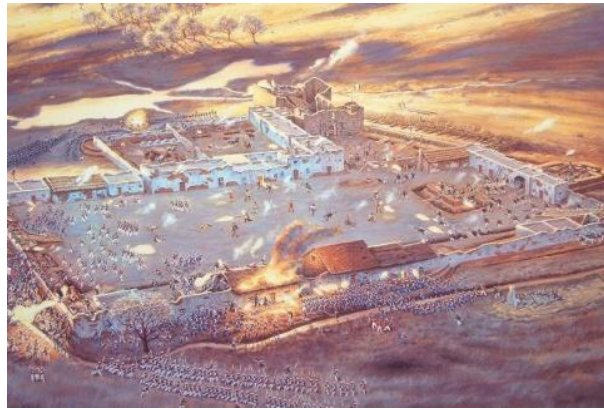




0. THE ALAMO BATTLE - Story Preface

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Gary Zaboly, an artist who focuses on the Texas Revolution (among other subjects) has imagined the scene of battle when Santa Anna's forces attacked the Alamo in March of 1836. Copyright, Gary Zaboly, all rights reserved. Image used here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with [Zaboly's artwork](#).

Thousands of Mexican troops surrounded the Alamo fortress. Santa Anna knew where the defenders' fortifications were located since his commander of engineers had drawn them on their official battle map. The drawing also depicts the town and military presidio of San Antonio (known as Bejar [or Bexar] at the time).

Susanna Dickinson's account describes their efforts to penetrate the old mission walls:

(T)wice did the enemy apply to the walls with their scaling ladders, and twice did they receive a check; for our men were determined to verify the words of the immortal Travis, 'to make the victory worse to the enemy than a defeat.' (Eyewitness to the Alamo, by Bill Groneman, quoting Susanna Dickinson's story published in the March 24, 1836 issue of the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, at [page 19](#).)

The third assault was successful, and the fighting was fierce once Santa Anna's men were inside:

(O)ur men...continued to fight and to resist, until the life ebbed out through their numberless wounds and the enemy had conquered the fort. (Groneman, quoting Dickinson, at [page 19](#) of *Eyewitness to the Alamo*.)

According to Dickinson, one defender asked for mercy:

(O)nly one, Warner, remained to ask for quarter, which was denied by the unrelenting enemy. (Groneman, quoting Dickinson, at [page 20](#) of *Eyewitness to the Alamo*.)

Susanna's husband, Captain Almeron Dickinson, died. As she left the Alamo, she saw a horrifying sight, including the dead body of Davy Crockett:

As we passed through the enclosed ground in front of the church, I saw heaps of dead and dying. The Texans on average killed between eight and nine Mexicans each - 182 Texans and 1,600 Mexicans were killed.

I recognized Col. Crockett lying dead and mutilated between the church and the two story barrack building, and even remember seeing his peculiar cap lying by his side. (Eyewitness to the Alamo, page 89.)

Travis, the man who just three days before ([on March 3](#)) wrote to the Texas Constitutional Convention 'God and Texas - Victory or Death,' sustained the latter. According to Dickinson's account:

Cols. Travis and Bonham were killed while working the cannon, the body of the former lay on top of the church. (Eyewitness to the Alamo, [page 90](#).)

And [what of James Bowie](#)?

Col. Bowie was sick in bed and not expected to live, but as the victorious Mexicans entered his room, he killed two of them with his pistols before they pierced him through with their sabres. (Eyewitness to the Alamo, [page 90](#).)

[Joe](#), who had been Travis' slave and was an active combatant in the final battle, was spared. So was Sam, the slave of James Bowie.

Immediately after the victory, Santa Anna wrote a letter to Tornel:

Victory belongs to the army, which at this very moment, 8 o'clock A.M., achieved a complete and glorious triumph that will render its memory imperishable.

After providing Tornel with some of the battle details, Santa Anna continues with his description of the Alamo dead:

Among the corpses are those of Bowie and Travis, who styled themselves Colonels, and also that of Crockett, and several leading men, who had entered the Fortress with dispatches from their Convention.

Santa Anna closes his letter with this observation:

The bearer takes with him one of the flags of the enemy's Battalions, captured today. The inspection of it will show plainly the true intentions of the treacherous colonists, and of their abettors, who came from parts of the United States of the North. God and Liberty! (This, and all previous Santa Anna letter-to-Tornel quotes in this chapter, from *Eyewitness to the Alamo*, pages 15-17.)

What Santa Anna did not tell Tornel was how he planned to handle the bodies of the dead defenders. Instead of turning them over to their families, he burned them all. Traditionally, the count was placed between 182-189, although historians today think the Alamo losses could have been as high as 250-260. Little more than a dozen people - mostly women and children - survived.

Two weeks later, Santa Anna struck again.

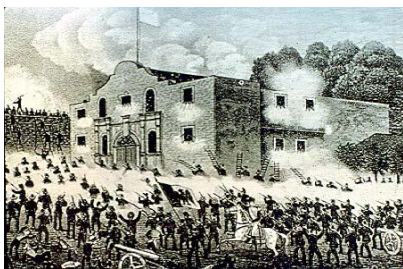
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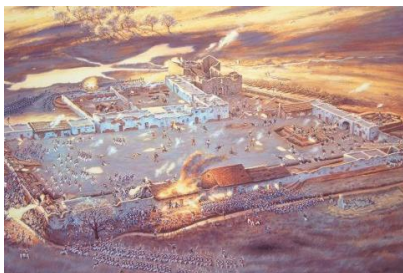
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Siege of the Alamo

Image online, courtesy the americanminute website.

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