

# HONORING THE HEROES OF THE ALAMO

By Earl P. Holt III

There's a common misconception surrounding the *Battle of the Alamo* (February 23 to March 6th, 1836.) Most Americans who bother to give it much thought assume that the Alamo's defenders died needlessly, although heroically, and that the Alamo was a lost battle and a lost cause.

The significance of the events surrounding this battle are far more complex and nuanced: in truth, the Alamo's defenders achieved exactly what their mission required, which is one reason why their courage and self-sacrifice have been forever immortalized by all *real* Texans.

**By remaining garrisoned within the Alamo's walls, its defenders were able to delay Mexican President-General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna's 2,500 man force for 13 days. This allowed General Sam Houston almost two additional weeks to raise an army of his own, while evading Santa Anna. Meanwhile, political leaders seized the opportunity to call a constitutional convention, write a constitution establishing the Republic of Texas, and seek formal recognition from Washington.**



**Santa Anna's ultimate goal was to destroy General Houston's army and end the Texas Revolution. However, he could not pursue Houston's army while leaving an enemy force of indeterminate size behind him at the Alamo, able to disrupt his supply lines and block his escape route back to Mexico. Before Santa Anna could engage Houston's army, he had to eliminate this potential threat of a well-armed force at his rear.**

According to most historians, during the Alamo's actual battle, Santa Anna may have lost as many as 500 of his 2,500 man army. This was another achievement of the Alamo's brave defenders.

Yet, despite the loss of approximately one-fifth of his army at the Alamo, Santa Anna assumed that his six to one advantage in soldiers would discourage the Texians, and anticipated that many would quickly abandon the cause of Texas Independence. There are few advantages in warfare that compare to being underestimated by your enemy: in fact, the fall of the Alamo had exactly the *opposite* effect.

A famous editorial appearing in the ***NEW YORK POST*** speculated that had Santa Anna been chivalrous in victory at the Alamo -- rather than murder all surviving combatants -- it would have been very difficult to stir the kind of passion soon found in the many Americans who "*thronged to the aid of their brethren*" in Texas.

**Following the Alamo, General Houston's army was pursued all over what is now south-central Texas for more than a month. On the afternoon of April 21, 1836, Houston's army counter-attacked Santa Anna's forces in the final and decisive battle of the *Texas Revolution*, which historians have named the *Battle of San Jacinto*. With the battle cry "**REMEMBER THE ALAMO**" ringing in every man's ears, Houston's army took 18 minutes to massacre the larger army of Santa Anna in one of the most lopsided victories in the history of warfare.**

Despite fleeing for his life and cowering in a marsh, Santa Anna was captured the following day, disguised in an enlisted man's uniform. He reportedly pled for mercy from General Houston, to which Houston, replied, "***You should have remembered that at the Alamo.***"



**San Jacinto Monument**

Santa Anna's life was ultimately spared, but he was forced to surrender the territory now known as the ***State of Texas***, as well as order his troops to return peaceably to Mexico. This ended Mexican dominion, thereby establishing the new ***Republic of Texas*** and its eventual recognition as a state in 1845.

**In light of these considerations, it can hardly be said that the defenders of the Alamo died in vain. May we NEVER forget their sacrifice, and may God Bless them each and every one...**