The Battle of the Alamo

A Reading A–Z Level V Leveled Reader
Word Count: 1,909



Reading a-z

Visit www.readinga-z.com
for thousands of books and materials.

LEVELED READER • V

The Battle of the Alamo



Written by David L. Dreier • Illustrated by Cende Hill

www.readinga-z.com

The Battle of the Alamo



Written by David L. Dreier
Illustrated by Cende Hill

www.readinga-z.com

Photo Credits:
Cover, title page: Library of Congress; back cover, page 4: © Royalty-Free/Corbis; pages 9, 11 (portrait), 12: Texas State Library and Archives Commission: page 11 (cannon): Photo courtesy of Donald Burger; page 19: The Dawn at the Alamo, Courtesy of the State Preservation Board, Austin, Texas. CHA 1989.81, Photographer Perry Huston, 8/3/94, post conservation; page 21: The Surrender of Santa Anna, Courtesy of the State Preservation Board, Austin, Texas. CHA 1989.46, Photographer unknown, pre 1991, pre conservation; pages 3, 22: Sam Houston, Courtesy of the State Preservation Board, Austin, Texas. CHA 1989.31, Photographer Bill Kennedy, 8/31/92, pre conservation. Texas Capitol Building Collection; page 23: © Jupiter Images

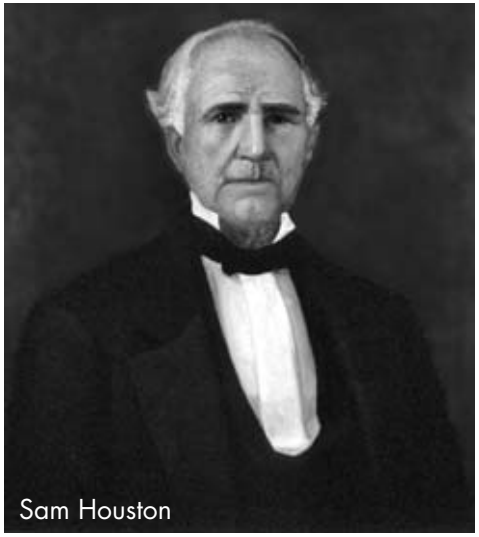
The Battle of the Alamo
Level V Leveled Reader
© 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Written by David L. Dreier
Illustrated by Cende Hill

All rights reserved.

www.readinga-z.com

Correlation

LEVEL V	
Fountas & Pinnell	R
Reading Recovery	25
DRA	40



Sam Houston

✯ Table of Contents ✯

Sacred Ground 4

From Mission to Fort 5

The Texas Revolution Begins 7

Santa Anna Marches 9

Travis, Bowie, Crockett 12

The Siege 14

The Battle. 16

The Defeat of Santa Anna 20

The Republic of Texas 22

Remember the Alamo 23

Glossary 24



✯ Sacred Ground ✯

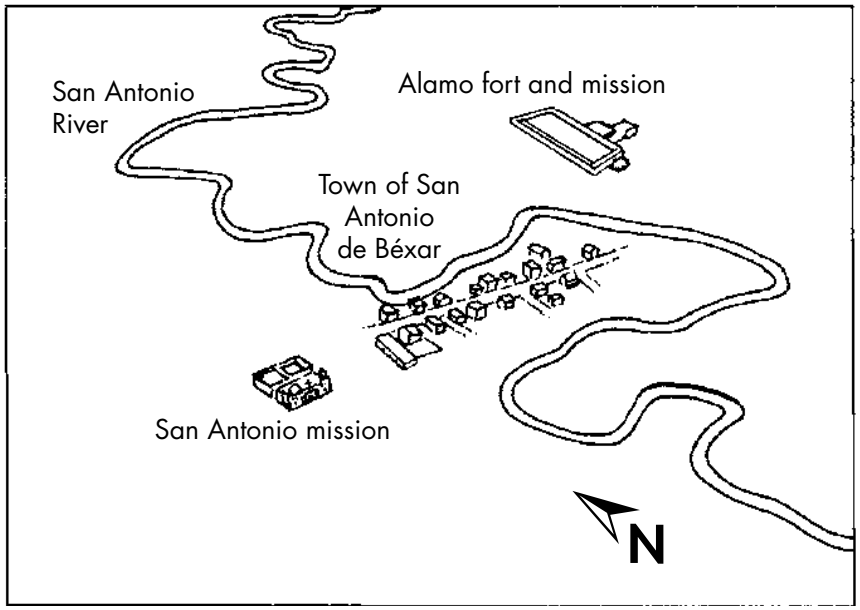
The Alamo is one of the most honored places in Texas. This cream-colored stone building in the city of San Antonio was once a chapel. It is the main remaining section of a Catholic **mission** that was turned into a military fort. Its quiet interior still feels like the inside of a church. Visitors speak softly. Their voices and footsteps echo slightly from the stone walls and floors.

It's hard to imagine that this place was once filled with the sounds of cannons, gunfire, and the screams of men. Or that it ran with blood. But it did.

✯ From Mission to Fort ✯

The Alamo was built in the 1720s as one of five missions constructed by Spanish missionaries in a settlement called San Antonio de Bexar. In the early 1700s, parts of Texas and Mexico were ruled by Spain.

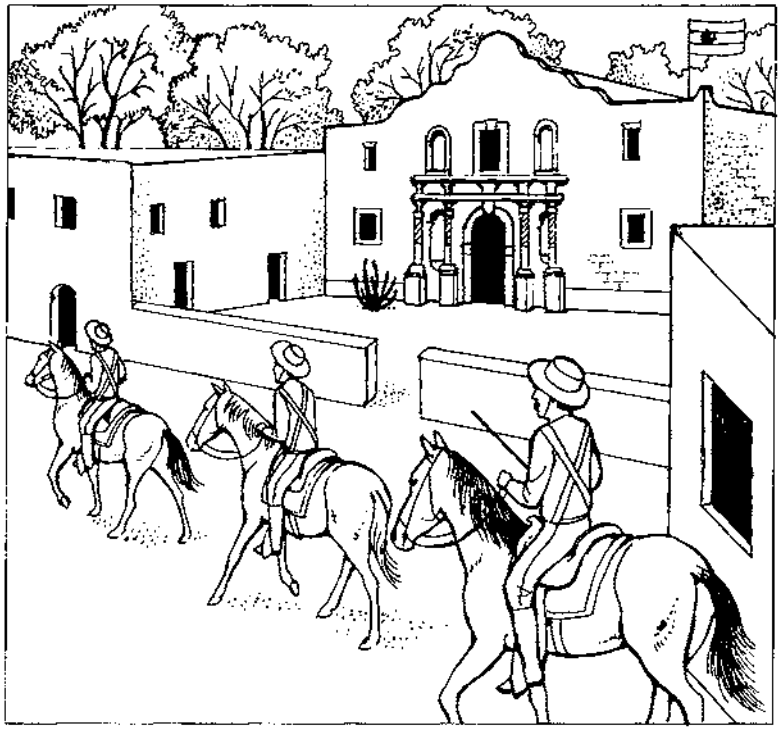
The Alamo was originally called Mission San Antonio de Valero. It consisted of the chapel and a number of smaller buildings. The buildings, and the walls connecting them, surrounded a large **compound**. For about 70 years, Mission San Antonio de Valero and the other missions taught Native Americans about Christianity.

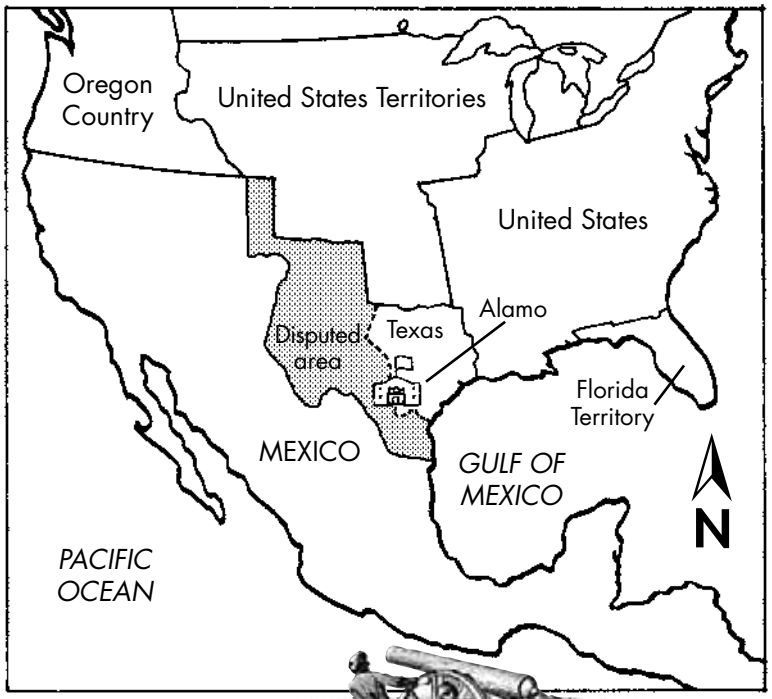


The period of the missionaries came to an end in 1793. That year, the Spanish government took control of the missions and gave the lands surrounding them back to the Native Americans.

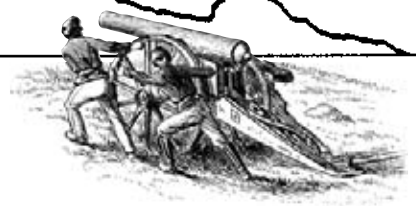
The Spanish began using Mission San Antonio de Valero as a military post for a **cavalry** unit.

The soldiers at the post renamed the former mission the Alamo. *Alamo* is the Spanish word for cottonwood. Cottonwood trees grew wild in the area around the mission. From then on, everyone called the old mission the Alamo.





Map of United States and Mexico circa 1833



✯ The Texas Revolution Begins ✯

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. The Mexican government thought Texas, which was a large area with a small population, needed more people living in its land. It invited Americans to settle in Texas by offering them land at low prices. Many people moved from the United States to Texas for the cheap land. The settlers became known as Texians.

By the 1830s, there were more than 25,000 settlers in Texas, which began to worry the Mexican government. There were now far more Texians than Mexicans living in Texas. The government of Mexico feared that Texas might try to break free of Mexican rule. In 1830, it tried to stop further settlement in Texas. That caused **hostility** between the Texians and the Mexican troops stationed in Texas.

Shortly thereafter, a group of Texians came together to lead the Texian struggle for independence. They recruited an army and appointed a man named Sam Houston as its commander. They also elected a governor, Henry Smith. The Texians decided to revolt and rid themselves of Mexican rule.

The Texas Revolution began as part of a larger civil war in Mexico between two rival groups, the Centralists and the Federalists. The Centralists believed that all of Mexico should be ruled by a strong central government. The Federalists favored having Mexican states, including Texas, control their own affairs. The Texians sided with the Federalists. However, by 1835, the Centralists were running things. If the Federalists had prevailed, there might not have been a Texas Revolution.

✯ Santa Anna Marches ✯

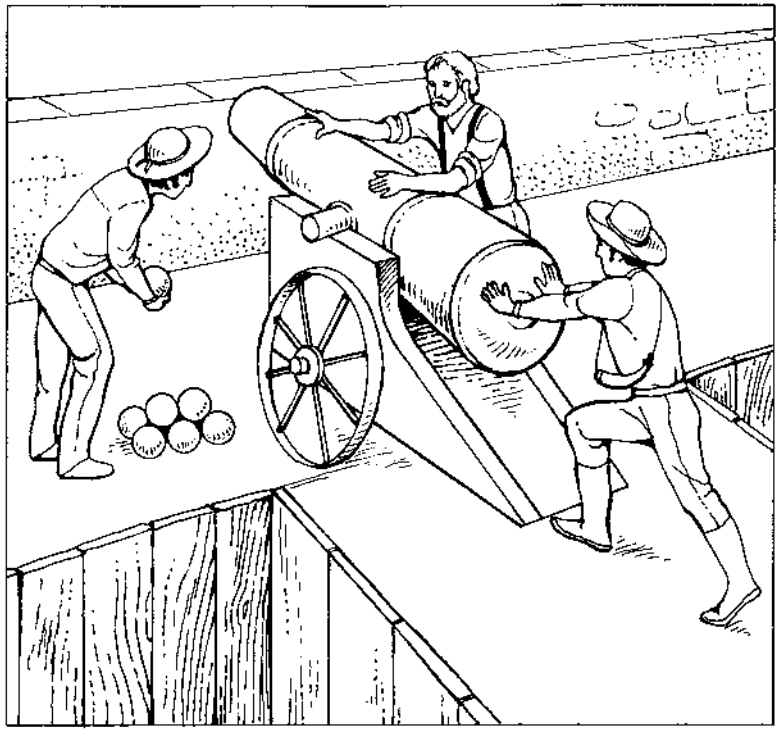
The president of Mexico at that time was General Antonio Lopéz de Santa Anna. He was the leader of the Centralists. Santa Anna believed that people in all parts of Mexico should do what the government told them to do.

Santa Anna decided that he was not going to let the Texians get away with their rebellious behavior. He vowed that he would crush the uprising and restore the Mexican government's control of Texas.



Santa Anna led the fight against the Texian revolt.

In February of 1836, Santa Anna led an army of more than 6,000 soldiers to the Rio Grande, a river in south Texas. The army then marched straight toward San Antonio.

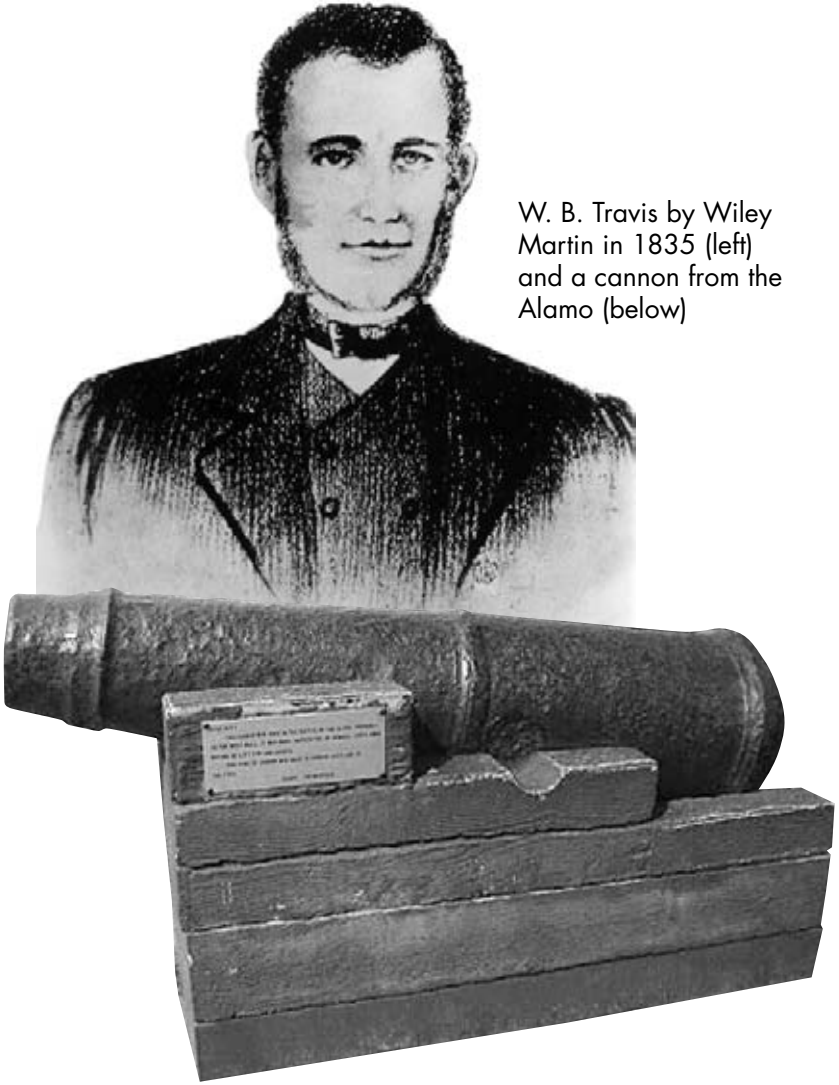


Even before Santa Anna crossed the Rio Grande, the Texians learned that he was coming to attack. Texian forces controlled San Antonio under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James C. Neill.

Colonel Neill had been working to build up the defenses of the Alamo because the old mission was in ruins due to years of neglect.

Neill ordered the walls strengthened and cannons mounted on top. As Santa Anna advanced toward San Antonio, Texian Governor Smith ordered Neill to hold the Alamo at all costs.

In mid-February, however, Colonel Neill left the Alamo. He had received an urgent message informing him of an illness in his family. Before leaving, he turned command of the Alamo over to another officer: William Barret Travis.



W. B. Travis by Wiley Martin in 1835 (left) and a cannon from the Alamo (below)

✯ Travis, Bowie, Crockett ✯

Travis—just 26 years old—had studied law in Alabama and been an officer in the Alabama **Militia**. He moved to Texas in 1831, opening a law office in the town of Anahuac (a-NAH-wak). He became involved in the Texas fight for independence and was appointed a lieutenant colonel in the Texas army.

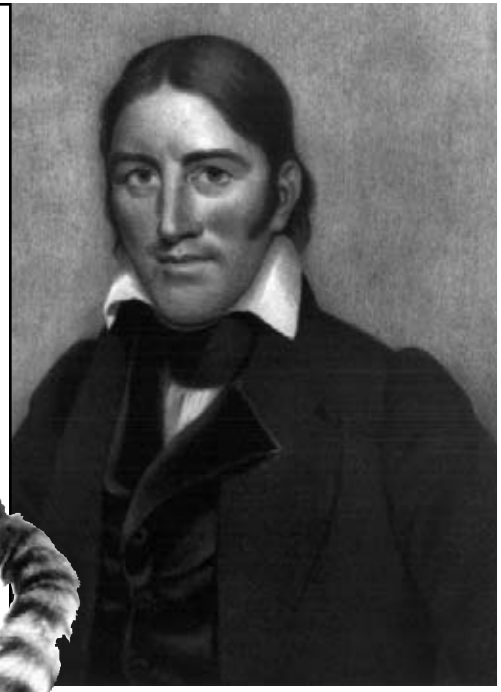


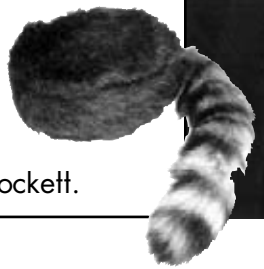
James Bowie and the knife he designed

James Bowie was a hard-fighting, 39-year-old adventurer. He had lived in Louisiana before moving to Texas around 1820. Bowie was renowned as a knife fighter. In fact, he designed a knife known as the Bowie knife. He commanded a group of volunteers at the Alamo and was looking forward to doing battle with Santa Anna.

David or Davy?

David Crockett didn't wear a coonskin cap and he never called himself Davy. Plenty of other people called him Davy, though. In addition to being a member of Congress, Crockett was a genuine folk hero. People far and wide heard about his exploits as a frontiersman. To them he was Davy Crockett.





Perhaps the best-known Alamo defender was David Crockett. Crockett was a famous 49-year-old frontiersman and a former U.S. congressman from Tennessee. He had departed for Texas in late 1835 after failing to win reelection to a fourth term in the U.S. Congress.

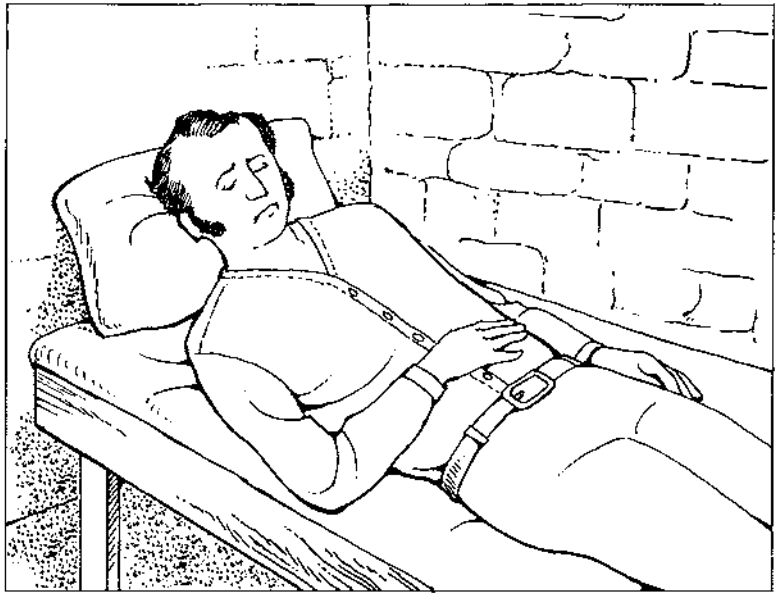
Crockett hadn't intended to take part in the Texas Revolution. He just wanted to see if Texas would be a good place to live, but after he got to Texas, he changed his mind and enrolled as a volunteer soldier. He arrived at the Alamo in early February with 12 other men.

✯ The Siege ✯

Santa Anna arrived in San Antonio with his army on February 23rd. He demanded the immediate surrender of the Alamo. Travis answered by firing a cannonball at the Mexican lines. Santa Anna was outraged. He vowed that all of the men in the Alamo would die.

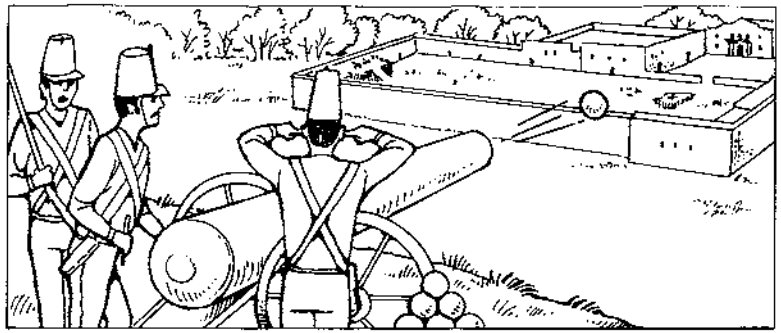
Mexican artillery began to bombard the fort. Santa Anna wanted to smash down the walls.

Early in the **siege**, Bowie became very ill, probably with a sickness called **typhoid**. He was confined to a cot in a small room next to the main gate. Travis then took full command.



Travis wrote to the Texian government describing the bombardment and asking for help. He told the Texian leaders about Santa Anna's vow to kill all the Alamo defenders. Travis promised that whatever happened, "I shall never surrender or retreat."

Day after day, the Mexican cannons blasted away at the Alamo walls, and night after night, the defenders worked to repair the damage.



During the siege, other Texians joined the Alamo defenders. The total number of men in the Alamo is uncertain. The longstanding official number was 189, but historians now think there may have been as many as 250 defenders in the Alamo at the time of the final attack, including a group of women and children.

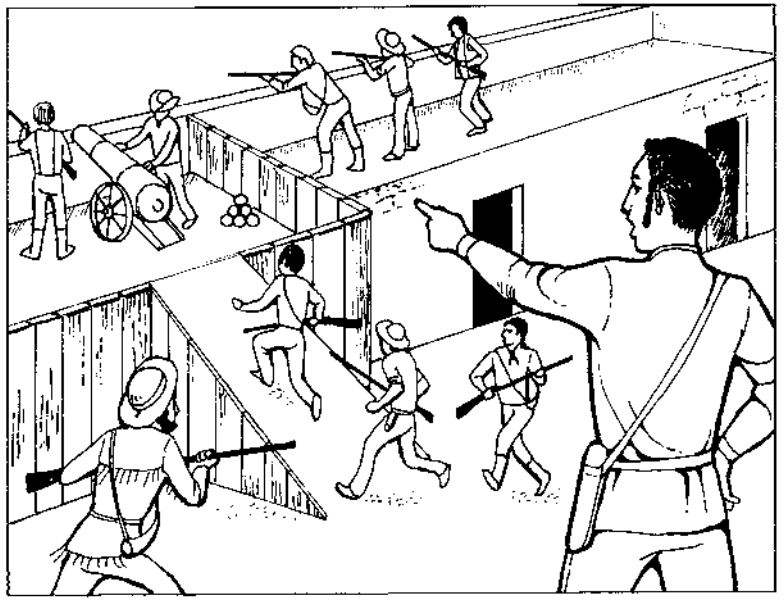
Travis continued to hope that help would arrive, but none came. Bowie's illness worsened.

✯ The Battle ✯

Before dawn on the 13th day of the siege, March 6th, Santa Anna launched an all-out attack. About 1,800 Mexican troops advanced through the darkness, many carrying ladders for climbing the walls of the fort.

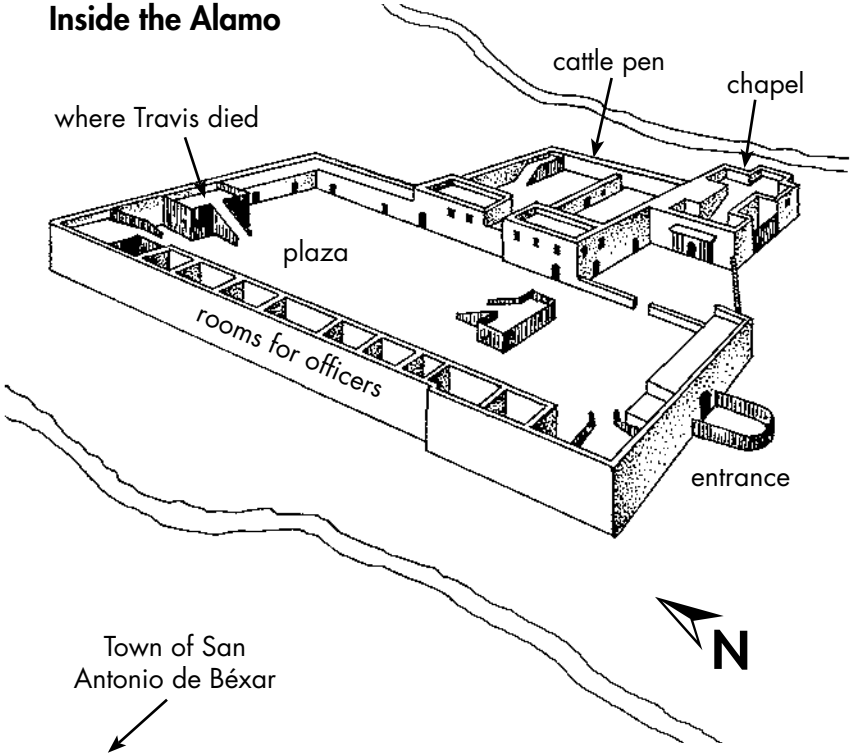
One of Travis's officers rushed into the commander's room to wake him. "The Mexicans are coming!" he yelled.

Travis jumped off his cot and ran to the north wall of the Alamo. All through the fort, the defenders were taking up positions and firing rounds at the Mexican troops.



The Texians fought bravely, but they could not stop the attack—one after another, they began to fall. Travis was one of the first defenders to die, hit in the head by a musket ball.

Inside the Alamo



Soon the Mexican troops were streaming over the walls. Some of the remaining defenders retreated to either the chapel or the long **barracks**, while others left the Alamo and fought outside the walls. The fighting became brutal hand-to-hand combat.



Mexican soldiers surged through the Alamo compound and surrounding rooms, finding Bowie lying on his cot. One soldier shot Bowie in the head, and several others plunged him with their **bayonets**.

It is not known how or where Crockett died. Some historians think he may have been killed in the chapel, while others think he was captured with several other defenders at the end of the battle and immediately executed.

When the sun rose, the Alamo was quiet. The battle had lasted just 90 minutes. The Alamo's women and children, and a slave who had been owned by Travis, were the only Texian survivors. Santa Anna allowed them to leave.

Soon after the battle, Santa Anna ordered his men to stack the bodies of the Alamo defenders into three large piles and burn them.

Santa Anna had triumphed, but the battle had been costly for him. About 600 of his soldiers were dead or wounded, and he still hadn't ended the Texas Revolution.



This famous painting shows what the Battle of the Alamo might have looked like on the morning of March 6.

☆ The Defeat of Santa Anna ☆

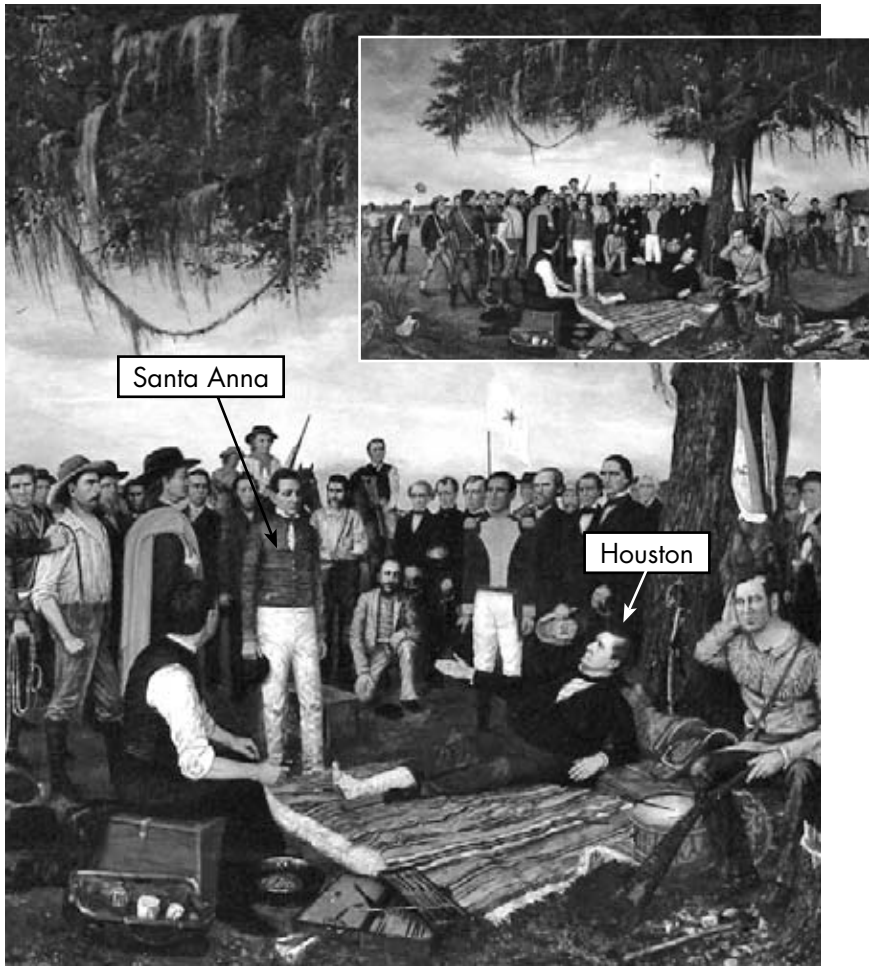
During the siege, the Texian leaders had declared Texas to be independent of Mexico.

Santa Anna set out to locate and fight the main Texian army, which was led by Sam Houston. The Texian army numbered about 900 men east of San Antonio. Santa Anna felt certain that he would have no trouble winning a quick victory against them.

Houston knew that losing his army to Santa Anna would be the end of the revolution. So he slowly retreated eastward, refusing to meet the Mexican general in battle.

Santa Anna was so confident about beating the Texians that he became careless. On April 21, his army was resting near the San Jacinto (ha-SEEN-toh) River. Santa Anna knew Houston's army was nearby, but he didn't worry about it. He was sure the Texians wouldn't even think of attacking him.

Houston decided that the time for action had arrived. He ordered his army to make a surprise attack against Santa Anna. In the Battle of San Jacinto, the Texians defeated the Mexican army. Nearly every Mexican soldier was killed or taken prisoner.



This painting shows the surrender of Santa Anna to Houston at San Jacinto.

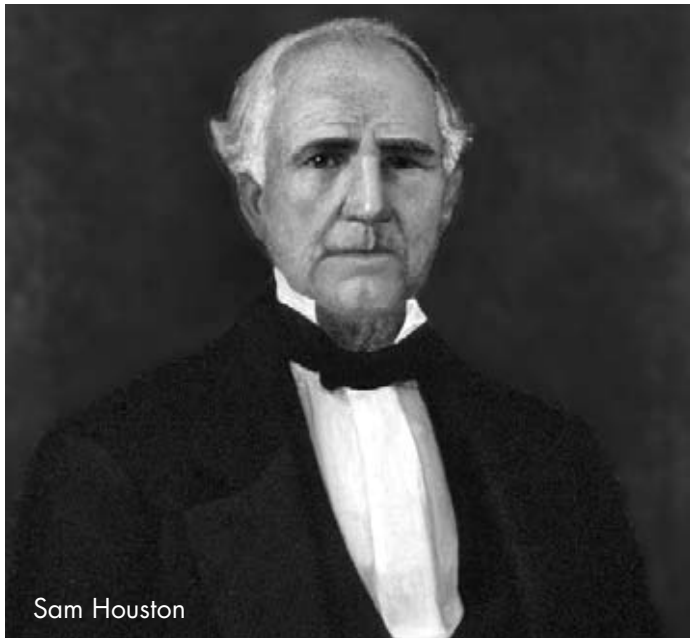
Santa Anna escaped but was captured the next day. The Texians brought him to face General Houston. Santa Anna agreed to take his remaining men back to Mexico and to grant Texas its independence.

✯ The Republic of Texas ✯

For nine years, Texas was an independent nation, the Republic of Texas, and Sam Houston served twice as its president.

The republic, however, had many problems. It had little money, and it continued to have trouble with Mexico. Most people in Texas thought that Texas should be part of the United States.

In 1845, the U.S. Congress voted to make Texas a member of the Union, and in December of that year, Texas became the 28th state of the United States.



Sam Houston



✯ Remember the Alamo ✯

For years after the 1836 battle, the Alamo lay in ruins. In 1846, after Texas became a state, the U.S. army began using the Alamo. It repaired the chapel walls and put a new roof on it, adding the now-familiar top to the chapel's damaged **facade**.

In the late 1800s, the army established a new post in San Antonio—Fort Sam Houston. The Alamo and surrounding grounds were later acquired by the state of Texas.

For years, the Alamo has been maintained by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. They preserve it as a historic shrine with landscaped gardens and a museum as a way to remember the brave men who lost their lives there.

✯ Glossary ✯

barracks army buildings where soldiers live (p. 17)

bayonets long, steel blades attached to the ends of rifles (p. 18)

cavalry soldiers on horseback (p. 6)

compound a walled-off area containing a group of buildings (p. 5)

facade the front, or face, of a building (p. 23)

hostility deep-seated anger (p. 8)

militia an army composed of ordinary citizens instead of trained soldiers (p. 12)

mission a place where Christians work to spread their faith to others in the area (p. 4)

siege a military tactic where soldiers surround and control the area around the enemy's fort (p. 14)

typhoid an infectious disease that causes a high fever (p. 14)