Selected Alamo Biographies

William Barret Travis

William Barret Travis, commander of the Alamo, was born on August 9, 1809 in Saluda County, South Carolina. Travis' father moved the family to Conecuh County, Alabama in 1817. Travis was enrolled in a school in Claiborne, Alabama. There he assisted other students in their studies. Travis became an apprentice of the leading attorney in Claiborne and eventually his partner.

On October 26, 1828, Travis married Rosanna Cato. Their first child, Charles Edward Travis, was born on August 8, 1829. Travis became involved in the Claiborne community by joining the Masonic Lodge, starting a newspaper and accepting a position in the Alabama Militia. Despite these personal successes, the Travis' marriage was falling apart. Both accused the other of infidelity and Travis would leave his wife, son and unborn daughter.

Travis, like so many others, chose Texas to start a new life. He arrived in 1831 and established a law practice in Anahuac on Galveston Bay.

In the course of practicing law in Texas, Travis met men associated with the war party, a group of militants opposing the Law of April 6, 1830.

In 1832, Travis was retained to help secure the return of runaway slaves being held by the commander of the Mexican garrison at Anahuac. Eventually, Travis and his law partner were jailed in two brick ovens. As men began to gather in protest, the Mexican Commander realized that he was outnumbered and released the two men.

Travis moved his law practice to San Felipe and was elected to the town council. He also met Rebecca Cummings and they became engaged in 1834. Meanwhile, Travis' wife, Rosana traveled to Texas in the fall of 1835, in order to get her husbands signature on divorce papers. She left their son, Charles, with him. Travis arranged for Charles to stay with David Ayers and family as he was caught up in the Texas Revolution.

Travis participated in the Grass Fight near Béxar. He accepted a commission of lieutenant colonel of cavalry. He was ordered to recruit 100 men and reinforce the Alamo. Although he could only recruit 29 men, he arrived in San Antonio in January 1836. He shared command of the Alamo with James Bowie until Bowie fell ill on February 24th. After General Santa Anna's arrival in San Antonio on February 23rd Travis penned letters to the provisional government of Texas explaining their situation and requesting reinforcements. The most famous of these letters was written on February 24, 1836 and began, "To the people of Texas and all Americans in the world…" Travis was killed early on the morning of March 6 as the Mexican army attacked the compound. According to his slave, Joe, Travis was shot through the head early in the battle as he directed fire on the north wall. His body was burned with those of the other defenders.

David Crockett

Frontiersman, congressman and Alamo defender, David Crockett was born in Greene County, East Tennessee, on August 17, 1786. He rose from humble beginnings to become a United States Congressman from his home state of Tennessee. At the age of twelve, David's father hired him out to Jacob Siler to help drive a herd of cattle to Virginia. David came home a few weeks later and received what would become a very short formal education.

He married Mary (Polly) Finley in 1806 and started a family. In 1813, David Crockett enlisted as a scout to avenge the Indian attack at Fort Mims, Alabama. He participated in the massacre of Tallussahatchee. He would reenlist several more times in the militia each time rising in rank.

Upon his return home in 1815 he found himself to be a father again, and before the year's end would also be a widower. Crockett married Elizabeth Patton, a widow with 2 children.

In 1817, Crockett became a justice of the peace, a position he would hold until 1819. It was also during this time that he decided to run for the Tennessee legislature and was elected first in 1821 and then again in 1823. He then decided to run for the United States Congress and was elected in 1827. He would be reelected to Congress two more times.

During his years in Congress, many books and plays were being written based on his exploits as a frontiersman. Crockett was on his way to possibly becoming president. In 1835 he lost his congressional seat and decided to leave Tennessee behind to explore Texas. On his way to Texas, he stopped at the Union Hotel and made his famous remark, "Since you have chosen to elect a man with a timber toe to succeed me, you may all go to hell and I will go to Texas."

David Crockett arrived in Texas on January 9, 1836, with the prospects of moving his family there, but upon arriving found himself in the middle of a revolution. He joined the Texas Army and was sent to San Antonio de Béxar and to the Alamo. David Crockett died on the morning of March 6, 1836 fighting alongside the rest of the Alamo defenders.

James Butler Bonham

James Butler Bonham was born on February 20, 1807 in Saluda County, South Carolina. He attended college, but did not graduate. He studied law and began practicing in Pendleton, South Carolina, in 1830. On October 17, 1835, Bonham led a rally to support the Texan cause in Mobile, Alabama. Two weeks later, he helped organize the volunteer company of Mobile Grays. He was in Texas by November of 1835.

Bonham was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Texas cavalry and declined all payment for his service. On February 1, 1836, he was unsuccessful in becoming a Béxar garrison delegate to the Constitutional Convention. He was sent to get help for the Alamo on February 16, 1836 and returned on March 3, 1836. Bonham would be the last

man to arrive at the Alamo before the battle. He died with the other defenders on March 6, 1836.

José María (Gregorio) Esparza

Alamo defender José María Esparza better known as Gregorio was born on February 25, 1802 in San Antonio de Béxar. He married Anna Salazar and together they had four children. In October 1835, Esparza enlisted in Juan Seguín's company. He participated in the siege and Battle of Béxar against the Mexican Army. He served until December 10, 1835.

When news came of Antonio López de Santa Anna's arrival in San Antonio, the Esparza's were advised to take refuge in the Alamo since they supported the revolt. They entered the Alamo through a window and Gregorio chose to remain and fight even though Tejanos were being allowed to leave. His family remained with him. He manned a cannon and died at his post on March 6, 1836. His family survived the battle. After the fall of the Alamo, Francisco, a Mexican soldier and brother of Gregorio asked Santa Anna for his brother's body for burial. He was the only Alamo Defender to be given a Christian burial in the Campo Santo of San Antonio de Béxar. His son Enrique, an Alamo survivor, would tell the story of what occurred during the battle.

José Toribio Losoya

Tejano Alamo defender José Toribio Losoya was born on April 11, 1808. The family home was located in the southwest corner of the Alamo compound. Toribio Losoya was married to Concepción Cubier and was the father of three. In 1830, Losoya was serving in the Alamo de Parras Company under Lt. Colonel Francisco Ruiz. It was in the same year that the Alamo de Parras company was sent to build and occupy Fort Tenoxtitlan on the Brazos River. He returned to San Antonio in 1832. When the government announced the abolishment of the federal constitution, Losoya was one of many soldiers that opposed Santa Anna. By 1835 he had deserted the Mexican Army and was serving with Juan Seguín's company. He took part in the siege and battle of Béxar and would later help reinforce the Alamo. Losoya would fall at the Battle of the Alamo along with the other defenders on March 6, 1836.

Juan Nepomuceno Almonte

Mexican officer and diplomat, Juan Nepomuceno Almonte was born in Michoacan on May 15, 1803. Almonte was sent to the United States to be educated. When he returned to Mexico he joined the fight against Spain. In 1822, he was sent to Texas to serve under the newly appointed governor José Félix Trespalacios. In 1824, he was sent to London as part of the legation, where he negotiated Mexico's first commercial treaty. In 1830 he served in the National Congress, but came under persecution by the government and had to hide due to his editorial works against President Anastasio Bustamante. In 1834, Almonte made an inspection of Texas and wrote a detailed report of his findings. He served in the Texas campaign under Santa Anna as his secretary and confidential adviser. Almonte also participated in the assault on

the Alamo. He was captured following the Mexican Army's defeat at the Battle of San Jacinto.

In 1837 he was sent to the U.S. with Santa Anna. In 1841, he was sent to Washington where he served as minister until 1845 when Texas was annexed. He served as secretary of war during the Mexican American War. After the war he was sent to London as a minister but neglected his duties to promote a foreign intervention in Mexico with the French. In 1862 he arrived in Veracruz to help establish the monarchy, finally fulfilling the 1821 Plan de Iguala. He was declared supreme chief of the Nation by the French. He was appointed envoy to France by Maximilian. He died on March 21, 1869 in Paris.

Susannah Dickinson

Susannah Dickinson was born in 1814 in Bolivar, Tennessee. She married Almeron on May 24, 1829 and moved Texas with him. Susannah and Almeron had a daughter, Angelina on December 14, 1834.

After Almeron left Gonzales to fight at the Siege of Béxar, their home was broken into by a group of men. Future Alamo courier, Launcelot Smither came to her rescue. Almeron returned home and brought Susannah and Angelina to San Antonio. They entered the Alamo on February 23, 1836.

Prior to the final battle on March 6, 1836, Colonel Travis, the Alamo commander gave fourteen month old Angelina a ring.

Although Susannah was shot in the leg, she her daughter were among the survivors of the battle of the Alamo. Afterwards General Santa Anna issued Susannah a blanket and two pesos and sent her on her way. On the trip to Gonzales she and Angelina met up with Travis' slave Joe.

Susannah delivered the news of the fall of the Alamo to General Sam Houston. She would retell her experiences at the Alamo many times over the course of her life.

Juan Nepomuceno Seguín

Texas patriot, political and military leader Juan Nepomuceno Seguín was born in San Antonio on October 27, 1806. Juan was encouraged to read and write even though he had very little formal schooling. At the age of 19, Juan married Maria Gertrudis Flores de Abrego and together they had 10 children. Seguín entered the political arena at a very young age, being elected to the town government in 1828. He later served as both mayor and political chief of the Department of Béxar. In 1835, Seguín entered into military service opposing the Centralist government following the battle of Gonzales; he was given a captain's commission by Stephen F. Austin. Seguín would raise a company of 37 to support the revolution. His company served as scouts; they also helped gather supplies of the army. In the Battle of Béxar, his company took part in the assault against General Cos troops. He entered the Alamo when Santa Anna arrived but was sent out as a courier. At Gonzales, he organized another company that would serve as the rear guard of Sam Houston's army and would take an active role at the Battle of San Jacinto. After the defeat of Santa Anna, his company observed the Mexican Army's retreat and

accepted the surrender of San Antonio on June 4, 1836. In February of 1837, Seguín would direct the burial of the remains of the Alamo defenders as he served as the military commander of San Antonio.

Seguín went on to serve in the Texas Senate for three terms. In 1840 he was elected mayor of San Antonio. He fell under suspicion due to his land speculation and trips to Mexico. He moved to Mexico in mid 1842 as a result of General Vasquez invasion of San Antonio on April 18, 1842. In September of that same year he was forced to serve in Gen. Adrian Woll's invasion of Texas. Seguín company saw action in the Mexican War against the U.S. forces after was the war, he returned to Texas and settled in present day, Wilson County. He reentered the political science and eventually retired to Nuevo Laredo where he died on August 27, 1890. He was re-interred in Seguín, Texas on July 4, 1976.

Martín Perfecto de Cos

Mexican general Martín Perfecto de Cos was born in Veracruz in 1800. He rose through the ranks of the Army beginning in the1820s as a cadet and by 1833 was a brigadier general. In September 1835 he was sent to Anahuac to investigate the refusal to pay duties to Mexico by the colonists. He dispersed the State legislature of Coahuila y Tejas and landed 300 men on the coast of Texas. His purpose was to end the resistance in Texas. In December 1835 Texas insurgents attack Béxar after a long siege and he surrendered. He was released with the pledge that he would not oppose the Federal Constitution of 1824.

Cos returned in 1836 with General Santa Anna and led a column that attacked the Alamo. At San Jacinto he was taken prisoner again. In the Mexican War, Cos commanded the troops at Tuxpan. Cos died in Veracruz on October 1, 1854.

James Bowie

James Bowie was a sugar planter, land speculator and a respected Texian leader. He was born on April 10, 1796 in Logan County, Kentucky. His family lived in Tennessee, Missouri and Kentucky before settling in Louisiana. Bowie left home at the age of 15 and made a living by floating lumber to market and operating a sugar plantation with his brother.

James and his older brother, Rezin became involved in the slave trade with pirate Jean Lafitte. Lafitte provided the Bowie brothers with captured slave from ships in the Caribbean. The Bowie's would then sell the slaves to plantation owners. They would continue this practice until accumulating $65,000. James Bowie was also involved in a series of fraudulent land grants in Arkansas.

Bowie became well known for the large knife that he carried. He gained national attention at an event known as the Sandbar Fight. Bowie attended a duel as a second for a friend. After the men involved in the duel had both missed, the others in attendance began to feud. Bowie was shot through the lower chest; he then drew his butcher knife

and gave chase to his assailant. He was then shot through the thigh and stabbed in several places. When his original attacker bent over him, Bowie plunged his knife into his chest.

Bowie arrived in Texas on January 1, 1830. On February 20, Bowie took the oath of allegiance to Mexico and traveled to San Antonio de Béxar. He was baptized in the Catholic Church and married Ursula de Veramendi, the daughter of a prominent San Antonio family. September 1833, Bowie's wife and in-laws died of cholera. At the time Bowie was ill with Yellow Fever and unaware of their deaths.

At the outbreak of the Texas Revolution, Bowie took part in the Battle of Concepción on October 28, 1835. Later during the Siege of Béxar served under General Stephen F. Austin. Colonel Bowie received instructions from Sam Houston to ride to Béxar to destroy the Alamo. After arriving, he and the garrison commander determined that the Alamo should be defended.

Colonel Bowie shared command of the Alamo garrison with Colonel William B. Travis until February 24, 1836 when he became ill and was forced to his cot. James Bowie died in his sick bed on the morning of March 6, 1836 with the rest of the Alamo garrison.

Antonio López de Santa Anna

Antonio López de Santa Anna, soldier and President of Mexico was born in Jalapa, Veracruz on February 21, 1794. He joined the Spanish Army in 1810 and served under General Joaquin de Arredondo. He fought in Texas against the Gutierrez-Magee expedition and was cited for bravery. It was during this time that he witnessed the execution of prisoners from the Battle of Medina near San Antonio de Béxar. He would shift his position from a loyal Spanish officer to an insurgent leader by joining forces with Agustín de Iturbide. He would turn against Iturbide in December 1822 and called for a republic to be established.

Santa Anna became the military governor of Veracruz, and would once again be called to defend Mexico against Spain at the Battle of Tampico in 1829. As the hero of Tampico, Santa Anna became President of Mexico in 1833. He abandoned his Federalist supporters and became a Centralist in 1834, a move that angered many Mexican states. When the state of Zacatecas refused to comply with his orders, he attacked with his army in bloody retribution. Once Zacatecas had fallen, Santa Anna's glance shifted northward to Texas. He arrived in San Antonio on February 23, 1836 and laid siege to the Alamo. On March 6, 1836 the Alamo fell before dawn to the Mexican Army.

After the fall of the Alamo, Santa Anna headed eastward to what is now Houston. There he was defeated and captured by General Sam Houston on April 21, 1836. After his release six months later, Santa Anna traveled to the United States before returning to Mexico. In 1838 he rose against the French, losing a leg in battle, but once again gaining popularity. He led the Armies against the United States, in the Mexican War, 1846-1848. After his defeat, Santa Anna would see Mexico lose half of its territory to the United States. He went into exile until 1853 when he returned to power. Two years later, Santa Anna would sell a small portion of land to the United States known as the Gadsden Purchase, a move that ended his political career. He died of old age in Mexico City on June 21, 1876.