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SAM RAYBURN'S "LADY FRIEND" REVEALED

Two biographers of the longest serving Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives uncover new information never before disclosed about Rayburn's relationship with the widow of former U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer

New York, NY, September 29, 2016— An article titled "Margaret Fallon (Peggy) Palmer: A Portrait of Sam Rayburn's 'Lady Friend'" about the life of the widow of former U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer as well as her close relationship with Sam Rayburn, the longest serving Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, will be published on October 10, 2016 by the Texas State Historical Association's scholarly journal *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, the oldest scholarly journal in Texas continuously published since 1897, brings the latest and most authoritative research in Texas history to a wide audience of history lovers and scholars. Anthony Champagne, a political science professor at the University of Texas at Dallas as well as a Rayburn biographer, and Reed Penney, a documentary producer working on a Sam Rayburn documentary, wrote the article.

For nearly fifty years Sam Rayburn served as a Congressman from Northeast Texas (1913 – 1961). For seventeen of those years he was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, longer than anyone else in American history.

"I think from 1931 to 1961 Sam Rayburn was the most important American politician who was never President. His fingerprints are on some of the most important legislation of the 20th century." – Reed Penney ("Margaret Fallon (Peggy) Palmer: A Portrait of Sam Rayburn's 'Lady Friend'" co-author)

At the peak of his career most people thought Sam Rayburn was a lifelong bachelor. When he died in 1961 he left no widow or children, but once in his life Rayburn was briefly married. In October 1927 Rayburn married the sister of a fellow Congressman from Texas, but nearly three months after they married they separated. In November 1928 they divorced.

After his divorce Rayburn had relationships with a number of women, but almost nothing has been known about the women in Rayburn's life until now. After A. Mitchell Palmer's death in 1936 his widow Peggy Palmer developed a close relationship with Sam Rayburn. It was so close that Hope Ridings Miller,

a journalist who covered Washington D.C. society for many years and a close friend of Rayburn's, suggested to him in 1940 that his vice presidential prospects would improve if he married Peggy Palmer. According to Miller Rayburn replied,

"Well, it's very nice of you to see just what I need and thank you very much. But I'll tell you, I like her, and I like her very much. She's one of the most charming, one of the most understanding women I've ever known in my life, but marriage is not in the cards for Sam Rayburn." – Hope Ridings Miller quoting Sam Rayburn to Anthony Champagne, Interview, August 19, 1986

There's no smoking gun evidence that Rayburn ever seriously considered a second marriage.

"Even if Rayburn had thought about marrying her, many things in Peggy's past as well as her life in Washington would have made her politically unacceptable to Rayburn's constituents. She had spent most of her privileged childhood in and near New York City when she was not traveling with her family abroad. She had attended an all-girls' college prep school on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. She had Irish Catholic roots on her father's side of the family. Her first marriage had ended in a scandalous divorce. Her father and her first two husbands were Republicans. In Washington Peggy was a socialite with a larger than life personality. Peggy's great-niece and great-nephew described her as an "Auntie Mame" type of a woman. Rayburn, in contrast, came from an impoverished background, one of eleven children of small farmers in Fannin County, Texas. The worlds Mr. Sam and Peggy had come from and their personalities were incredibly dissimilar yet they liked and enjoyed each other's company." - Anthony Champagne & Reed Penney ("Margaret Fallon (Peggy) Palmer: A Portrait of Sam Rayburn's 'Lady Friend'" co-authors)

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If you would like more information and/or receive an advance reading copy of this article, please contact Reed Penney (917-376-8014, reed@onecentproductions.com) and Anthony Champagne (972-814-3812, tchamp@utdallas.edu).

SOURCE: Reed Penney & Anthony Champagne

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