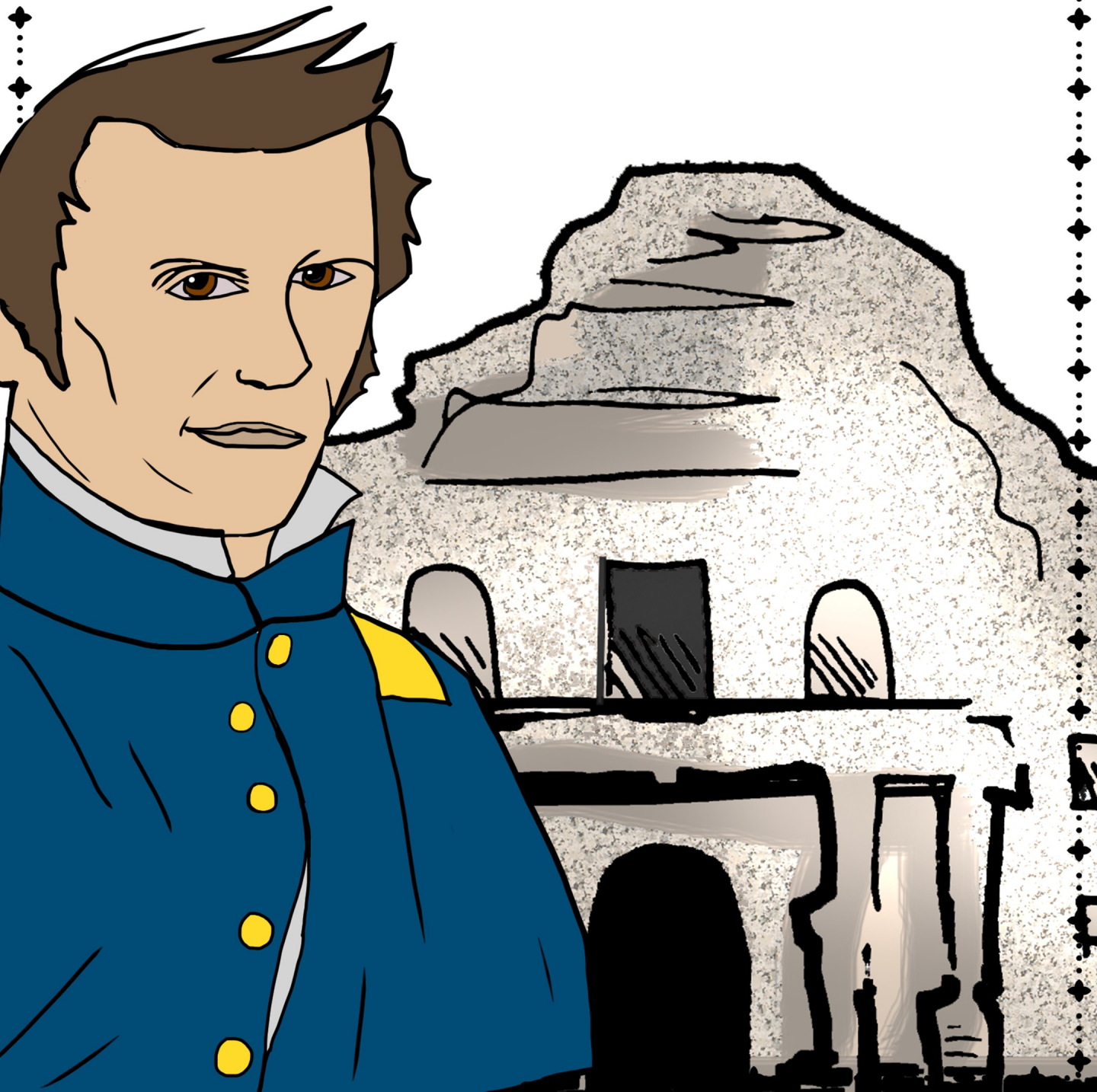


The Texas Revolution



The Texas Revolution

Battle of Gonzales - October 2, 1835

When Mexican General Domingo de Ugartechea, military commander in Texas, received word that the American colonists of Gonzales refused to surrender a small cannon that had been given to the town, he sent Francisco de Castañeda and 100 soldiers to retrieve it. Ugartechea realized that, given the tensions between the Texians and the Mexican government, the slightest issue might start problems. He instructed Castañeda to use force if necessary but to avoid open conflict if possible.

When Castañeda's troops reached the Guadalupe River opposite Gonzales on September 29 they found their path blocked by high water and eighteen Texian soldiers. Castañeda demanded the return of the cannon, but the Texian settlers refused. The men of Gonzales quickly asked for reinforcements from several of the surrounding settlements. The cannon had been previously hidden in a peach orchard. They dug it up and mounted it on a cart. Because they didn't have cannonballs, they gathered metal scraps to fill the cannon. James C. Neill was given command of the cannon. He gathered several men, including Almaron Dickinson who had served in the US Army.

On the night of October 1, Texian troops crossed over the river and towards Castañeda's camp. The Texians raised a homemade flag with an image of the cannon painted in black in the center. It said, "Come and Take It". On the morning of October 2 they attacked the Mexicans, who were outnumbered and didn't have enough weapons. Castañeda ordered a withdrawal toward San Antonio de Bexar. In his report to Ugartechea, Castañeda stated that

"since the orders from your Lordship were for me to withdraw without compromising the honor of Mexican arms, I did so."

Despite Castañeda's efforts to avoid war, the Battle of Gonzales (which was really only a brief skirmish) marked a clear break between the American colonists and the Mexican government. Declaring a victory, this skirmish was the start of the Texas Revolution. It is often called the "Lexington of Texas", comparing it to the first battle of the American Revolution.

Battle of Goliad - October 9, 1835

The Battle of Goliad was the second battle of the Texas Revolution. In the early-morning hours of October 9, 1835, rebellious Texas settlers attacked Mexican army soldiers at Presidio La Bahia, a fort near the Mexican settlement of Goliad.

In September, Texians began plotting to kidnap Mexican General Martin Perfecto de Cós, who was going to Goliad to attempt to stop the unrest in Texas. At first the plan was dismissed. But within days of the Texian victory at the Battle of Gonzales, Captain Collinworth and members of the Texian militia began marching towards Goliad. The Texians soon learned that Cós and his men had already left for San Antonio de Béxar but continued their march.

The fort at La Bahia was understaffed and could not mount an effective defense. Using axes borrowed from townspeople, the Texians were able to chop through a door and enter the fort before the Mexicans even knew they were there. After a 30-minute battle, the Mexicans surrendered. One Mexican soldier had been killed and three others wounded, while only one Texian had been injured. The majority of the Mexican soldiers were instructed to leave Texas, and the Texians took \$10,000 worth of supplies and several cannons. These were given to the Texian army for use in the siege of San Antonio.



Presidio La Bahia

The Texas Revolution

Early Battles
Fall, 1835

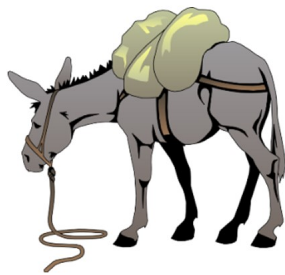
March on San Antonio - October-November, 1835

San Antonio was the most important town in Texas - the Texians knew they needed to control the city. Stephen F. Austin was named commander of the Texian army and immediately marched on San Antonio. When he arrived with 300 men in mid-October, he found General Cós in control. Mexican General Martín Perfecto de Cós, brother-in-law of Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna, decided to defend the city, and the siege began. The Texian army surrounded the city and the Mexicans were unable to get more supplies or information. The Texians had little in supplies either, and were forced to forage for food in the surrounding area.

The Battle of Concepción - October 27, 1835

Stephen F. Austin sends Jim Bowie and James Fannin, along with some 90 men, to scout San Antonio and find a place to set up a camp. They choose to stay at the Concepción mission. Seeing the Texians divided, Cós sends General Ugartechea to attack. At first, the Texians were greatly outnumbered, but were able to fight off several attacks from the Mexican army. When the remainder of the Texian army joined the battle, the Mexicans retreated. The Battle of Concepción was the second victory for the Texians.

The Grass Fight - November 26, 1835



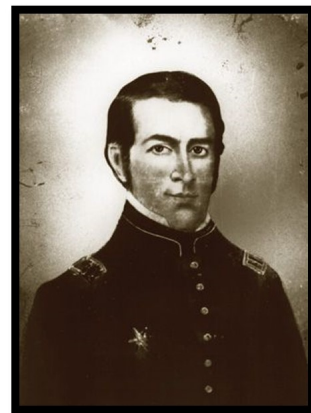
In November, the Texians got word that Mexican soldiers were approaching San Antonio with supplies and ammunition. Led once again by Jim Bowie, a small group of Texians attacked, driving the Mexicans into San Antonio. The Texians found out that it was not reinforcements after all, but some men sent out to cut some grass for the animals trapped inside San Antonio. The Texians had managed to capture donkeys with bags of grass! Although the "Grass Fight" was small, it helped convince the Texians that the Mexicans inside San Antonio were getting desperate.

Siege and Capture of San Antonio - December 5-9, 1835

After the Grass Fight, the Texians didn't know how to proceed. Most of the officers wanted to retreat and leave San Antonio to the Mexicans, many of the men wanted to attack, and still others wanted to go home. Only when Ben Milam, a cranky original settler, declared "Boys! Who will go with old Ben Milam into Bexar?" did the men decide to attack San Antonio. The attack began early on December 5th.

The Mexicans, who had more men and a better fighting position, did not expect an attack. Mexicans who had joined the rebels and knew the town led the way. The battle was fought in the streets, houses and public squares of the city. During the 4 day battle, Ben Milam was killed.

Losing men in the battle and to desertion, Cós was forced to retreat to the Alamo. The next day, Cós surrendered, and under the terms of the peace treaty he signed, his men were allowed to leave Texas. He and his army had to swear to never return. Now the Alamo was in the hands of the Texian army.



Ben Milam

The Texas Revolution

The Siege of the Alamo - February 23-March 5, 1836

Once the Texian Army won San Antonio, they quickly began reinforcing and fortifying the San Antonio de Valero mission, known as the Alamo. General Sam Houston ordered the men to retreat from San Antonio and join his army. However, the Texians at the Alamo disagreed. As the defenders saw it, the Alamo was the key to the defense of Texas, and they were ready to give their lives rather than surrender their position to General Santa Anna. The regular Texian Army at the Alamo was led by William B. Travis, the Volunteer Army was led by James Bowie.

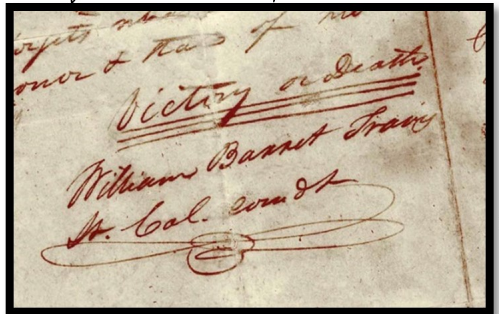
On February 23, 1836, the arrival of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna's army outside San Antonio caught the Texas in San Antonio by surprise. The Texians and Tejanos prepared to defend the Alamo together. The defenders held out for 13 days against Santa Anna's army during the Siege of the Alamo.

DAY 1: February 23, 1836

Mexican dictator General Antonio López de Santa Anna and his troops arrive at San Antonio and begin siege preparations at the Alamo. Travis immediately sent a request to the city of Gonzales for help.

DAY 2: February 24, 1836

Travis takes overall command of the Alamo after Bowie becomes too ill to serve as co-commander. Travis sent Juan Seguin for help with the famous "Victory or Death" letter that began with the words "To the People of Texas & all Americans in the World."



Part of Travis's Letter

DAY 3: February 25, 1836

A two-hour fight occurs when Santa Anna's troops attempt to occupy *jacales* (picket and thatch huts) located near the southwest corner of the compound. Texians venture out of the Alamo and burn the *jacales* this night. James W. Fannin leaves Goliad with his army to help at the Alamo. The very next day, Fannin, returns to Goliad when he learns that Mexican troops under Col. José Urrea are advancing northward from Matamoros. He does not help the men at the Alamo.

DAY 4 - February 26, 1836 through DAY 7 - February 29, 1836

A "norther" or cold front blows in, dropping the temperature and bringing rain. Work continues by the Mexican army preparing for a battle. The constant bombing, started earlier in the siege, continues.

DAY 8: March 1, 1836

A second cold front blows through San Antonio. 32 men from Gonzales arrive, responding to Travis' pleas for help. These are the only reinforcements to arrive.

DAY 9: March 2, 1836

The siege continues. The provisional (temporary) Texas government at Washington-on-the-Brazos declares independence from Mexico. Texians in the Alamo do not know they are now fighting for independence.

DAY 10: March 3, 1836 and DAY 11: March 4, 1836

Travis receives a letter from a friend that details efforts to send aid to the Alamo. In the letter, Travis is asked to hold out a little longer until help arrives. Santa Anna receives 1,100 reinforcements. Travis sends out his last known appeals for assistance, stating, "I am determined to perish in the defense of this place, and may my bones reproach my country for her neglect." The Mexican army continues to move closer to the Alamo.

The Texas Revolution

DAY 12, March 5, 1836

Santa Anna ordered his army moved closer to the Alamo. The cannon attack continues. Santa Anna announces to his officers that he plans to attack the Alamo in the morning and orders them to prepare their troops for assault. His officers consider this an unwise move. They argued that the Texians would surrender soon enough and a battle was not necessary. Santa Anna insists on victory and demands that every defender be killed, either in battle or executed immediately afterwards. According to legend, Travis gathered his men together one final time to offer them the chance to leave. According to one account, Travis draws a line in the sand and asks his men to make a decision to stay or leave. Only one man, Moses Rose, chooses to leave.



DAY 13: March 6, 1836 - THE BATTLE OF THE ALAMO

Santa Anna gives the order to attack just before dawn, around 5 am in the morning. The Mexican troops attack the Alamo from all four sides before finally gaining access to the mission from the south wall. Travis is one of the first Texians to die, and James Bowie is executed in his sick bed. After a bloody 90-minute battle, the Alamo falls and all of the defenders die. To this day there is ongoing debate that Davy Crockett survived the battle, but was then executed immediately after. Santa Anna orders the bodies of the slain defenders burned. Officially, 189 defenders died, but ongoing research may increase the number to as many as 257. The Mexican forces also suffered heavy casualties in the Battle of the Alamo, losing between 600 and 1,600 men. Women and children were spared in order to spread the word of the Texian defeat. Susannah Dickinson, wife of one of the defenders, shared the horrors of the battle with Sam Houston when she reaches Gonzales.

The Texas Declaration of Independence - March 2, 1836

While Santa Anna was attacking the Alamo, the delegates at the Convention of 1836 were creating a government. They had to work quickly, as they knew it was a matter of time before the Mexican army reached their location in Washington-on-the-Brazos. First they wrote a declaration of independence from Mexico. The Texas Declaration of Independence was adopted on March 2, 1836. The declaration was written by George Childress in less than 24 hours and based on the United States Declaration of Independence. It claimed that Mexico had "ceased to protect the lives, liberty, and property of the people, from whom its legitimate powers are derived" and complained about "arbitrary acts of oppression and tyranny."

Next, the delegates worked to both create a government and defend their new country. They elected Sam Houston as commander-in-chief of the Texas military. He immediately began work to defend Texas. The ad-interim (temporary) government then elected David G. Burnet as the president and Lorenzo de Zavala as vice president. They created their Constitution by basing it on the laws of the United States and Mexico. Then they began to flee - the Mexican army determined to capture and execute them.

The Texas Revolution

The Goliad Massacre - March 27, 1836

As part of the Mexican invasion of Texas in early 1836, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and his main force of at least 5000 men attacked San Antonio. At the same time, Mexican General Jose Urrea with 900 troops moved through southern Texas.

As Urrea and Santa Anna marched through Texas, James Fannin and his remaining force of about 350 men were asked to help Travis and the Alamo defenders. Fannin was also ordered by Sam Houston to retreat with his men to Victoria. This dilemma caused Fannin to wait several days before he decided to take his men to San Antonio.

It was not long, however, before the Texians found themselves surrounded on an open prairie. In the Battle of Coleto Creek, Fannin was unprepared and wounded. Heavily outnumbered and with no water and few supplies, the Texians waved the white flag of surrender on March 20, 1836. They believed that they would be taken captive and eventually returned to their homes. Fannin and his men were escorted back to Goliad as prisoners.

When news of their capture reached Santa Anna, he was furious that the Texians had not been executed on the spot. Citing a recently passed law that all foreigners taken under arms would be treated as pirates and executed, Santa Anna sent orders to execute the Goliad prisoners. General Urrea protested, but was unable to convince Santa Anna to spare the Texians.



Santa Anna's orders were followed. On Palm Sunday, the 27th of March, the Texian prisoners were divided into three groups, marched onto open prairie, and executed. All of Fannin's men except a few that managed to escape during the slaughter were massacred. The bodies of the Texians were stacked together and burned. The Mexican army left the charred remains of the Texian soldiers behind as they continued in their pursuit of the remaining portion of the Texian army under Sam Houston.

Nearly 350 Texians were executed in the Goliad Massacre. More Texians would have been massacred, except for one woman, the "Angel of Goliad", Francita Alavez, who convinced a Mexican colonel to spare the lives of approximately 20 men.

The Runaway Scrape - Spring 1836

Santa Anna's arrival in Texas started a panic. Settlers were afraid that if they were captured by Santa Anna, they would be executed - and they were right. When the news spread of the massacres at the Alamo and Goliad, American colonists fled their towns in fear. Accompanied by Sam Houston's army, the civilians of Texas left their homes in a panic. Their goal was to cross the Sabine River and reach the safety of the United States. Women and children experienced terrible conditions as they took everything they could carry and started marching east. The towns of Gonzales and San Felipe de Austin were burned to the ground to prevent the Mexicans from getting supplies. Many women and children died in the months that followed because of disease and hunger.



The Texas Revolution

The Battle of San Jacinto - April 21, 1836

Sam Houston and the small army of Texas retreated eastward following the fall of the Alamo in the spring of 1836. Sam Houston's men were eager to meet the Mexican Army. They wanted a fight to gain revenge for the Alamo and Goliad.

On the morning of the April 19, the Texian army set up camp on the San Jacinto River. Here, the army prepared their defenses on the edge of a grove of trees. Their rear was protected by trees and the bayou, while before them was an open prairie.

On the following morning, Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna came marching across the prairie. A shot from the Texian's "Twin Sisters" cannons brought him to a sudden halt. Falling back to a clump of trees a quarter of a mile distant, Santa Anna formed in line of battle. Colonel Sidney Sherman, at the head of the Texas cavalry, charged the Mexican army, but accomplished little except to inspire the Texians.

The morning of April the 21st found men from both sides ready for battle. The main forces of the Texas army was about 750 men. They faced an army of over 1500 Mexican soldiers. Early in the morning, Houston sent Deaf Smith, a Texas spy, with two or three men, to destroy Vince's bridge over which the Mexican army had passed. This cut off the Mexican's only escape route. However, Houston did not attack in the morning, he waited until mid-afternoon, when the Mexican army, tired from their forced march, rested.

When Houston's long awaited order to advance was given at 4:30 pm, the Texians did not hesitate. When within seventy yards the word "fire" was given, the Texian shouts of "Remember the Alamo" and "Remember Goliad" rang along the entire line. The Battle of San Jacinto was over within 18 minutes - the fastest victory for any army in history. 700 Mexicans were killed in the battle with another 730 taken as prisoners. Eleven Texians died, with 30 others, including Houston, wounded.

Santa Anna had disappeared during the battle, and next day General Houston ordered his men to search the surrounding area. In the afternoon a Mexican soldier was caught slipping through the woods toward Vince's Bayou. The Texian soldiers took the captive to camp, and on the way, Mexican prisoners began to shout, "El Presidente!" Santa Anna had been captured dressed as a common soldier! He was brought to General Houston, who lay under a tree due to his wounded foot.



Santa Anna was afraid that he would be immediately executed. He asked Sam Houston for mercy. "What claim have you to mercy?" Houston replied, "when you showed none at the Alamo or at Goliad?" Stephen F. Austin's nephew helped interpret the conversation between the two leaders. Santa Anna agreed to order that his troops withdraw to south of the Rio Grande. The Texians had won their independence at San Jacinto.