

THE MEXICAN SIDE  
OF THE  
TEXAN REVOLUTION

[1836]

BY THE  
CHIEF MEXICAN PARTICIPANTS

GENERAL ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA-ANNA  
D. RAMON MARTINEZ CARO (Secretary to Santa-Anna)  
GENERAL VICENTE FILISOLA  
GENERAL JOSÉ URREA  
GENERAL JOSÉ MARÍA TORNEL (Secretary of War)

---

TRANSLATED WITH NOTES

BY

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*Latin-American Librarian, University of Texas*

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such councils give rise to have not always seemed to me appropriate. Before undertaking the assault and after the reply given to Travis who commanded the enemy fortification, I still wanted to try a generous measure, characteristic of Mexican kindness, and I offered life to the defendants who would surrender their arms and retire under oath not to take them up again against Mexico. Colonel Don Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, through whom this generous offer was made, transmitted to me their reply which stated that they would let us know if they accepted and if not, they would renew the fire at a given hour. They decided on the latter course and their decision irrevocably sealed their fate.<sup>5</sup>

On the night of the fifth of March, four columns having been made ready for the assault under the command of their respective officers, they moved forward in the best order and with the greatest silence, but the imprudent huzzas of one of them awakened the sleeping vigilance of the defenders of the fort and their artillery fire caused such disorder among our columns that it was necessary to make use of the reserves. The Alamo was taken, this victory that was so much and so justly celebrated at the time, costing us seventy dead and about three hundred wounded,<sup>6</sup> a loss that was also later judged to be avoidable and charged, after the disaster of San Jacinto, to my incompetence and precipitation. I do not know of a way in which any fortification, defended by artillery, can be carried by assault without the personal losses of the attacking party being greater than those of the enemy, against whose walls and fortifications the brave assailants can present only their bare breasts. It is easy enough, from a desk in a peaceful office, to pile up charges against a general out on the field but this cannot prove anything more than the praiseworthy desire of making war less disastrous. But its

<sup>5</sup> "To the proposals to surrender he replied always that every man under his command preferred to die rather than surrender the fort to the Mexicans." Genaro García, *Documentos*, II, 34.

<sup>6</sup> "Not one remained alive but they disabled over a thousand of our men between dead and wounded." *Ibid.*, 35.

nature being such, a laws. Let us weep a at the Alamo defend try. They won a l; never forget their he

The enemy, discov ories, fled before our theless, constantly mo their intimate acquai woods, and the effect our troops. It becan and embarrassing ma availed but little for gether could not sto whole army should st were almost invisible, fleeing, to perfect a principle of all my o troops available into force under the com to fall back upon.

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Another division 1 Gaona was ordered t same objects in view from Béxar to Bastro

<sup>7</sup> There seems to be n that the Texans resorted

door to our future operations by taking it. It would have been easy enough to have surprised it, because those occupying it did not have the faintest news of the march of our army. I entrusted, therefore, the operation to one of our generals, who with a detachment of cavalry, part of the dragoons mounted on infantry officers' horses, should have fallen on Béxar in the early morning of February 23, 1836. My orders were concise and definite. I was most surprised, therefore, to find the said general a quarter of a league from Béxar at ten o'clock of that day, awaiting new orders. This, perhaps, was the result of inevitable circumstances; and, although the city was captured, the surprise that I had ordered to be carried out would have saved the time consumed and the blood shed later in the taking of the Alamo.

Having taken Béxar and the proceeds of the small booty having been sold by the commissary department to meet its immediate needs, all of which I communicated to the government (Document No. 4), the enemy fortified itself in the Alamo, overlooking the city. A siege of a few days would have caused its surrender, but it was not fit that the entire army should be detained before an irregular fortification hardly worthy of the name. Neither could its capture be dispensed with, for bad as it was, it was well equipped with artillery, had a double wall, and defenders who, it must be admitted, were very courageous and caused much damage to Béxar. Lastly, to leave a part of the army to lay siege to it, the rest continuing on its march, was to leave our retreat, in case of a reverse, if not entirely cut off, at least exposed, and to be unable to help those who were besieging it, who could be reenforced only from the main body of the advancing army. This would leave to the enemy a rallying point, although it might be only for a few days. An assault would infuse our soldiers with that enthusiasm of the first triumph that would make them superior in the future to those of the enemy. It was not my judgment alone that moved me to decide upon it, but the general opinion expressed in a council of war, made up of generals, that I called even though the discussions which

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nature being such, a general has no power over its immutable laws. Let us weep at the tomb of the brave Mexicans who died at the Alamo defending the honor and the rights of their country. They won a lasting claim to fame and the country can never forget their heroic names.

The enemy, discouraged by this blow that left fateful memories, fled before our forces. Our flanks, however, were, nevertheless, constantly molested by guerrilla bands,<sup>7</sup> which, favored by their intimate acquaintance with the country, the thickets of the woods, and the effectiveness of their rifles, caused daily losses to our troops. It became necessary to remedy this evil. The slow and embarrassing march of the whole army as a unit could have availed but little for such a purpose, for the fact of being together could not stop this evil. Nor was it advisable that our whole army should stop to combat the small guerrilla bands that were almost invisible, allowing the main army of the enemy, now fleeing, to perfect a plan of defence. Brevity was the ruling principle of all my operations, and for this reason I divided the troops available into three divisions, leaving at Béxar a sufficient force under the command of General Don Juan José Andrade to fall back upon.

The first division on our right, under the command of General Don José Urrea, was to operate in the district of Goliad, El Cópago and the whole coast. Its orders were to fight the small groups that were gathering to prevent their acting in concert and becoming a menace, and to clear and free the coast of enemies as far as Brazoria. This division was to rejoin me at San Felipe de Austin, which, situated on the margin of a river, in a central location, and well provided with food, seemed to me very appropriate as a point from which to direct the campaign.

Another division under the command of General Don Antonio Gaona was ordered to our left for the same purpose. With the same objects in view as the first, it was to scour the entire line from Béxar to Bastrop. Although at first he had instructions to

<sup>7</sup> There seems to be no evidence in the English accounts of the campaign that the Texans resorted to the use of guerrilla bands.

THE ALAMO  
REMEMBERED

Tejano Accounts and Perspectives

TIMOTHY M. MATOVINA



University of Texas Press, Austin

street of the city, crossed the river and passing through the principal avenue arrived at the spot whence part of the ashes had been collected, the procession halted, the coffin was placed upon the spot and three volleys of musquetry were discharged over it by one of the companies, proceeding onwards to the second spot from whence the ashes were taken whete the same honors were done and thence to the principal spot and place of interment, the coffin was then placed upon the large heap of ashes when I addressed a few words to the battalion and assemblage ptesent in honor of the occasion in the Castilian language as I do not possess the English. Major [Thomas] Western then addressed the concourse in the latter tongue, the coffin and all the ashes were then interred and three volleys of musquetry were fired over the grave by the whole battalion with an accuracy that would do honor to the best disciplined troops. We then marched back to quarter in the city with music and colors flying. Half hour guns were not fired because I had no powder for the purpose, but every honor was done within the reach of my scanty means. I hope as a whole my effotts may meet your aptobation.

- 4 -

Juan N. Seguín

*Columbia (later Houston) Telegraph and Texas Register*

4 APRIL 1837

*Colonel Juan Nepomuceno Seguín gave a speech in Spanish at the interment ceremony for the Alamo defenders (see document 3). This oration was translated and published in a Texas newspaper.*

Companions in Arms!! These remains which we have the honor of carrying on our shoulders are those of the valiant heroes who died in the Alamo. Yes, my friends, they preferred to die a thousand times rather rhan submit themselves to the tyrant's yoke. What a brilliant example! Deserving of being nored in the pages of history. The spirit of liberty appears to be looking out from its elevated throne with its pleasing mien and pointing to us, saying: "There are your brothers, Travis, Bowie, Crockett, and others whose valor places them in the rank of my heroes." Yes soldiets and

fellow citizens, these are the wotthy beings who, by the twists of fate, during the present campaign delivered their bodies to the ferocity of their enemies; who, barbarously treated as beasts, were bound by their feet and dragged to this spot, where they were reduced to ashes. The venerable remains of our worthy companions as witnesses, I invite you to declare to the entire world, "Texas shall be free and independent or we shall perish in glorious combat."

Damasio de los Reyes  
Deposition  
4 SEPTEMBER 1856

*Damasio de los Reyes filed a deposition to support the land grant petition of Andrés Nava's heirs. De los Reyes testified that Nava was one of seven Tejano Alamo defenders. He saw Nava's dead body within the Alamo when authorities ordered him and other local citizens to burn the fallen defenders' corpses.*

The State of Texas, County of Bexar

Be it remembered that on this the fourth day of September A.D. 1856, before me the undersigned authority [notary public C. E. Jefferson] personally appeared Damasio de los Reyes and made oath that he was acquainted with Andrés Nava in his lifetime, that he knew him well in the years 1835 and 1836. That he was serving as a soldier with the Americans under Travis in the Alamo in February and March A.D. 1836 and was killed in the Alamo at the raking of the Alamo by Santa Anna, when Travis and Bowie and their men were massacred.

Shortly after the battle deponent with Agustín Barrera and others went into the Alamo and saw the dead body of said Nava. Deponent says that he, deponent, with others, were ordered by the authorities to go into the Alamo and gather up the dead bodies and burn them. The dead body of Nava was burned with the Americans.

Deponent says that there were seven Mexicans who fought on the side of the Americans who were killed in the Alamo, when Travis and Bowie were killed, and Andrés Nava was one of them.

Juana Navarro Alsbury  
Petition  
1 NOVEMBER 1857

*Juana Navarro Alsbury, who was within the Alamo when it fell, requested government compensation for the nursing services she provided during the*

*siege and for personal property confiscated by the Mexican army after the battle.*

The State of Texas, County of Bexar  
San Antonio—November 1, 1857

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Texas.

The petition of Juana Navarro Alsbury respectfully referents that during the war with Mexico she was in the Alamo at the time of its fall. She was then the wife of Dr. [Horatio] Alexandet Alsbury, who was taken prisoner on the 11th day of September 1842 and carried into captivity by General Adrian Woll. That during the siege of the Alamo she was ever ready to render and did render all the service she could towards nursing and attending upon the sick and wounded during said siege, which lasted some twelve or fourteen days. At the time when the place was stormed and carried by the enemy she and an only sister and a Mrs. [Susanna] Dickinson were the only females in the garrison. That all the property she had to wit her clothing, money, and jewels were seized and taken by the enemy . . . [the petitioner] prays the honorable Legislature will take her case into consideration and in view of all the circumstances allow her some compensation.

Francisco Esparza  
Deposition  
26 AUGUST 1859

*Francisco Esparza filed a deposition to support the land grant petition of his brother Gregorio's heirs. Esparza testified that his brother died defending the Alamo. He also stated that Mexican general Martín Cos granted him permission to bury Gregorio's body, probably because Francisco had fought in the Mexican army during the Texan siege of San Antonio three months earlier.*

The State of Texas, County of Bexar

Before me, Samuel S. Smith, Clerk of the County Court of Bexar County

On the north battery of the fortress lay the lifeless body of Colonel Travis on the gun cartiage, *shot* only in the forehead. Toward the west and in the small fort opposite the city, we found the body of Colonel Crockett. Colonel Bowie was found dead in his bed, in one of the rooms of the south side.

Santa Anna, after all the Mexicans were taken out, ordered wood to be brought to burn the bodies of the Texians. He sent a company of dragoons with me to bring wood and dry branches from the neighboring forest. About three o'clock in the afternoon they commenced laying the wood and dry branches, upon which a file of dead bodies was placed; more wood was piled on them and another file brought and in this manner they were all arranged in layers. Kindling wood was distributed through the pile and about five o'clock in the evening it was lighted.

The dead Mexicans of Santa Anna were taken to the graveyard but, not having sufficient room for them, I ordered some of them to be thrown in the river, which was done on the same day.

Santa Anna's loss was estimated at sixteen hundred men. These were the flower of his army.

The gallantry of the few Texians who defended the Alamo was really wondered at by the Mexican army. Even the generals were astonished at their vigorous resistance and how dearly victory had been bought.

The generals who, under Santa Anna, participated in the storming of the Alamo were Juan [Valentín] Amador, [Manuel Fernández] Castrillón, [Joaquín] Ramírez [y] Sesma, and [Juan José] Andrade.

The men burnt numbered 182. I was an eyewitness, for as *alcalde* [mayor] of San Antonio I was with some of the neighbors collecting the dead bodies and placing them on the funeral pyre.

Signed, Francisco Antonio Ruiz

P.S. My father was Don Francisco Ruiz, a member of the Texas Convention. He signed the Declaration of Independence on the 2nd day of March, 1836.

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Juana Navarro Alsbury  
John S. Ford Memoirs  
c. 1880s

*John Salmon Ford, a renowned Texas veteran, political figure, and history enthusiast, procured Juana Navarro Alsbury's testimony as a source for his writings on the Alamo battle. Recorded some fifty years after the battle, this vivid account is one of the few sources attributed to adults who survived the final assault on the Alamo. Although previously unpublished, Navarro Alsbury's account is included in this section because, like many published accounts of this period, it is a relatively extensive narrative obtained by an interviewer.*

#### Mrs. Alsbury's Recollections of the Alamo

Juana, the daughter of Angel Navarro and a niece of Colonel José Antonio Navarro, when very young was adopted by Governor [Juan Martín] Veramendi, who had married her father's sister. Señorita Juana married a Mexican gentleman, Don Alejo Pérez, by whom she had a son, Alejo, who is a respectable citizen of San Antonio. The elder Pérez died in 1834 and his widow married Dr. Horatio Alexander Alsbury early in 1836. It must be remembered that Colonel James Bowie married the daughter of Governor Veramendi, consequently his wife was the cousin and the adopted sister of Mrs. Alsbury. This accounts for her being in his charge and in the Alamo.

When the news of Santa Anna's approach at the head of a considerable force was verified in San Antonio, Dr. Alsbury proceeded to the Brazos River to procure means to remove his family, expecting to return before Santa Anna could reach the city. He failed to do so; and his wife went into the Alamo where her protector was, when the Mexican troops were near by. She was accompanied by her younger sister, Gertrudis. Colonel Bowie was very sick of typhoid fever. For that reason he thought it prudent to be removed from the part of the buildings occupied by Mrs. Alsbury. A couple of soldiers carried him away. On leaving he said: "Sister, do not be afraid. I leave you with Colonel Travis, Colonel Crockett, and other friends. They are gentlemen and will treat you kindly." He had himself brought back two or three times to see and talk with her. Their last interview took place

three or four days before the fall of the Alamo. She never saw him again, either alive or dead.

She says she does not know who nursed him after he left the quarters she occupied and expresses no disbelief in the statement of Madam Candelaria [Andrea Castañón Villanueva]. "There were people in the Alamo I did not see."

Mrs. Alsbury and her sister were in a building not far from where the residence of Colonel Sam Maverick was afterwards erected. It was considered quite a safe locality. They saw very little of the fighting. While the final struggle was progressing she peeped out and saw the surging columns of Santa Anna assaulting the Alamo on every side, as she believed. She could hear the noise of the conflict—the roar of the artillery, the rattle of the small arms, the shouts of the combatants, the groans of the dying, and the moans of the wounded. The firing approximated where she was and she realized the fact that the brave Texans had been overwhelmed by numbers. She asked her sister to go to the door and request the Mexican soldiers not to fire into the room, as it contained women only. Señorita Gertrudis opened the door, she was greeted in offensive language by the soldiers. Her shawl was torn from her shoulders and she rushed back into the room. During this period Mrs. Alsbury was standing with her one-year-old son strained to her bosom, supposing he would be motherless soon. The soldiers then demanded of Señorita Gertrudis: "Your money and your husband." She replied: "I have neither money nor husband." About this time a sick man ran up to Mrs. Alsbury and attempted to protect her. The soldiers bayoneted him at her side. She thinks his name was Mitchell.

After this tragic event a young Mexican, hotly pursued by soldiers, seized her by the arm and endeavored to keep her between himself and his assailants. His grasp was broken and four or five bayonets plunged into his body and nearly as many balls went through his lifeless corpse. The soldiers broke open her trunk and took her money and clothes, also the watch of Colonel Travis and other officers.

A Mexican officer appeared on the scene. He excitedly inquired, "How did you come here? What are you doing here any how? Where is the entrance to the fort?" He made her pass out of the room over a cannon standing nearby the door. He told her to remain there and he would have her sent to President Santa Anna. Another officer came up and asked: "What

17. 16 7  
Navarro y Alsbury Juana  
El Dia 23 de Julio de 1888  
fallecio alas 4 1/2 de la tarde  
ala edad de 78 años en  
el Rancho de la Laguna  
redonda donde esta  
sepultado.  
Alejo E. Perez

*Death Notice of Juana Navarro Alsbury. The inscription states that she died at 4:30 P.M. on 23 July 1888 at the age of 78. She died at the Laguna Ranch and was buried nearby. This notice is in the personal journal of Juana's son, Alejo E. Pérez, and is written in his hand. Pérez was the last survivor of the Alamo battle at the time of his death in 1918. Courtesy Dorothy Marie Pérez. Photograph from original taken by staff at Institute of Texan Cultures, San Antonio.*

*Gertrudis Navarro Cantú, sister of Juana Navarro Alsbury and survivor of the Alamo battle. CNO8198, Gertrudis Navarro file, Prints and Photographs Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin.*



are you doing here?" She replied: "An officer ordered us to remain here and he would have us sent to the President." "President the devil. Don't you see they are about to fire that cannon? Leave." They were moving when they heard a voice calling "Sister." "To my great relief Don Manuel Pérez came to us. He said: 'Don't you know your own brother-in-law?' I answered: 'I am so excited and distressed that I scarcely know anything.'" Don Manuel placed them in charge of a colored woman belonging to Colonel Bowie and the party reached the house of Don Angel Navarro in safety.

Mrs. Alsbury says to the best of her remembrance she heard firing at the Alamo till twelve o'clock that day.

She says the name of the girl Santa Anna deceived by false marriage was [left blank].

She describes Colonel Bowie as a tall, well made gentleman, of a very serious countenance, of few words, always to the point, and a warm friend. In his family he was affectionate, kind, and so acted as to secure the love and confidence of all.

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Juan N. Seguín

*Clarksville Standard*

4 MARCH 1887

*This interview of the aging Juan Nepomuceno Seguín expands on an earlier account in his Memoirs (see document 15) by describing the danger entailed in his departure as a courier from the beleaguered Alamo.*

Colonel Juan N. Seguín

A representative of the [*Laredo*] *Times* called on the venerable Colonel Juan N. Seguín, sole surviving captain of the Texan army participating in the battle of San Jacinto. Colonel Seguín was born in San Antonio, October 29th [27th], 1806, and is consequently eighty years of age. He comes of pure Castilian descent, his ancestors being of the first colony that came from the Canaries to San Fernando, as San Antonio was first called. He would easily pass now for a man of sixty, so gently has time indented its furrows upon his brow and face, although his hair is snow white. In per-

sonal appearance Colonel Seguín is about five feet eight inches tall and rather heavy, doubtless weighing 170 or 180 pounds. His complexion is fair, his features regular, and the general expression of the countenance indicating firmness and gentleness of heart. As a commander his force must have lain rather in persuasion and the love of his men, than in the exercise of stern power, as was largely the case with General [Lawrence Sullivan?] Ross. His manner is dignified yet kindly and confidential, and tears came to his eyes as he dwelt upon the stirring scenes of 1836 and he inquired of his friends of that period and of their descendants. Of those known to the writer, only one survives: Mr. Thomas O'Connor, of Refugio; and as the old veteran inquired of John J. Linn, Edward Linn, John S. Menefee, and others, the answer was "Dead!" In many respects Colonel Seguín was a unique figure in the Texas Revolution, siding as he did against the majority of his countrymen. That he was actuated by the purest of patriotic motives there can be no doubt, and equally as true is it that he contributed his full share in achieving the independence of Texas. He was shut up in the Alamo by the encircling lines of Santa Anna's army and was the fourth and last messenger sent out by Travis for aid, Major Red [John W. "Red" Smith?] being the only one so sent whose name he could recall. The message was verbal, directing Colonel [James Walker] Fannin, at La Bahía (Goliad) to march to his rescue. His egress from the beleaguered Alamo was under the friendly cover of darkness and was attended with great danger, as the fort was entirely surrounded and bombs were bursting all around. He, however, stealthily made his way through the Mexican lines on foot and often upon all fours. A horse was procured at a ranch and he rode night and day until La Bahía was reached and faithfully delivered the message to Colonel Fannin. Colonel Seguín says Fannin said it would be impossible for him to comply, as General [José] Urrea was then near his position. Being unable to re-enter the Alamo, and fortunately for him, Colonel Seguín went to Gonzales, at which point was General Houston and the Texan army. Here he organized his company, a brave and gallant band of Mexicans who did their whole duty at San Jacinto.

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Republic of Texas Press



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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!<sup>19</sup>

Santa Anna apparently felt it necessary to exaggerate the losses of Texans at the Alamo while downplaying his own. Traditionally the Texan losses are given as 182 – 189, but new evaluation of sources indicates the number was probably closer to 250 – 260. Still, Santa Anna's number of 600 is unrealistically high.<sup>20</sup> (For other accounts by or attributed to Santa Anna see #1.9, 1.11, 3.1, 4.31, and 4.33.)

## Chapter Two

# 1836

*We also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*

— Hebrews XII 1

2.1

Susanna Dickinson, March 24, 1836

From an article in the *Telegraph and Texas Register*

At daybreak of the 6th inst. the enemy surrounded the fort with their infantry, with the cavalry forming a circle outside to prevent escape on the part of the garrison: the number consisted of at least 1000 against 140! General Santa Ana commanded in person, assisted by four generals and a formidable train of artillery. Our men had been previously much fatigued and harrassed by nightwatching and incessant toil, having experienced for some days past a heavy bombardment and several real and feigned attacks. But, American valor and American love of liberty displayed themselves to the last: they were never more conspicuous: twice did the enemy apply to the walls 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." A pause ensued after the second attack, which was renewed on the third time, owing to the exertions of Santa Anna and his officers: They then poured in over the walls, "like sheep:" the struggle, however, did not even there cease- unable from the crowd and for want of time to load their guns and rifles, our men made use of the but [*sic*]-ends of the latter and continued to fight and to resist, until life ebbed out through their numberless wounds and the enemy had conquered the fort, but not its

brave, its matchless defenders: they perished but they yielded not: only one (Warner) remained to ask for quarter, which was denied by the unrelenting enemy....

[At this point the editor of the article added his own unabashed praise for the defenders of the Alamo. The narrative continues below:]

From the commencement to the close the storming lasted less than an hour. Major Evans, master of ordnance was killed when in the act of setting fire to the powder magazine, agreeable to the previous orders from Travis. The end of David Crocket of Tennessee, the great hunter of the west was as glorious as his career through life had been useful. He and his companions were found surrounded by piles of assailants, whom they had immolated on the altar of Texas liberties. The countenance of Crocket was unchanged: he had in death that freshness of hue, which his exercise of pursuing the beasts of the forest and the prairie had imparted to him. Texas places him, exaltingly, amongst the martyrs in her cause. Col. Travis stood on the walls cheering his men exclaiming "Hurra my boys" till he received a second shot, and fell: it is stated that a Mexican general (Mora) then rushed upon him, and lifted his sword to destroy his victim, who, collecting all his last expiring energies, directed a thrust at the former, which changed their relative positions: for the victim became the victor, and the remains of both descended to eternal sleep: but not alike to everlasting fame.

Travis's negro was spared, because, as the enemy said, "his master had behaved like a brave man:" words which of themselves form an epitaph: they are already engraved on the hearts of Texans, and should be inscribed on his tomb. Col. James Bowie, who had for several days been sick, was murdered in his bed: his remains were mutilated.

Suspended animation has returned to the instrument of our narration, and we continue. Mrs. Dickinson and her child, and a negro of Bowie's, and as before said, Travis's were spared.

Our dead were denied the right of Christian burial; being stripped and thrown into a pile, and burned. Would that we could gather up their ashes and place them in urns!

It is stated that about fifteen hundred of the enemy were killed and wounded in the last and previous attacks.<sup>1</sup>

Susanna Dickinson (1814-1883) was the wife of Almeron Dickinson, who served as an artillery officer in the Alamo

garrison. She survived the Alamo battle with her infant daughter Angelina. This first account of the fall of the Alamo appeared in the newspaper the *Telegraph and Texas Register*



Susanna (Dickinson) Hannig survived the Alamo battle and gave several accounts of it in later life.  
(Courtesy of the Archives Division — Texas State Library)

published in San Felipe de Austin by Joseph Baker, Gail Borden Jr., and Thomas H. Borden. The paper had been in publications since the previous October. The issue in which this account appeared was the last issue before the editors were forced to flee to Harrisburg before Santa Anna's army. The account is interspersed heavily with editorial comments by the publisher, and the actual information provided by Dickinson is scant. Much of the information in this account is repeated later in accounts by Travis's slave, Joe. Some of the statements attributed to Joe actually originated with Susanna Dickinson. (See the account of Joe, #2.6. For other accounts by or attributed to Dickinson see: 2.5, 3.18, 3.20, 3.22, 3.23, 3.28, 3.29, and 4.22.)

## 2.2

**Unidentified Mexican Soldier, April 5, 1836**

From an article in *El Mosquito Mexicano*

Dear brothers of my heart; God our Lord receive thanks, because the triumph of our forces are multiplied. The ungrateful and proud colonists who made us suffer so many days of unpleasantness in the previous campaigns have now succumbed to the fate brought about by their imprudent rashness. After thirteen days of continuous fire, his excellency the President ordered at 2:00 A.M., the night before last, that the fortifications at the Alamo be attacked: to make this effective four columns were readied, being commanded by General Cos and Colonels Juan Morales, D.N. Duque de Estrada y Romero. I was under the orders of General Cos and therefore will relate what I saw at close range. After a roundabout approach we stopped at 3:00 A.M. on the north side, about 300 paces from the enemy's fort and there the column which consisted of the Aldama and part of that of San Luis Potosi. We remained on the ground until 5:30 (the morning felt quite cool) when the signal to march was given by his Excellency the President, from his battery situated to the northeast. Immediately Mr. Cos yelled - on your feet! and placing himself at the head of the forces, we ran to the assault. Ladders, beam, bars, pick axes &c were carried for that purpose; although the distance was short, we suffered through cannister shots that shot down more than forty men: the tenacious resistance of our enemy was to be admired and the dauntless steadiness of all the generals, chiefs, officers and troops: it seemed as though the shot and bullets from the cannons, muskets and

rifles of the enemy found their mark on the chests of our soldiers, who ceaselessly shouted Long Live the Mexican Republic! Long Live General Santa Anna! I assure you that all signs of fear or terror disappeared at the sight of so many brave men by ladders, by batteries, by embrasures and even over one another clambered over the walls. The four columns and the reserves as if by a charm at the same time climbed the enemy's wall and threw themselves inside his enclosure after about three quarters of an hour under horrible fire which when ended was followed by a horrid battle at sword point; and afterwards a pitiful but unavoidable massacre of the ungrateful colonists took place, some throwing down their arms and attempting to flee or hide.

Miserable ones! They no longer exist: they all died, all and up to now I have seen burned (to avoid putrefaction) 257 bodies not counting the previous ones of the thirteen days, or those being caught, who attempted to escape. The chief they called Travis died like a brave man with his gun in his hand, in back of a cannon; but the wicked and boastful Santiago Bowie, died like a woman, almost hidden under a mattress. On our side we suffered heavy losses both of officers and troops, and about 200 wounded, a regrettable loss but small if one considers the strong position of the enemy and its kind. The former insult which we have received has been avenged. His Excellency the President made a beautiful speech to all of the divisions inside the Alamo in view of the dead enemies, and is pleased with everyone's behavior.<sup>2</sup>

The true identity of this Mexican soldier has never been established. There has been some speculation that the writer was José Juan Sanchez Navarro, a scion of the largest land holding family in Mexico. The reason for this writer's anonymity also remains a mystery. (See Sanchez-Navarro's account #4.29.)

## 2.3

**Joe, April 11, 1836**

From a letter by an unidentified correspondent to the editor of the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*

...The Honorable Davy Crockett died like a hero, surrounded by heaps of the enemy slain. Colonel James Bowie was sick and unable to rise. He was slain in his bed: the enemy allowed him a grave — probably in consideration of his having been married to a Mexican lady, a daughter of the late Governor Berrimundi [Veramendi]. The enemy had made

daily and nightly attacks upon the place for 10 days. The garrison was exhausted by incessant watching; at last the enemy made a final assault with 4000 men, half an hour before daylight, on the morning of the 6th instant. It was dark, and the enemy were undiscovered until they were close to the walls, and before the sentinels had aroused the garrison, the enemy had gained possession of a part of the ramparts. The garrison fought like men who knew there was but a brief space left them in which to avenge the wrongs of their country's possession. When driven from the walls by overwhelming numbers, they retired to the barracks, and fought hand to hand and man to man until the last man was slain — no, there was a man yet left; a little man named Warner had secreted himself among the dead bodies, and was found when the battle was over, and the dead men being removed without the walls of the fort. He asked for quarters; the soldiers took him to Santa Anna, who ordered him to be shot. The order was executed, and the body was taken out and burnt with the heroes who deserve as bright a remembrance as those who died on the pass of Thermopylae.<sup>3</sup>

Joe (1813 or 15 - ?) was the slave of William Barret Travis and accompanied Travis into the Alamo. He participated in the Alamo battle as an active combatant but survived with minor wounds. He was last reported in Austin, Texas, in 1875. Joe was briefly detained by Santa Anna following the Alamo battle and then was permitted to travel to the Texan forces. He gave his story of the battle to Texan officials, and his words were interpreted and passed on by some of those who heard them. This first letter is included since it has been cited as one of Joe's firsthand accounts in the past, and the writer states, "I learnt these facts from a negro boy, the servant of Colonel Travis." Apparently no anthropologist, the writer also explains that Joe's life was spared "probably in consideration of his kindred blood [to the Mexicans]."<sup>4</sup> This letter should not be construed as Joe's exact words. It is obvious that the account has been heavily edited by one or perhaps more newspaper editors. (For other accounts by or attributed to Joe see #2.4, 2.6, and 4.13)

2.4

Joe, April 12, 1836

As reported by George C. Childress  
in the *Memphis (Tennessee) Enquirer*

The servant of the lamented Travis, says his master fell near the close of the siege. That the Texians had picket guards stationed some hundred yards around the Alamo, (as the fort of San Antonio is called,) and upon its walls; that on Sunday morning about 3 o'clock the guard upon the wall cried out, "Col. Travis the Mexicans are coming!" Whether the picket guards were asleep or killed is not known; they were not heard, if they sounded any alarm. The Mexicans were encamped around the Alamo, out of the reach of its cannon. Col. Travis sprang from his blanket with his sword and gun, mounted the rampart and seeing the enemy under the mouths of the cannon with scaling ladders, discharged his double barreled gun down upon them; he was immediately shot; his gun falling upon the enemy and himself within the fort. The Mexican General *leading* the charge mounted the wall by means of a ladder, and seeing the bleeding Travis, attempted to behead him; the dying Colonel raised his sword and *killed him!* The negro then hid in one of the apartments of the fort, until the spirit of bravery was entirely quenched, when he heard a voice enquire if there "were no negroes here." The negro replied "yes here's one," and came out; a Mexican discharged a gun at him, but did him no injury; another ran his bayonet at him, injuring him slightly, when the Mexican officer speaking English interposed and saved him. This officer conversed freely with the negro as also did Santa Anna; this general was there, and made the negro point out Col. Travis; by which conversation he knew his master had killed the general leading the siege, as their blood then congealed together. The body of Col. Travis and his little yet great band were burnt by order of Santa Anna....<sup>5</sup>

This version of Joe's account comes to us through the observations of George C. Childress, who had been the editor of the *Nashville Banner*. Childress was present at Washington-on-the-Brazos, Texas, when Joe reported the fall of the Alamo to Texan officials. He claimed to receive this account personally from Joe and described him as being "intelligent and known to be faithful and honest."<sup>6</sup> (For other accounts by or attributed to Joe see #2.3, 2.6, and 4.13.)