

Few battles in American history have stirred the imagination and aroused so much emotion as the brief and bloody engagement between a handful of Texas settlers and a Mexi-

of rebellious Texas settlers had forced the surrender of Mexican troops in San Antonio and taken over the Alamo. Enraged, Mexican leader Santa Anna marched north with an army to retake

vidualists rather than a disciplined fighting force. William Travis, at only age 26, eventually became commander. Travis had come to Texas in the early 1830's. Sent to the Alamo on February 3, Travis had expected to assume command, only to be disappointed and angered when the defenders chose James Bowie instead.

James Bowie, better known as Jim, at age 40, was a San Antonio resident with extensive landholdings and had early cast his lot with the rebels. He suffered from tuberculosis, however, and he turned command over to Travis after a fall that broke several ribs confined him to bed.

Jim Bowie fought with the small force at the Alamo.



## THE ALAMO

can Army of thousands. The major battle took place on March 6, 1836, at an old mission called the Alamo on the outskirts of San Antonio.

In December 1835, a small band

the occupied mission and put down the rebellion before it went further.

On Feb. 23, 1836, Santa Anna's army surrounded the Alamo and began an 11-day siege with several thousand well-trained Mexican troops. The Alamo's defenders never numbered more than 200.

Moreover, the defenders were an assemblage of indi-



After the Battle of the Alamo, right, Santa Anna, above, was elected president of Mexico in 1833, but he did not serve. In 1834, he took control of the country, and he ruled as a dictator.





Perhaps more famous than either Travis or Bowie was former Tennessee Congressman David Crockett, known as Davy. Nearly 50 years old and recently defeated for reelection to the House, he had come to Texas with a small group of land-hungry adventurers. Crockett was

the archetypal frontiersman—brave and a crack shot but also boastful and a teller of tall tales. He was already a legendary figure, and his death at the Alamo only heightened his mythic stature.

At dawn on March 6, Santa Anna's army ended the siege and squadrons



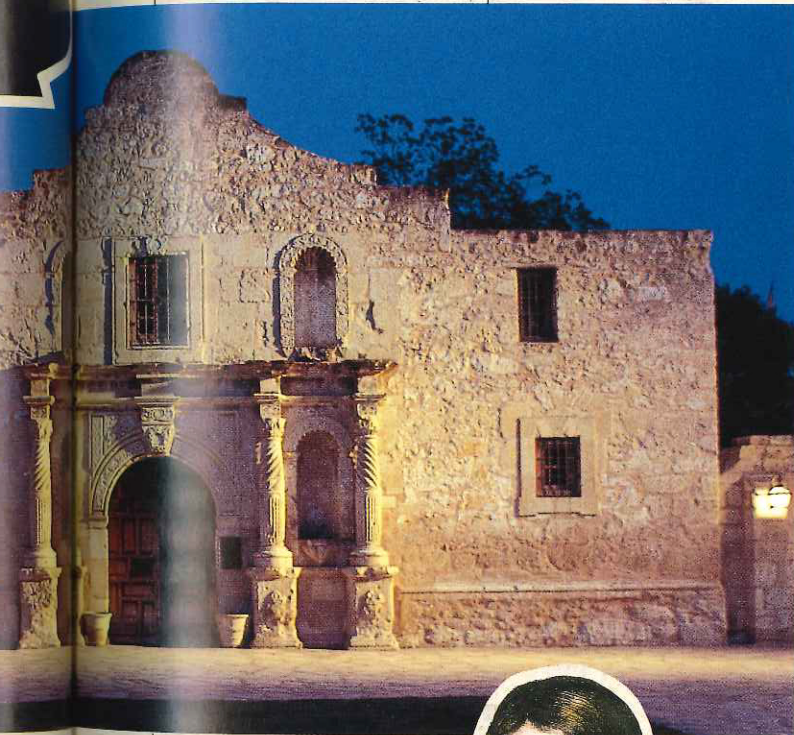
Sam Houston won his greatest victory in the Battle of San Jacinto.

carrying assault ladders and weapons dashed forward to scale the walls. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Texas rebels concentrated on killing as many Mexicans as they could. Bowie died fighting from his sickbed. Crockett fell near the end of the five-hour battle. The only survivors were a woman and her 15-month-old baby, along with a few other children and black slaves.

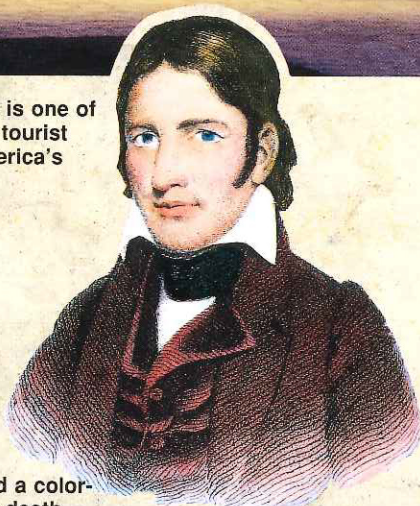
Crazed with hatred of the rebels who had killed so many of their fellow soldiers, the victorious Mexican troops went wild. They mutilated and then burned the bodies of dead rebels.

Santa Anna may have thought that such action would teach a lesson to those still in revolt against his government. He sent a message to Sam Houston, the commander of a rebel army, offering peace and amnesty to all who would lay down their arms and submit to his rule.

However, the defeat at the Alamo and the treatment of its fallen defenders only hardened the resolve of Houston and his troops. On April 21, Houston's army avenged the Alamo at the Battle of San Jacinto by capturing Santa Anna and ensuring Texas independence.



Today, the Alamo is one of the most popular tourist attractions in America's Southwest.



Davy Crockett had a colorful life and heroic death.