

Time Machine (1836): The Battle of the Alamo

By Telegraph and Texas Register on 05.03.16

Word Count **1,239**

Level **MAX**



"The Fall of the Alamo," painted in 1903 by Robert Jenkins Onderdonk, depicts Davy Crockett wielding his musket as a club against Mexican troops who have breached the walls of the mission. Texas State Archives

Newsela Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the March 24, 1836, edition of the Telegraph and Texas Register, published in San Felipe, Texas. It was the first article in print about the fall of the Alamo and is considered to be the most influential account of the battle.

That event, so lamentable, and yet so glorious to Texas, is of such deep interest and excites so much our feelings that we shall never cease to celebrate it, and regret that we are not acquainted with the names of those who fell in that fort, that we might publish them, and thus consecrate to future ages the memory of our heroes who perished at the Thermopylae of Texas. Such examples are bright ones, and should be held up as mirrors, that by reflection we may catch the spirit and learn to fashion our own behavior. The list of names inserted below, was furnished by Mr. John W. Smith, and Mr. Navon, and as we obtain more we will publish them. To Mr. Smith, who has rendered good service to Texas, and to Judge Ponton are we indebted for the particulars, as communicated to them by Mrs. Dickinson, who was in the Alamo during the siege and assault.

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 4000 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 harassed by night watching and incessant toils, having experienced 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 Ana 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 butt ends of the latter and continued to fight and to resist, until life ran 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 relenting enemy -- total extermination succeeded, and the darkness of death occupied the memorable Alamo, but recently so teeming with gallant spirits and filled with deeds of never-failing remembrance. We envy not the feelings of the victors, for they must have been bitter and galling: not proud ones. Who would not be rather one of the Alamo heroes, than of the living of the merciless victors? 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 demigods of old, as founders of new actions, and as patterns for imitation!

From the commencement to its 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, agreeably to the previous orders from Travis. The end of David Crockett 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 Crockett 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, exultingly, 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. Humanity shudders at describing these scenes, and the pen, as if a living thing, stops to gain fresh force that sensibility may give way to duty.

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.

Colonels. W.B. Travis, Commandant,

James Bowie

David Crocket, of Tenn.

Captains. Forsyth, of the regular army

Harrison of Tenn.

N.O. Grays,

Baker, Miss. volunteers,

Evans,

Carey, militia of Texas,

S.C. Blair, volunteer militia,

Lieut's. John Jones, N.O. Grays,

J. G. Baugh, N.O. Grays

Rob't. Evans, mast. ord. Ireland,

Williamson, sergt. Major,

Dr. Micheson,

" Pollard, surgeon.

" Thompson, Tenn.

Chas. Despalier,

Eliel Melton, quarter master

Anderson, assist't qr. Mast.

Burnell, " "

Privates. Nelson,

Wm. Blazeby,

Nelson, (cl'k. of Austin, mer.)
William Smith, Nacogdoches,
Lewis Johnson. Trinity,
E.P. Mitchel, Georgia
F. Desanque, of Philadelphia,
John, (cl'k in Desanque's store,)
Thurstof,
Moore,
Christopher Parker, Natchez,
Hewkill,
Rose, of Nacogdoches,
Blair, “
David Wilson, “
John M. Hays, Tenn.
Stuart,
Simpson,
W.D. Sutherland, Navidad, Tex.
Doctor Howell, N.O.
Butler, “
Charles Smith,
McGregor, Scotland,
Rusk,
Hawkins, Ireland,
Holloway,
Browne,
Smith,
Browne, Philadelphia,
Kedeson,
Wm. Wells, Tenn.

Wm. Cummings, Penn.

Voluntine, “

Cockran, “

R.W. Valentine,

S. Holloway,

Issac White,

Day,

Robt. Muselman, N. O.

Robt. Crossman, “

Richard Starr, England,

J. G. Ganett, N. O.

James Dinkin, England

Robt. B. Moore, N. O.

Wm. Linn, Boston

Hutchinson,

Wm. Johnson, Philadelphia,

Nelson, Charleston, S.C.

George Tumlinson,

Wm. Deardorf,

Dan'l. Bourne, England,

Ingram, England

Lewis, Wales

Chas. Zanco, Denmark,

James Ewing,

Robert Cunningham,

Burns, Ireland

George Neggin

Maj. G. B. Jamieson

Col. J. B. Bonham, Ala.

Capt. White,
Robinson, Scotland,
Sewell, shoemaker,
Harris of Ky.
Devault, of Mo. plasterer,
Jonathan Lindley, of Illinois,
Tapley Holland,
Dewell, blacksmith, N.Y.
James Kinney,
Cane,
Warner,
John Garvin, Mo
Wornel,
Robbins, Ky.
Jno. Flanders,
Issac Ryan, Opelonas,
Jackson, Ireland
Capt. A. Dickinson, Gonzalez,
Geo. C. Kimball, “
James, George, “
Dolphin, Floyd, “
Thomas, Jackson, “
Jacob, Durst, “
George W. Cottle, “
Andrew Kent, “
Thos. R. Miller, “
Issac Baker, “
Wm. King, “
Jessee McKoy, “

Claiborn Wright, “

William Fishback, “

Millsap, “

Galby Fugun “

John Davis, “

Albert Martin, “

Quiz

- 1 Which of the following statements BEST represents the relationship between the article's central ideas?
- (A) The Texans who died fighting at the Alamo will be heralded as heroes and legends; they will inspire the fight for independence from Mexico for years to come.
 - (B) The Texans who gave their lives for the cause of Texan independence from Mexico died at the hands of a brutal army; it is every Texans' duty to take up arms and avenge their deaths.
 - (C) A terrible fight took place at the Alamo that led to the deaths of almost all Texans on site. This tragedy will be remembered for years to come and will serve as a valuable lesson for the future.
 - (D) A tragic battle was fought between the Texan and Mexican army, where both sides suffered great losses. All Texans salute the heroes and lament that there was no way to save or rescue the brave men.
- 2 Which of the following BEST conveys the central idea that the men who died did not perish in vain?
- (A) That event, so lamentable, and yet so glorious to Texas, is of such deep interest and excites so much our feelings that we shall never cease to celebrate it, and regret that we are not acquainted with the names of those who fell in that fort, that we might publish them, and thus consecrate to future ages the memory of our heroes who perished at the Thermopylae of Texas.
 - (B) ...they perished, but they yielded not, only one (Warner) remained to ask for quarter, which was denied by the relenting enemy -- total extermination succeeded, and the darkness of death occupied the memorable Alamo, but recently so teeming with gallant spirits and filled with deeds of never-failing remembrance.
 - (C) 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 demigods of old, as founders of new actions, and as patterns for imitation!
 - (D) The end of David Crockett of Tennessee, the great hunter of the west, was as glorious as his career through life had been useful...Texas places him, exultingly, amongst the martyrs in her cause.

- 3 The author makes his point with all of the following devices EXCEPT:
- (A) anecdote
 - (B) metaphor
 - (C) call to action
 - (D) rhetorical question
- 4 Which statement is LEAST important to the author's claim?
- (A) 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 4000 against 140!
 - (B) 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."
 - (C) ...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 butt ends of the latter and continued to fight and to resist, until life ran 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...
 - (D) Humanity shudders at describing these scenes, and the pen, as if a living thing, stops to gain fresh force that sensibility may give way to duty. Suspended animation has returned to the instrument of our narration, and we continue.

Answer Key

- 1 Which of the following statements BEST represents the relationship between the article's central ideas?
- (A) **The Texans who died fighting at the Alamo will be heralded as heroes and legends; they will inspire the fight for independence from Mexico for years to come.**
 - (B) The Texans who gave their lives for the cause of Texan independence from Mexico died at the hands of a brutal army; it is every Texans' duty to take up arms and avenge their deaths.
 - (C) A terrible fight took place at the Alamo that led to the deaths of almost all Texans on site. This tragedy will be remembered for years to come and will serve as a valuable lesson for the future.
 - (D) A tragic battle was fought between the Texan and Mexican army, where both sides suffered great losses. All Texans salute the heroes and lament that there was no way to save or rescue the brave men.
- 2 Which of the following BEST conveys the central idea that the men who died did not perish in vain?
- (A) That event, so lamentable, and yet so glorious to Texas, is of such deep interest and excites so much our feelings that we shall never cease to celebrate it, and regret that we are not acquainted with the names of those who fell in that fort, that we might publish them, and thus consecrate to future ages the memory of our heroes who perished at the Thermopylae of Texas.
 - (B) ...they perished, but they yielded not, only one (Warner) remained to ask for quarter, which was denied by the relenting enemy -- total extermination succeeded, and the darkness of death occupied the memorable Alamo, but recently so teeming with gallant spirits and filled with deeds of never-failing remembrance.
 - (C) **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 demigods of old, as founders of new actions, and as patterns for imitation!**
 - (D) The end of David Crockett of Tennessee, the great hunter of the west, was as glorious as his career through life had been useful...Texas places him, exultingly, amongst the martyrs in her cause.

- 3 The author makes his point with all of the following devices EXCEPT:
- (A) anecdote
 - (B) metaphor
 - (C) **call to action**
 - (D) rhetorical question
- 4 Which statement is LEAST important to the author's claim?
- (A) 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 4000 against 140!
 - (B) 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."
 - (C) ...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 butt ends of the latter and continued to fight and to resist, until life ran 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...
 - (D) **Humanity shudders at describing these scenes, and the pen, as if a living thing, stops to gain fresh force that sensibility may give way to duty. Suspended animation has returned to the instrument of our narration, and we continue.**