 1872) and *The Squatter and the Don* (S. Carson and Co.: San Francisco, 1885) under pen name C. Loyal. She became a resident of San Diego.

María was born in La Paz, Baja California and came to California in 1849 married a military officer, Henry Stanton Burton. María's great uncle, Francisco Ruiz had been the comandante of San Diego in the early 1800s. In California she studied English under a tutor and was a life-long friend and correspondent with Mariano Vallejo, a respected Californio in Sonoma. In 1852 María and her husband lived at an army post at Mission San Diego and together they purchased Rancho Jamul. She wrote to Vallejo of her aspirations: "...I am persuaded that we were born to do something more than simply live, that is, we were born for something more, for the rest of our poor countrymen." Living on rancho Jamul, the Burtons made improvements on it and submitted its title to the Court of Land Claims. For the next few decades María would be involved in dozens of lawsuits while trying to retain title to her land. After her husband's death she moved to New Town where she wrote her novel, *The Squatter and the Don*. It was published in 1885. All the while she was involved in litigation over Jamul and eventually her attorney fees for the litigation and the costs of unpaid mortgages forced her into bankruptcy. She traveled to Chicago to find help for her fight for her rights to another rancho that had been in her family, Rancho Ensenada de Todos Santos. There she died in 1895 trying to get political support for her claims. - Source: [San Diego Chicano History](#)

Primary Works

Who would have thought it? edited and introduced by Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita. Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1995. PS2736 .R53 W48

The squatter and the don. edited and introduced by Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita. Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1997. PS2736 .R53 S658

Conflicts of interest: the letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton. edited, with a commentary, by Rosaura

Selected Bibliography 1980-Present

Davidson, Cathy N. and Jessamyn Hatcher. eds. *No More Separate Spheres! A Next Wave American Studies Reader*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002.

Lomelí, Francisco A. and Carl R. Shirley. eds. *Chicano Writers: Third Series*. Detroit: Gale, 1999.

Montes, Amelia, and Anne Goldman. eds. *María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: Critical and Pedagogical Perspectives*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004.

Rivera, John-Michael. *The Emergence of Mexican America: Recovering Stories of Mexican Peoplehood in U.S. Culture*. NY: New York UP, 2006.

Warren, Joyce W. *Women, Money, and the Law: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Gender, and the Courts*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2005.

MLA Style Citation of this Web Page

Reuben, Paul P. "Chapter 5: María Amparo Ruiz de Burton (1832-1895)." *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide*.

URL: <http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap5/burton.html> (provide page date or date of your login).

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