

# Lines in the Soil; Lines on the Soul: Myths, Fallacies, and Canards That Obscure the Battle of the Alamo

by  
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His first visit to the Alamo greatly stirred A. B. Lawrence. The year was 1840 and the old mission still lay in ruins. Nevertheless, already San Antonio de Béxar's leading tourist attraction, its cold stones possessed the ability to inspire. A citizen of the United States and a Presbyterian minister, Lawrence was touring the Republic of Texas gathering materiel for an emigrant's guide he was planning to write. What he had already seen of that fledgling nation impressed him mightily. "It contains," he insisted, "more productive and valuable land than any other country of similar extent in the known world." Yet, nothing he had previously experienced had prepared him for the sensation of reverence and awe that the Alamo stimulated. Clearly moved, he waxed elegiac:

Will not in future days Bexar be classic ground? Is it not by victory and the blood of heroes, consecrated to liberty, and sacred to the fame of patriots who there repose upon the very ground they defended with their last breath and last drop of generous blood? Will Texians ever forget them? Or cease to prize the boon for which these patriots bled? Forbid it honor, virtue, patriotism. Let every Texian bosom be the monument sacred to their fame, and every Texian freeman be emulous of their virtues.

Lawrence was by no means alone in expressing such sentiments. Almost before the blood dried on those shattered stones, the Alamo and its defenders entered the realm of myth and legend — and there, in large measure, it remains.<sup>1</sup>

Myth and fallacy has so enshrouded every aspect of the Alamo story that it becomes difficult—not impossible, but difficult—to separate the fanciful from the factual. A parochial chauvinism generated traditional myths and a desire to extol the doomed defenders beyond the point that evidence merited. Yet, newer myths also evolved, produced by politically correct trends that sought to undermine treasured traditions. Like older myths, documentation often failed to support them.<sup>2</sup>

It is useful to define terms. When discussing the role of myth in Texas history, contentious question-and-answer sessions invariably ensue. Predictably, a fuming member of the audience asks a question like this one. “Tell me, Dr. Hardin, when you talk about the Alamo myth, are you claiming that those brave men didn’t actually die there, that it’s just a fairy story someone made up?” That is one definition of “myth”—“an unfounded or false notion”—but *not* the one at play here. No, the operating definition is, “a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon.” The battle of the Alamo is a perfect example of this second definition.

When Texans shouted, “Remember the Alamo,” were they urging people to recall a catastrophic defeat? Was it an appeal for contemplation and caution, so they never again suffered such a loss? No, of course not. What began as a cry for vengeance became one of pride and exultation. Outsiders, those who fail to understand Texas culture and deny Texas exceptionalism, find it curious that natives celebrate a crushing slaughter. They fail to understand that the

defenders' last stand transcended mere history, becoming both symbol and icon. Or, to state it more succinctly, Texans constructed a myth.

Almost immediately Texians began to describe the episode in mythic terms. Less than three weeks after the battle, a Texas newspaperman employed fulsome diction to pay homage to the fallen defenders:

Spirits of the mighty, though fallen! Honors and rest are with ye: the spark of immortality which animated your forms, shall brighten into a flame, and Texas, the whole world, shall hail ye like the demi-gods of old, as founders of new actions and as patterns of imitation!<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding all that President Andrew Jackson had on his plate—Indian removal, the Second Seminole War, the upcoming presidential election—he felt himself moved to reply to the nine-year-old Jackson Donelson. He was the son of Andrew and Emily Donelson, the president's closest living relatives. From his boarding school, young Jackson had written his “Uncle” Andrew mourning the fall of the Alamo. On April 22, 1836, (the day following the Texian victory at San Jacinto) the “Old Hero” responded to the boy: “Your sympathies expressed on hearing of the death of those brave men who fell in defense of the Alamo displays a proper feeling of patriotism and sympathy for the gallant defenders of the rights of freemen, which I trust will grow with your growth . . . and find you always a strong votary in the cause of freedom.” Old Hickory voiced the feelings of most Americans. Although Texas had not yet joined the federal union, “those brave men” had died in defense of American values and traditions—“in the cause of freedom.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, almost immediately the battle lost its factual content, ceased to be a calamitous military defeat, becoming instead a paradigm of “honor, virtue, and patriotism.” The myth made

acceptable that which was inherently intolerable. It consoled Texians, assuring them that the sacrifice of Travis and his men had not been in vain. Given the tone of much of the early rhetoric, one might have believed that it was actually beneficial to have an enemy slaughter one's garrison to the last man.

No surprise then that Texans began to embellish the narrative. No praise of the fallen defenders could be too effusive; no estimations of slain *soldados* at the foot of Jim Bowie's sick bed could be too high; no presumptions of Mexican malice could be too excessive. The parable became the central scene of a Lone Star morality play, a melodrama in which slain champions served as primordial types. Consider, for example, this paradigm of purple prose contained within a popular *textbook*:

The Mexicans, bleeding, wounded, and shattered, hesitated to renew the attack, but the stern command of Santa Anna and the flashing sabers of the cavalry, forced them on. By tens, by hundreds, they swarmed up the ladders. Down fell the first, down, down went the second, crushing all beneath them, while the Texans stood like gods waiting to let others feel their mighty strength.<sup>5</sup>

Such perceptions survived the romantic nineteenth century and thrived even into the mid-twentieth century. In 1960, actor and director John Wayne described his film "The Alamo" as "the story of 185 men joined together in an immortal pact to give their lives that the spark of freedom might blaze into a roaring flame. It is the story of how they died to the last man, putting up an unbelievably gallant fight against an overwhelming enemy; and of the priceless legacy they left us."<sup>6</sup>

Wayne unintentionally identified the problem with the mythic Alamo. The traditional story was, indeed, *unbelievably* gallant. Nevertheless, those of a certain age, who grew up with

the Walt Disney version—who wore coonskin caps and sang “Da-vy, Davy Crockett,” until it drove parents to distraction—are frequently aggrieved when some egg-head tells us that their childhood hero may not have gone down swinging ol’ Betsy *a la* Fess Parker. They are chagrined when their children and grandchildren, who did not grow up with Fess Parker and John Wayne, fail to share their enthusiasm for the tale. The bombast and lack of credibility that accompanies most of the mythic accounts tends to alienate younger people who, quite rightly, demand to examine the evidence. However, enough of professorial pontificating; let’s get down to specific cases.<sup>7</sup>

#### MYTH 1

*“Travis’ words have tugged at the conscience of Texans for seven generations. Yet neither his gallant prose nor the desperate bravery of the garrison at the Alamo can alter the fact that the battle there was an exercise in martial folly. The battle should never have been fought, and regardless of what the defenders contributed to the mythology of Texas, their contribution to the strategy of the Texas Revolution was nil or negative.”*

—H. W. Brands<sup>8</sup>

This is a newer myth—or, perhaps, a counter-myth—one that suggests that Bowie and Travis were blithering idiots for attempting to hold a post of no military significance. Those who hold this view tend to examine the battle only in tactical terms. To fathom the encounter fully one must appreciate its strategic context.<sup>9</sup>

Any general worthy of his epaulettes could have read a map. In 1836, two major roads led into Texas from the Mexican interior. The first was the Atascosito Road, which stretched from Matamoros on the Rio Grande northward through San Patricio, Goliad, Victoria, and finally into the heart of Austin’s colony. The second was the Old San Antonio Road, a *camino real* that

crossed the Rio Grande and wound northeastward through San Antonio de B exar, Bastrop, Nacogdoches, San Augustine, before crossing the Sabine River into Louisiana.

Yet what was manifest to Mexican General Antonio L opez de Santa Anna was equally clear to Texian leaders, who took steps to block these vital transportation arteries. Two forts barred these approaches into Texas and each functioned as a frontier picket post, ready to alert the Anglo settlements of an enemy advance: Presidio La Bah a at Goliad and the Alamo at San Antonio. James Clinton Neill took charge of the B exar garrison. Some ninety miles to the southeast, James Walker Fannin, Jr., subsequently commanded at Goliad. Both Neill and Fannin determined to stall the centralists on the frontier. Still, they labored under no delusions. Without speedy reinforcements, neither the Alamo nor Presidio La Bah a could long stand.

The self-styled “Napoleon of the West” sought to emulate the French emperor. Santa Anna planned to strike swiftly, hurl his columns along parallel roads, and achieve strategic surprise. Ignorant of his intentions, the rebels dispersed their meager forces against the threat of multiple Mexican advances. Santa Anna, keeping the Texans guessing, would concentrate his battalions to deliver a hammer blow where the enemy was weakest.

The generalissimo anticipated ensnaring the rebels in a strategic pincer movement. On February 16, he crossed the Rio Grande near modern-day Eagle Pass with the bulk of his army and rumbled toward San Antonio. The following day, General Jos e Urrea forded more than three hundred miles downriver at Matamoros with about five hundred infantry and cavalry. Barreling up the Atascosito Road, his mission was to retake Goliad.<sup>10</sup>

San Antonio de Béxar was the linchpin of Santa Anna's stratagem. "Béxar was held by the enemy," he explained, "and it was necessary to open the door to our future operations by taking it." Once he had reduced the Alamo, the town could serve as a supply depot, a stopover for weary *soldados*, and a springboard against rebel enclaves further east. Some critics have argued that once he had surrounded the Alamo, he could have simply monitored the garrison and continued his campaign. Yet, what sort of commander would allow an enemy garrison to remain just outside his base of operation and sit astride his central line of communication? <sup>11</sup>

His officers, however, whispered that other issues might have influenced Santa Anna's plans. Some observed that Goliad, which controlled the entire Texas coastline, was actually of more strategic importance than Béxar. Even so, Béxar was the *political* hub of Tejas, a consideration of enormous symbolic importance.

Although Travis had initially objected to his posting, once there he began calling Béxar the "key of Texas." Curiously, Santa Anna and Travis selected similar metaphors to describe the town's strategic importance. Like Neill and Bowie, Travis came to realize that the best way to protect Texian families was to stop the enemy at San Antonio. One may argue the tactics of the battle, but to assert that San Antonio de Béxar was of no strategic significance is absurd.<sup>12</sup>

#### MYTH 2

*"Travis and Bowie's disobedience of Houston's direct orders to abandon and then blow up the Alamo not only cost them their lives. Another 187 brave men were lost with them."*

—Marshal De Bruhl<sup>13</sup>

On January 17, 1836, General Sam Houston wrote Governor Henry Smith that he had ordered Colonel James Bowie and a company of volunteers to San Antonio. Traditional

misunderstanding of the letter's contents created one of the most persistent canards of the Alamo story.<sup>14</sup>

For the careful reader, Houston's own words clarify the issue: "I have ordered the fortifications of the town of Bexar to be demolished, and, *if you think well of it*, I will remove all the cannon and other munitions of war to Gonzales and Copano, blow up the Alamo and abandon the place, as it will be impossible to keep up the Station with volunteers. [T]he sooner I can be *authorized* the better it will be for the country" [Emphasis added].<sup>15</sup>

Houston clearly wanted to raze the Alamo and withdraw, but it is likewise obvious that he was asking Smith's consent to do so. Smith and the council could concur upon few issues, but on this occasion both the governor and the council agreed they must maintain the Alamo and the San Antonio River line.

On January 19, Bowie rode into the Alamo. What he saw impressed him. The old mission had begun to look like a real fort. Neill's arguments and leadership electrified Bowie. He declared that he and Neill had resolved to "die in these ditches" before they would surrender so valuable a post. Bowie's letter confirmed the governor's view of the defensibility of the Alamo. Smith and the council had already concluded that Texian forces must hold B exar and Bowie's judgment only strengthened this determination. Rejecting Houston's plan, Smith prepared to funnel reinforcements and provisions to the Alamo.<sup>16</sup>

Above all others, one document refutes the often repeated assertion that Bowie and Travis disobeyed their orders to "abandon and then blow up the Alamo." On January 21, responding to Houston's advice to Governor Smith in the January 17 dispatch, members of the council directed



that an “express be sent immediately to Bejar, with orders from the acting Governor [James W. Robinson] countermanding the orders of Genl. Houston, and that the Commandant be required to put the place in the best possible state for defense, with assurances that every possible effort is making to strengthen, supply and provision the Garrison, and in no case to abandon or surrender the place unless in the last extremity.” Even if Houston had sent orders to abandon the post (and, again, no evidence exists that he actually did) this directive from the legally constituted civilian government rendered countermanded them.<sup>17</sup>

Contrary to the myth, Houston did not dispatch “direct orders” to abandon the Alamo only to have Neill and Bowie ignore them. In brief, Houston had asked for permission to evacuate the post. The politicians considered his request; the answer was an unequivocal “No.” Even after the Texian government fell apart, both Governor Smith and the council directed Neill to stand his ground. While Houston thought it prudent, there was never an actual directive for Neill and Bowie—and later, Travis—to evacuate the fort. To the contrary, the instruction they *did* receive demanded that they defend it to the “last extremity.”<sup>18</sup>

### MYTH 3

*“[Alamo defenders] joined together in an immortal pact to give their lives that the spark of freedom might blaze into a roaring flame.”*

—John Wayne<sup>19</sup>

Many assume that Alamo defenders knew from the beginning that they were doomed. Travis did not enter the fort to enjoy a glorious death but to hold it until reinforcements arrived. He made that clear in his famous letter of February 24: “Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch.” He was not, as many have asserted, delusional.<sup>20</sup>

As the siege continued and none of the promised aid appeared, Travis became anxious, then angry. On March 3, he wrote to the delegates of the Independence Convention then assembled in the Town of Washington:

Col. Fannin is said to be on the march to this place with reinforcements. But I fear it is not true, as I have repeatedly sent to him for aid without receiving any. . . . I look to the colonies alone for aid; unless it arrives soon, I shall have to fight the enemy on his own terms. I will, however, do the best I can under the circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

Later the same day, Travis revealed even more bitterness in a letter to his friend Jesse Grimes: “I am determined to perish in the defense of this place, and my bones shall reproach my country for her neglect.”<sup>22</sup>

This prompts an obvious question: Why did Texian leaders ignore Travis’s repeated calls for assistance? Texans dislike admitting it, but the provisional government that should have—and could have—organized relief efforts had fallen apart because of its bickering, dissention, and discord. On March 1, when Texian delegates finally assembled in the Town of Washington to organize a new government, it was too late for the men besieged inside the Alamo. They were as much victims of political malfeasance as enemy bayonets. Having received “assurances that every possible effort is making to strengthen, supply and provision the Garrison,” Travis found it difficult to accept that his superiors had placed him and his men in harm’s way only to forsake them through sheer ineptness and indifference. Had he lived longer, he may have learned to place less faith in the promises of politicians.<sup>23</sup>

Travis was not, as some have insisted, a zealot with a death wish. The men of the Alamo were not part of an obsessive death cult; nor were they Japanese *kamikazes* bent on ritual suicide.

Such fanaticism was no part of their cultural tradition. The defenders were citizen soldiers. They may have been willing to die for their country but that was never their aspiration. They fervently prayed that such a sacrifice would prove unnecessary.

It never occurred to them to join “in an immortal pact to give their lives.” That knowledge makes their sacrifice *more*, not less, heroic. When their political leaders neglected them, Travis and his garrison did as they promised. They fought the enemy on “his own terms” and did the best they could “under the circumstances.” What more could anyone possibly ask of them?<sup>24</sup>

#### MYTH 4

*“In a voice trembling with emotion, Travis told his men that death was inevitable, and showed that he had detained them thus long, hoping for reinforcements. . . . Drawing his sword, he drew a line in front of his men, and cried: ‘Those who wish to die like heroes and patriots come over to me.’ There was no hesitation. In a few minutes, every soldier, save one, had crossed. Even the wounded dragged themselves across the fatal mark.”*

—Anna J. H. Pennybacker

This, the most cherished of Alamo myths, is also one of the most incredible. Here is the timeline. French immigrant Louis “Moses” Rose left the Alamo on or about March 3. After many hardships, he made his way to East Texas where he took refuge in the home of Abraham and Mary Ann Zuber where he related his story. The Zubers had a son, William Physick, who was fifteen years of age in 1836, but away from home serving in the Texian army. Over the years, he learned the tale of the mysterious visitor from his parents. Not until 1872, thirty-five years after an event he did not witness, did he publish his account of Rose’s escape in the *Texas Almanac* wherein he related the story of Travis’s line.

Zuber's account was highly detailed. Even at the time, many wondered how he could have known the exact wording of Travis's speech. On September 14, 1877, Zuber wrote to the Adjutant General of the State of Texas responding to his critics. In this letter, Zuber confessed to fabricating the speech, but claimed he had based it on information Rose had provided his parents, which over the years they had passed along to him. He further admitted that he had concocted one paragraph out of whole cloth: "I found a deficiency in the material of the speech, which from my knowledge of the man, I thought I could supply. I accordingly threw in one paragraph which I firmly believe to be characteristic of Travis, and without which the speech would have been incomplete."<sup>25</sup>

As Walter Lord observed, "Zuber never said what the passage was, but the omission itself is significant. The line [in the dirt] was the crux of the whole speech—the center of the controversy. If his concoction ('without which the speech would have been incomplete') was not the line, it seems he would have said so, for this was the one thing everyone wanted to know." The dramatic announcement of their inevitable doom appeared to have been an element that he "threw in" as "characteristic of Travis."<sup>26</sup>

It is true that survivors Susanna Dickinson Hanning and Enrique Esparza also referenced the line-in-the-dirt tale, but not until long after Zuber had published his article and the public had embraced it. Mrs. Hanning botched the story completely. As she told it, Travis invited those who wished to *leave* to cross the line. Most damning, she has this pivotal event take place on the first day of the siege. Despite all the inconsistencies, many could not let the fable go. As one crotchety Texan argued, "Is there any proof that Travis didn't draw the line? If, not let us believe

it, even though it possibly may be legendary and based on an offer that any who wanted to leave could do so.”<sup>27</sup>

That is not the way history works—at least not professional history. History is not something that *might* have happened, or we *wish* had happened. History is what documents prove *did* happen. By that standard, the tale of Travis’s line does not even come close.

Nowadays, most Alamo scholars reject the legend. In *Texian Iliad*, I gently dismissed it, stating, “According to legend, [Travis] drew a line in the dust with his saber, inviting all those who were resolved to stay and die with him to cross. Evidence does not support the tale, but apparently Travis did gather the men for a conference.” In 1998, William C. Davis was far more emphatic in his rigorously researched *Three Roads to the Alamo*. “Nothing in this story stands up to scrutiny,” he insisted. “So far as this present work is concerned, the event simply did not happen, or if it did, then something much more reliable than an admittedly fictionalized secondhand account written thirty-five years after the fact is necessary to establish it beyond question.” Nevertheless, the line myth recently received a patron when James Donovan, author of *The Blood of Heroes* (2012), professed to believe it had actually occurred. Even so, in his afterward he admitted that he had based his faith upon “secondhand and third hand, or circumstantial” evidence. This is hardly a ringing endorsement. Indeed, those are the same complaints professional historians have had with the line parable since Zuber first introduced it in 1872.<sup>28</sup>

#### MYTH 5

*“They are surrounded. And we can’t help them. Now, tomorrow, when your recruits start to whine and bellyache, you tell them that a hundred and eighty-five of their friends, neighbors,*

*fellow Texicans, are hold up in a crumbling adobe church down on the Rio Bravo, buying them this precious time.”*

—Richard Boone as Sam Houston, “The Alamo” (1960)<sup>29</sup>

This myth is easy to refute. His biographers carefully documented the general’s movements and, as Walter Lord observed with eloquent understatement, “Sam Houston . . . was strangely inactive during most of the siege.” On February 23, the day the Alamo siege began Houston was not even with the army. He was in East Texas negotiating with the Cherokees as an emissary of the deposed Governor Smith. On February 29, he arrived in the Town of Washington where he served as a delegate at the Independence Convention. On March 4, the delegates reconfirmed him as commander of the Texian army. On the evening of March 6, Houston promised, “If mortal power could avail,” he would personally lead a detachment to “relieve the brave men in the Alamo.” Ironically, the Alamo had already fallen earlier that morning. On March 11, Houston finally joined the army at Gonzales. Obviously, the stand of Travis and his men had not bought Houston the “precious time” he required to raise and train the Texian army.

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Even so, the thirteen-day siege *did* delay Santa Anna’s advance through Texas. Without the Alamo siege, he would have likely routed the members of the Independence Convention before they finished writing a constitution for the Republic of Texas. The siege produced political dividends but Houston did not begin his military duties until after the Alamo had fallen.<sup>31</sup>

#### MYTH 6:

*“[An artillery] battery finally brought about what Santa Anna had been trying to accomplish for eleven days. A sizable breach was battered in the east end of the plaza’s north wall.”*

—John Myers Myers<sup>32</sup>

The above passage appears in Myers's 1948 book *The Alamo*. Published in 1955, Frederic Ray's *The Story of the Alamo: An Illustrated history of the Siege and Fall of the Alamo* affirmed, "By March 5<sup>th</sup>, Mexican cannon had breached the north wall." Moreover, the "breach" story also appeared in more highbrow treatments including Lon Tinkle's bestseller *13 Days to Glory: The Siege of the Alamo*, published in 1958. Tinkle even included an illustration of the compound showing the "breach" in the north wall. The exception was Walter Lord's *A Time to Stand*. He made no mention of a breach and his illustration of the compound depicted the north wall standing intact.<sup>33</sup>

Hollywood reinforced the breach-in-the-wall tale. Both 1955's "The Last Command" and 1960's "The Alamo" included scenes that showed the wall crumbling during the March 6 assault and Mexican troops flooding through. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, most Texans accepted the breach in the wall as gospel.<sup>34</sup>

Curiously, contemporary accounts failed to reference any breach. As late as March 3, Travis could boast, "I have fortified this place, so that the walls are generally proof against cannon balls; and I shall strengthen the walls by throwing up dirt." Eyewitness Mexican reports recount the difficulty they had climbing *over* the north wall but none recalled a yawning hole in it—a detail they surely would have mentioned.<sup>35</sup>

How did the "breach-in-the wall" become entrenched in the public imagination? Tinkle's *13 Day to Glory* provides a clue. In a note to the bird's-eye-view of the compound, Tinkle revealed that it was "based on sketches by Lt. J. Edmund Blake in 1845 and Lt. Edward Everett

in 1846 and on the map drawn by Capt. R. M. Potter after his visit to the Alamo in 1841.” Of course, all of those officers sketched the Alamo as it appeared *after* the battle; none knew what it looked like during the 1836 siege.<sup>36</sup>

They were likely unaware that following the battlefield disaster at San Jacinto, General Vicente Filisola had ordered General Juan José Andrade to demolish the Alamo and evacuate Béxar. After the March 6 assault, Andrade and his men had remained in San Antonio with instructions to renovate the fort for a future Mexican garrison. Now with the Mexican army in full retreat, Filisola ordered Andrade to dismantle the compound so that it would never again provide safe haven for the enemy. On May 22, Dr. Joseph Barnard, a captive American physician, noted, “They [Andrade’s troops] are now busy as bees *tearing down walls, &c.*” In the years following 1836, many tourists visited the Alamo and commented on its ruined condition. Blake, Everett, and Potter no doubt saw a “breach” and assumed Santa Anna’s cannon had created it. Yet, it is almost certain that Andrade’s picks and sledgehammers produced the “sizeable breach” in the north wall.<sup>37</sup>

#### Myth 7

*“Twice he charged, then blew recall. On the fatal third time,  
Santa Anna breached the wall and he killed them one and all.”*  
—“Ballad of the Alamo,” lyrics by P.F. Webster & Dimitri Tiomkin<sup>38</sup>

Many traditional accounts of the battle assert that on March 6, Mexican assault troops required three separate attacks to overwhelm the Alamo’s defenses. The May 25, 1836, edition of the Frankfort, Kentucky, *Commonwealth* ran a highly detailed recounting of the final assault with “some particulars” that Susanna Dickinson supplied. “The enemy three times applied their



scaling ladders to the wall; twice they were beaten back,” the article recounted. “But numbers and discipline prevailed over valor and desperation. On the third attempt they succeeded, and then came over ‘*like sheep*.’” Anna J. H. Pennybacker’s *A New History of Texas for Schools* transferred this version to generations of Texas schoolchildren. Then the movies took up the tale, most notably in 1955’s “Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier.” By 1960, when singer-songwriter Marty Robbins released his “Ballad of the Alamo,” the fable was well ensconced in the popular imagination.<sup>39</sup>

The Widow Dickinson was responsible for this old canard. In 1876, during her interview with the Adjutant General’s Office, she recalled:

On the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> Mch. about daylight enemy threw up signal rocket & advanced & were repulsed. They rallied & made 2<sup>nd</sup> assault with scaling ladders, first thrown up on E. side of Fort. Terrible fight ensued. Witness retired into a room of the old church & saw no part of the fight—Though she could distinctly hear it.<sup>40</sup>

Later, in an 1881 interview for the San Antonio *Daily Express*, the number of attacks had changed:

Three times [the Mexican assault troops] were repulsed, and the two cannon, planted high upon the ramparts, carried dismay with their belches of fire and lead.<sup>41</sup>

All of Mrs. Dickinson’s accounts offer complications. In the first place, she was illiterate. Consequently, all of her accounts take the form of answers to questions posed to her by others. Her testimony to the Adjutant General’s Office is hastily scribbled notes by an unknown party. Reporters heavily edited nearly all her interviews. Clearly, neither of these methods was conducive to an accurate recollection of an historical event. Additionally, the lengthy period between the incident and her recounting of it was also cause for concern. Her testimony to the

Adjutant General's Office came forty years after the event; her *Daily Express* interview was an additional five years later. She recalled two attacks in 1876, yet in 1881, she claimed that the defenders repulsed the Mexican assault troops "three times." Did that mean that their *fourth* attack was successful?

Shielded in the church sacristy along with the other non-combatants, Mrs. Dickinson was in the worst possible location to view the battle. Indeed, the unnamed reporter in the 1881 *Daily Express* article admitted as much. "[Mrs. Hanning] says she can give but a little of the struggle, as she was in a little dark room in the rear of the building."<sup>42</sup>

This is a quandary with her recollections; what she asserts in one, she contradicts in another. The most incriminatory feature of Mrs. Dickinson's multiple-attack story is that none of the other witnesses corroborates it. Joe, Travis's body servant, was standing by his master on the north wall and certainly in a better position to see the assault than Mrs. Dickinson. Yet, he never mentioned separate Mexican attacks. Nor did any of the Mexican participants—not Juan Almonte, not Ramón Martínez Caro, not Vincenté Filisola, not José Enrique de la Peña, not José Juan Sanchez-Navarro, and not Antonio López de Santa Anna.<sup>43</sup>

So far removed from the event, it is impossible to reconstruct what Mrs. Dickinson believed she might have seen, much less what she might have heard. Most likely, the clamor of four Mexican assault columns hitting the walls at different times reached her startled ears and she interpreted them as separate attacks. Nevertheless, it is clear that her multiple repulse fable does not survive scrutiny.

*“Our heroes struggled on till they were literally cut to pieces. But not one fell unavenged. . . . The court ran with blood, but the conflict did not cease until every one of the noble band lay a bleeding sacrifice upon his country’s altar.”*

—Anna J. H. Pennybacker<sup>44</sup>

Many still cling to the fiction that Alamo defenders died fighting to the last man. This myth demands too much of human nature. When the tide of battle turns against them, nearly all soldiers succumb to the instinct of self-preservation. The defenders of the Alamo were no exception.

Credible Mexican sources reveal that some of the defenders attempted to surrender. José Enrique de la Peña recalled that during the struggle for the long barracks, a few defenders “poked the points of their bayonets through a hole with a white cloth, the symbol of ceasefire, and some even used their socks.” When the Mexican assault troops poured over the north and west walls, as many as seventy defenders sought to escape by bounding through the gun emplacements at the northeast corner of the cattle pen, over the wall of the horse corral, and, finally, over the south wall palisade and through the abatis. Now outside the fort, they ran for cover but lancers commanded by General Joaquín Ramírez y Sesma intercepted them. In his post-battle report, he testified to the escapees’ “desperate resistance” and lauded the Texians for selling “their lives at a very high price,” but all but one died under the lethal lances. One escapee burrowed deep into the heavy brush and refused all demands to come out. Finally, the cavalymen shot him where he crouched.<sup>45</sup>

Not just Peña, but several eyewitness Mexican accounts, confirm that *soldados* took six or seven defenders captive. General Manuel Fernández Castrillón interceded with Santa Anna to

spare their lives but, turning on his heel, His Excellency ordered their immediate deaths. Proper soldiers, those who had actually fought in the battle, balked at obeying such a barbarous order. Yet, members of the generalissimo's personal staff, those who had not taken an active part in the assault, drew their swords and hacked the helpless prisoners to death. An overwhelming body of evidence asserts that Congressman David Crockett was among these unfortunate defenders murdered at Santa Anna's direct command.<sup>46</sup>

No, the defenders did not fight to the last man. Rather, Santa Anna ordered his staff lackeys to kill them to the last man and therein rests a delicious irony. Had Santa Anna been willing to take prisoners he would have robbed the battle of its moral power; Americans would remember the Alamo only as a terrible debacle; Hollywood would have had no interest in making movies about a military disaster; and few today would express any curiosity in a long forgotten defeat. Whatever mythic mojo the battle contains is because it was a *last stand*. And who was responsible for making sure it was one? Antonio López de Santa Anna.

### Myth 9

*In 1836, the Alamo church appeared much as it does now.*

In the public imagination, the Alamo church has always looked the same. In popular culture venues, illustrators have depicted the church consistently. Nearly all of these representations share two common traits: at least some variation of the arched gable—what most folks call the Alamo “hump”—and the inclusion of the upper windows. Yet, these features did not appear until the U.S. Army took possession of the building between 1850 and 1852. The arched gable was the creation of Bavarian-born architect John Fries and local stonemason David

Russi.<sup>47</sup> The army added a second floor inside the building and cut a pair of windows to provide sunlight. Oddly, after all the care Fries and Russi lavished on the gable, army engineers did not attempt to mirror the Spanish style of the lower windows. Consequently, the army-installed upper windows assumed a utilitarian, even jerry-rigged, appearance. Some found the alterations to the façade repugnant. Lieutenant Edward Everett, who had earlier sketched the church in ruins, protested: “I regret to see . . . that tasteless hands have evened off the rough walls, as they were left after the siege, surmounting them with a ridiculous scroll, giving the building the appearance of the headboard of a bedstead.”<sup>48</sup>

Remarkably, it was not until John Lee Hancock’s 2004 film, “The Alamo,” that Hollywood depicted the church without upper windows and the “ridiculous scroll.” Production designer Michael Corenblith carefully researched all the post battle sketches and the only existing daguerreotype before the army Taco-Belled it to reproduce an accurate facsimile of the 1836 original. It was an astonishing achievement; he re-created the church—down to the size and shape of the stones in the facade—with absolute fidelity. Nevertheless, Corenblith exasperated many purists when he moved his church forward some eighty feet to “make the icon accessible throughout the plaza, so that the audience understands where they are at all times.”<sup>49</sup>

Even so, recent research suggests that even Corenblith got it wrong. Alamo scholar and illustrator Gary Zaboly asserted that reliance on the post-1836 sketches and the daguerreotype had led historians astray. He argued that Colonel José Juan Sánchez-Navarro’s sketch—the only one drawn during the 1836 siege—indicated a completely different roofline from the post-battle illustrations. Zaboly maintained that the large “gouges” that are prevalent in the post-1836

sketches, the 1849 daguerreotype, and consequently the set of the 2004 film were—like the so-called “breach” in the north wall—the result of General Andrade’s after-battle demolition. During the battle, the western-facing façade of the church was likely more rectangular, with a straight, unbroken, roof line. Zaboly even declared that the roof line was likely crenelated. Debate concerning the 1836 appearance of the church will continue, but it is certain that the upper windows and the iconic “hump,” so frequently represented in popular culture, were absent.<sup>50</sup>

#### Myth 10

*The defenders of the Alamo, as brave as they may have been, were martyrs to the cause of the freedom of slaveholders, with the Texas War of Independence having been the first of their nineteenth-century revolts, with the American Civil War the second.*

—James W. Russell<sup>51</sup>

It is irresponsible to attribute an event as complex as the Texas War for Independence to a single cause, yet increasingly many do. Consider, for example, the following observation: “In retrospect, rather than a fight for liberty, the 1835 Anglo-led revolution was a poorly conceived southern land grab that nearly failed.” No mention of land speculation, no mention of the Constitution of 1824, no mention of the dissolution of Mexican federalism, no mention of ethnocentrism, no mention of efforts to install a centralist regime in Texas, no mention of Santa Anna’s vow to rid Texas of all “perfidious foreigners,”—no, according to this persistent cant the Texas Revolution was all about slavery. Period. Just accept it.<sup>52</sup>

Well, I might have accepted it—if I had not spent the last thirty years immersed in documents from the period. For example, the “Declaration of the People of Texas,” issued on November 7, 1835:

Whereas, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, and other military chieftains, have, by force of arms, overthrown the Federal Institutions of Mexico, and dissolved the social compact which existed between Texas and the other members of the Mexican Confederacy; the good People of Texas, availing themselves of their natural right. SOLEMNLY DECLARE . . .

The following eight articles delineate their intentions and principles—but never mention slavery.<sup>53</sup>

The Alamo garrison was extremely cosmopolitan. It strains credulity to claim that James Brown of Pennsylvania, or John Flanders of Massachusetts, or John Hubbard Forsyth of New York, or Gregorio Esparza of Texas and especially Daniel Bourne from England, Lewis Johnson from Wales, Henry Courtman from Germany, and Charles Zanco from Denmark would have risked their lives for a “southern land grab.”<sup>54</sup>

As a young man, I discovered a quotation from English novelist E. M. Forster that has guided me throughout my career: “The historian must have some conception of how men who are not historians behave.” Historians who view the world exclusively through the lens of race, class, and gender frequently forget that people ever lived who did not share their modern—and myopic—perception.<sup>55</sup>

Slavery was part of the toxic stew that led to war—but not the principal ingredient. Randolph B. Campbell, who literally wrote the book on Texas slavery, should have the last word: “The immediate cause of the conflict was the political instability of Mexico and the implications of Santa Anna’s centralist regime for Texas. Mexico forced the issue in 1835, not over slavery, but over customs duties and the general defiant attitude of Anglo-Americans in Texas.”<sup>56</sup>

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Myth is an unalienable part of the Alamo story. Even if it were possible, efforts to purge the mythic content would prove unwise. As with Washington and the cherry tree, Travis and the line is a homily that conveys a vital lesson. It is part of a shared national experience and constitutes a valuable cultural touchstone. It will certainly do children no harm to hear it and it may even do them some good. Ponder the wisdom of C. S. Lewis: “Since it is so likely that children will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker.”<sup>57</sup>

Understand and appreciate the myths; understand and appreciate the historical reality. But, please, graze them in different pastures. Hazards arise for both individuals and societies—not when they treasure national myths—but when they begin to *mistake* those myths for history.

Myth reflects history; it does not verify it. The warped image it provides is that of a fun house mirror, one that reveals more about the modes and motives of those who constructed, and continue to embrace, the folklore. Nevertheless, when one strips away the layers of legend and fallacy what is left is still grandly heroic. Chauvinism may have steered A. B. Lawrence’s fervent pen but he was not wrong. The Alamo story is remarkably complex but, at its core, it remains one of “honor, virtue, and patriotism.”



<sup>1</sup>[A. B. Lawrence], *Texas in 1840, or The Emigrant's Guide to the New Republic; Being the Result of Observation, Enquiry and Travel in That Beautiful Country, by an Emigrant, Late of the United States, With an Introduction by the Rev. A. B. Lawrence, of New Orleans* (New York: William W. Allen, 1840; reprint, Austin: W. M. Morrison Books, 1987), 81, 220.

<sup>2</sup>The late Walter Lord was the first to approach the mythic Alamo in a scholarly, or even serious, manner. In his classic *A Time to Stand*, he included an addendum to his narrative titled "Riddles of the Alamo." In this section he lassoed many of the sacred Texas cows with enormous skill, sensitivity, and audacity. Long before Carmen Perry and Dan Kilgore published their work, Mr. Lord dared suggest that David Crockett might have died *after* the battle and that William Barret Travis probably did *not* draw the legendary line in the sand. More than half a century later, Lord's book remains indispensable. Walter Lord, *A Time to Stand* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961) 198-212. Seven years later, Lord contributed an article to an anthology in which he expanded upon "Riddles of the Alamo." Students of the mythic Alamo ignore it at their peril. Walter Lord, "Myths and Realities of the Alamo," in Stephen B. Oates, ed., *The Republic of Texas* (Palo Alto, California: American West Publishing Company and Texas State Historical Association, 1968), 18-25.

<sup>3</sup>*Telegraph and Texas Register* (San Felipe de Austin, Tex.), Vol. 1, No. 21, Ed. 1, Thursday, March 24, 1836. The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph47891/m1/3/>

<sup>4</sup>Andrew Jackson to Jackson Donelson, April 22, 1836, quoted in Pauline Wilcox Burke, *Emily Donelson of Tennessee* (2 vols., Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1941) 2:97.

<sup>5</sup>Anna J. H. Pennybacker, *A New History of Texas for Schools, Also for General Reading and for Teachers Preparing Themselves for Examination* (Austin: Mrs. Percy V Pennybacker, 1900), 142.

<sup>6</sup>John Wayne letter in Thomas J. Kane, ed., *The Alamo* (N.P.: Sovereign Publications, 1960), unnumbered pages. This is the movie souvenir book for John Wayne's epic film. Film studios sold these in theatre lobbies ("lobby book" was another common term for such publications) during the road show engagements of A-list feature films.

<sup>7</sup>On December 15, 1954, Americans heard "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" for the first time when the television miniseries "Davy Crockett" aired as part of the "Disneyland" program. Disney composer George Bruns wrote the music; Thomas W. Blackburn crafted the lyrics. San Angelo, Texas, native Fess Parker won the plum role of Davy Crockett and also starred in four other episodes.

<sup>8</sup>H. W. Brands, "The Alamo Should Never Have Happened," *Texas Monthly* online, <http://www.texasmonthly.com/story/alamo-should-never-have-happened>.

<sup>9</sup>Lay historian Jeff Long best represented this view. Jeff Long, *Duel of Eagles: The Mexican and U.S. Fight for the Alamo* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), 218.

<sup>10</sup>For an expanded discussion of the strategy of the Texas War for Independence see the author's *Texian Iliad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994) *passim*.

<sup>11</sup>Antonio López de Santa Anna, *Manifiesto Relative to His Operations in the Texas Campaign and his Capture*, in Carlos E. Castañeda, ed., *The Mexican Side of the Texan Revolution* (Dallas: P. L. Turner Company, 1928; reprint, Austin: Graphic Ideas, 1970), 12-13.

<sup>12</sup>William Barret Travis to Henry Smith, February 16, 1836, in John H. Jenkins, ed., *The Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*, 10 vols. (Austin: Presidial Press, 1973), 4:368.

<sup>13</sup>Marshal De Bruhl, *Sword of San Jacinto: A Life of Sam Houston* (New York: Random House, 1993), 186.

<sup>14</sup>Houston's biographers were especially egregious in promoting this unfounded tale. See, for example, Marquis James, *The Raven: A Biography of Sam Houston* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), 227; John Hoyt Williams, *Sam Houston: A Biography of the Father of Texas* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 131; De Bruhl, *Sword*, 177, 179, 186-188. Never one to miss an opportunity to misconstrue sources, Jeff Long also piled on this band wagon. Long, *Duel of Eagles*, 119.

<sup>15</sup>Sam Houston to Henry Smith, January 17, 1836, in Jenkins, ed., *PTR*, 4:46-47.

<sup>16</sup>James Bowie to Henry Smith, February 25, 1836, in *ibid*, 4:236-2238.

<sup>17</sup>D. C. Barrett, J. D. Clements, Alexander Thomson, and G. A. Pattillo to Acting Governor James Robinson, January 31, 1836, in *ibid.*, 4:204-206

<sup>18</sup>The author discussed this issue with more depth in *The Alamo 1836: Santa Anna's Texas Campaign* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2001), 28-29.

<sup>19</sup>John Wayne letter in Kane, ed., *The Alamo*, 1.

<sup>20</sup>Travis to the Public, February 24, 1836, in Jenkins, ed., *PTR*, 4:423; lay historian Jeff Long best expressed the view that the Alamo commander had lost his grasp on reality. Long, *Duel of Eagles*, 189-190.

<sup>21</sup>Travis to Convention, March 3, 1836, in Jenkins, ed., *PTR*, 4:502-504.

<sup>22</sup>Travis to Grimes, March 3, 1836, in *ibid*, 4:504-505.

<sup>23</sup>D. C. Barrett, J. D. Clements, Alexander Thomson, and G. A. Pattillo to Acting Governor James Robinson, January 31, 1836, in *ibid.*, 4:204-206; Richard Bruce Winders explores this controversy with sensitivity and acumen in *Sacrificed at the Alamo: Tragedy and Triumph in the Texas Revolution* (Abilene: State House Press, 2004), 82-110.

<sup>24</sup>Travis to Convention, March 3, 1836, in Jenkins, ed., *PTR*, 4:502-504.

<sup>25</sup>William P. Zuber quoted in Lord, *A Time to Stand*, 203.

<sup>26</sup>Lord, *A Time to Stand*, 203-204.

<sup>27</sup>Susanna Dickinson Hanning interview, [San Antonio] *Daily Express*, April 28, 1881, quoted in Todd Hansen, ed., *The Alamo Reader: A Study in History* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003), 51-54. The following are Mrs. Hannings own words, or at least her words as embellished by the *Daily Express* reporter. Frankly, they sound far too grandiose to be those of an illiterate frontier woman:

THE MEXICAN BUGLES WERE SOUNDING

the charge of battle, and the cannon's roar was heard to reverberate throughout the valley of the San Antonio. But about one hundred and sixty sound persons were in the Alamo, and when the enemy appeared, overwhelmingly, upon the environs of the city to the west, and about where the International depot now stands, the Noble Travis called his men, drew a line with his sword and said: "My soldiers, I am going to meet the fate that becomes me. Those who will stand by me, let them remain, but those who desire to go, let them go—and who crosses the line that I have drawn, shall go!"

Again, note that in this version Mrs. Hanning has Travis drawing the line on the *first* day of the siege and requesting those who *wished to leave* to cross over; J. K. Beretta to Editor, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 43 (October, 1939), 253.

<sup>28</sup>Hardin, *Texian Iliad*, 136. William C. Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo: The Lives and Fortunes of David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Barret Travis* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1998), 731-732, n. 99. In this content endnote, Davis offers a cogent argument against the line myth. In his chapter, “Afterword- Moses Roses and the Line,” Donovan presented a lengthy, spirited, but ultimately unconvincing defense of the line myth. James Donovan, *Blood of Heroes: The 13-Day Struggle for the Alamo—and the Sacrifice That Forged a Nation* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2012), 351-374. Yet, even Donovan appeared unsure:

There are historians who will complain that much of the evidence is hearsay, or circumstantial, or that post-1873 journalists may have inserted such details into their “interviews,” especially with Mrs. Hanning and Enrique Esparza. They will say that there is no direct evidence that Moses Rose escaped from the Alamo, or that he was even there, or that he was even the same individual, if he ever existed, as the Louis/Lewis Rose abundantly documented in the Nacogdoches records—and there is even less documentation for the story of the line that Travis drew. Those historians would be technically correct.

What an amazing admission this is. As a lay historian, Donovan, of course, is free to believe anything he desires. This is an indulgence professional historians do not have. The rules of their profession require them to follow clear lines of evidence, reject unconfirmed tittle-tattle or circumstantial testimony, and voice the niggling criticisms that buffs find so annoying. Indeed, the current author stands fast with those historians Donovan mentions, those who “complain” about the nature of the unsubstantiated rumor and sheer invention that undergirds the line-in-the-sand legend.

<sup>29</sup>Remarkably, the entire screenplay of John Wayne’s epic 1960 film is online at <http://johnwayne-thealamo.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=43> (accessed September 4, 2014).

<sup>30</sup>Lord, *A Time to Stand*, Sam Houston image caption, unnumbered page. For Houston’s activities during this critical period, see James L. Haley, *Sam Houston* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 120-122. [Charles Edwards Lester], *The Life of Sam Houston (The Only Authentic Memoir of Him Ever Published)* (New York: J. C. Derby, 1855), 90-91.

<sup>31</sup>Dr. Winders, the historian and curator of the Alamo, makes the point succinctly. Winders, *Sacrificed at the Alamo*, 134.

<sup>32</sup>John Myers Myers, *The Alamo* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1948; reprint, New York: Bantam Books, 1966), 142.

<sup>33</sup>Frederic Ray, *The Story of the Alamo: An Illustrated History of the Siege and Fall of the Alamo* (N.P.: privately printed, 1955), unnumbered pages; Lon Tinkle, *13 Day to Glory: The Siege of the Alamo* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1958; reprint, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 193; Lord, *A Time to Stand*, bird's-eye view of the 1836 Alamo compound printed on endpapers.

<sup>34</sup>*The Last Command*, videocassette, directed by Frank Lloyd (1955, Los Angeles: NTA Home Entertainment, 1984; *The Alamo*, videocassette, directed by John Wayne (1960, Los Angeles: MGM/UA Home Video, Inc., 1992).

<sup>35</sup>Travis to Convention, March 3, 1836, in Jenkins, ed., *PTR*, 4:502-504; José Enrique de la Peña described the Mexican assault troops' heroic efforts to scale the north wall:

General [Martín Perfecto de] Cos, looking for a starting point from which to climb, had advanced frontally with his column to where the second and third were. All united at one point, mixing and forming a confused mass. Fortunately the wall reinforcement on this front was of lumber, its excavation was hardly begun, and the height of the parapet was eight or nine feet; there was therefore a starting point, and it could be climbed, though with difficulty. But disorder had already begun; officers of all ranks shouted but were hardly heard. The most daring of our veterans tried to be the first to climb, which they accomplished, yelling wildly so that room could be made for them, at times climbing over their own comrades. Others, jammed together, made useless efforts, obstructing each other, getting in the way of the more agile ones and pushing down those who were about to carry out their courageous effort. A lively rifle fire coming from the roof of the barracks and other points caused painful havoc, increasing the confusion of our disorderly mass. The first to climb were thrown down by bayonets already waiting for them behind the parapet, or by pistol fire, but the courage of our soldiers was not diminished as they saw their comrades falling dead or wounded, and they hurried to occupy their places and to avenge them, climbing over their bleeding bodies. The sharp reports of the rifles, the whistling of bullets, the groans of the wounded, the cursing harangues of the officers, the noise of the instruments of war, and the inordinate shouts of the attackers, who climbed vigorously, bewildered all and made this moment a tremendous and critical one.

José Enrique de la Peña, *With Santa Anna in Texas*, trans. and ed. by Carmen Perry, new introduction by James Crisp (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975; Expanded Edition, 1997), 48-49.

Mexican assault troops surely would not have subjected themselves to all that horror if they could have simply strolled through a gaping hole in the north wall.

<sup>36</sup>Tinkle, *13 Days to Glory*, caption to the drawing, “The Alamo Under Fire,” in illustrations following p. 128.

<sup>37</sup>J. H. Barnard, *Dr. J. H. Barnard’s Journal: A Composite of Known Versions of the Journal of Dr. Joseph H. Barnard, One of the Surgeons of Fannin’s Regiment, Covering the Period from December, 1835 to June 5, 1836*, edited and annotated by Hobart Huson (N. P.: privately printed, 1950), 43; for years, researcher and illustrator Gary S. Zaboly has studied Andrade’s demolition of the Alamo. See his extensive sidebar, “Andrade Demolishes the Alamo,” in his *An Altar for Their Sons: The Alamo and the Texas Revolution in Contemporary Newspaper Accounts* (Buffalo Gap, Texas: State House Press, 2011), 347-349.

<sup>38</sup>Russian-born composer Dimitri Tiomkin partnered with P. F. Webster on the music and lyrics to “The Ballad of the Alamo” for John Wayne’s 1960 film. Although, Tiomkin employed the music as part of the soundtrack, viewers of the film only heard a sampling the lyrics in the final scene. Most Americans never heard all the lyrics until Marty Robbins released his spirited version.

<sup>39</sup>Susanna Dickinson quoted in [Frankford, Kentucky] *Commonwealth*, May 25, 1836, in Hansen, ed., *Alamo Reader*, 75; Pennybacker, *New History of Texas*, 142. With characteristic hyperbole, Mrs. Pennybacker described the three attacks:

Santa Anna’s troops advanced to the attack. The Texans received them with a terrible volley of musketry and artillery. Back rushed the Mexicans before that fire of death. Again they, advanced, planted their ladders and tried to mount. The fury and despair nerved the arms of Travis’s men, and again they hurled back the foe.

*Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier*, DVD, directed by Norman Foster (1955; Burbank: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2004).

<sup>40</sup>Mrs. Joseph Hanning interview, September 23, 1876, Adjutant General’s Office, (RG-401), Strays—Alamo Dead and Monument, Texas State Library and Archives, in Hansen, *Alamo Reader*, 47.

<sup>41</sup>Susanna Hanning interview, [San Antonio] *Daily Express*, April 28, 1881, in *ibid*, 53.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>43</sup>The following newspapers quoted Joe in their reports of the battle: [New Orleans] *Commercial Bulletin*, April 11, 1836; *Memphis Enquirer*, April 12, 1836; [Washington, D.C.] *National Intelligencer*; [Frankfort, Kentucky] *Commonwealth*, May 25, 1836. All of the above cited articles appear in Hansen, ed., *Alamo Reader*, 70-76. Like Mrs. Dickinson, Joe was illiterate. Thus, all of Joe's statements come from individuals who allegedly reported what he said. Juan N. Almonte, "The Private Journal of Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, February 1-April 16, 1836," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 28, no. 3 (July 1944); Ramon Martinez Caro, *Verdadera Idea de la Primera Campaña de Tejas y Sucesos Icurridos Después de la Accion de San Jacinto*, English language translation in Castañeda, ed., *Mexican Side of the Texan Revolution*, 92-164; Vicente Filisola, *Representacion Dirigida Al Supremo Gobierno por el General en Gefe del Ejercito Sobre Tejas*, English language translation in *ibid*, 164-209; José Juan Sanchez-Navarro, *La Guerra de Tejas: Memorias de un Soldado*, ed. By Carlos Sanchez Navarro (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Polis, 1938; Santa Anna, *Manifiesto Que de Sus Operaciones en la Campana de Tejas y en Sus Conciudadanos el General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna* (Veracruz: Imprenta Liberal a cargo de Antonio María Valdes, 1837), English language translation in Castañeda, ed., *Mexican Side of the Texan Revolution*, 2-91.

<sup>44</sup>Pennybacker, *New History of Texas*, 143.

<sup>45</sup>Peña, *With Santa Anna in Texas*, 51; Joaquín Ramírez y Sesma, after-battle report, Expediente ,XI/481.3/1149, Archivo Historico Mexicano Militar, Mexico, D.F., quoted in Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo*, 562.

<sup>46</sup>Of all the Alamo controversies, none generates more dissent than the circumstances surrounding the death of David Crockett. Indeed, during the 1990s explaining how Davy died became something of a cottage industry. Crisp's "Introduction" in the 1996 expanded edition of Peña's *With Santa Anna in Texas* provides a concise and erudite summary of the debate. Peña, *With Santa Anna in Texas*, 1996 Expanded Edition, xi-xxv. Crisp's "Introduction" makes this the best edition.

<sup>47</sup>Thomas "Ty" Smith, "The U.S. Army and the Alamo, 1846-1877," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 118 (January 2015): 273.

<sup>48</sup>Susan Prendergast Schoelwer with Tom W. Gläser, *Alamo Images: Changing Perceptions of a Texas Experience* (Dallas: DeGolyer Library and Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 35-36; Edward Everett quoted in *ibid*.



<sup>49</sup>Michael Corenblith quoted in Frank Thompson, *The Alamo: The Illustrated Story of the Epic Film* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2004), 26.

<sup>50</sup>Gary Zaboly, *An Altar for Their Sons: The Alamo and the Texas Revolution in Contemporary Newspaper Accounts* (Buffalo Gap, Texas: State House Press, 2011), S14-S28.

<sup>51</sup>James W. Russell, "Slavery and the Myth of the Alamo," George Mason University History News Network website, <http://hnn.us/article/146405> [accessed May 30, 2014]. Odd it is that professor Russell contributed to a website ostensibly devoted to the study of history since he is, by training, a sociologist. He serves as University Professor of Sociology at Eastern Connecticut State University and is the author of *Escape from Texas: A Novel of Slavery and the Texas War of Independence*. Dr. Russell is also the author of *Modes of Production in World History*, which Amazon.com describes as follows: "Taking a Marxist perspective the author shows how the history of development is the history of the successive modes of production, from communal modes of production in primitive societies, to modern capitalist modes of production." Another one of Russell's offerings is the *Marx-Engels Dictionary*. Marxists appear to harbor a special dislike for the Alamo and its defenders. Revolutionary Worker Online posed an article by Travis Morales (he must really hate his first name) entitled, "Remember the Alamo? Hell NO!" Lacking Dr. Russell's rhetorical sophistication, Mr. Morales explained:

I want to say that these mother fuckers Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William Barrett [*sic*] Travis and all the rest got exactly what they deserved--death! They were a bunch of professional Indian killers, slave traders, and mercenaries who invaded Texas, and then stole it from México so it could be a slave state. And the war waged upon them by México was a *just war!*

As Mr. Morales tells it, his "comrade," Damián García was the only true Alamo hero:

On March 20, 1980, Damián García, a member of the RCP, scaled the walls of the Alamo, together with two other revolutionaries.

There they tore down the U.S. flag, and raised the red flag of revolution.

From the top of that reactionary "shrine," Damián announced through a bullhorn: "We've come to set the record straight about the Alamo. This is a symbol of the theft of Mexican land. A symbol about the murder of Mexicans and Indians. And a symbol of oppression of Chicanos and Mexicanos throughout the whole Southwest."

They called on people to come out in struggle, together with people worldwide, on May 1st, International Workers Day.

They were arrested for desecration of a venerated object--that "venerated object" was nothing but the Alamo itself!

<sup>52</sup>Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>53</sup>“Declaration of the People of Texas, In General Convention assembled,” November 7, 1835, in Jenkins, ed., *PTR*, 2:346-348.

<sup>54</sup>For thumbnail biographical sketches of every known member of the garrison, see Bill Groneman, *Alamo Defenders - A Genealogy: The People and Their Words* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1990).

<sup>55</sup>Edward Morgan Forster quoted in *Familiar Quotations by John Bartlett: A Collection of Passages, Phrases and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), 901.

<sup>56</sup>Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 48.

<sup>57</sup>C. S. Lewis, “On Three Ways of Writing for Children,” the entire 1946 article appears online at <http://mail.scu.edu.tw/~jmklassen/scu99b/chlitgrad/3ways.pdf> (accessed August 21, 2014). The quotation appears on page five.