The Men of the Texas Revolution and the Alamo:

Who They Were, Why They Fought, and Why Their Fight was not Necessary

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Junior Thesis

The American Revolution was a fight against tyranny, and the Texas Revolution has been viewed the same way. The common view is that Mexico threatened the rights of Texas, so the Texans took up arms to fight for their rights and for freedom from Mexico. Everyone knows who Jim Bowie, David “Davy” Crockett, and Sam Houston were. But relatively few people know why the Texas Revolution occurred, why the Alamo was fought, and who these men really were. The Texas Revolution was fought because of the greed of new Texans who found an opportunity to claim Texas. The Battle of the Alamo was not necessary because its location was militarily insignificant. The heroes were not perfect. Bowie was a conman, and Houston was guilty of assault charges. Only Crockett was a good citizen, but he still came to Texas after losing a Congressional race. The Texas Revolution and the Alamo were not required, and the heroes who fought in them were not the perfect, law-abiding citizens that the legend has made them.

When Spain still owned Mexico, it allowed Texas to be settled by Americans to block Mexico from Indians. After it gained its independence, Mexico, ruled by an emperor, kept the same policy, but made a few changes.[[1]](#footnote-1) New settlers would get a four year tax exemption, but all settlers had to swear allegiance to Mexico.[[2]](#footnote-2) Mexico did this to keep settlers loyal, but this plan stopped working in the 1830s.

The Americans in Texas, or Texans, wanted to make Texas a separate state, as it was part of Coahuila. They got their chance when the federalists fought the imperialists in the Mexican Civil War in the early 1830s. The Texans sided with Santa Anna and the federalists. Santa Anna won the war and became president, and the Texans held a convention in 1833 to draw up a state Constitution and finalize their demands. Texas wanted to be separate from Coahuila, but two groups disagreed over the final outcome. Sam Houston led the radical group that desired war to make Texas independent with an eventual United States statehood.[[3]](#footnote-3) Stephen Austin, one of the first settlers, led the moderates, who wanted to be a separate state, not independent.[[4]](#footnote-4) The moderates won out in the Convention. Austin took the Texas Constitution to Mexico City for approval by Santa Anna.

While in Mexico City, Austin could not see Santa Anna for a few months. Because of his frustration at the situation, he wrote an angry letter to Texas advocating for action.[[5]](#footnote-5) When Santa Anna finally met with Austin, he allowed all desires and demands of Texas except for statehood. Austin began to travel home, but he was arrested for the treasonous intent in his letter and imprisoned for 2 years.[[6]](#footnote-6) When he arrived back to Texas, he found that the war supporters had grown in Texas and had taken control. Santa Anna had decided to take over the federalist government, and he became a dictator. This only increased the war fervor in Texas.

In response to the war sentiment in Texas, Santa Anna sent his brother-in-law, Martin Perfecto de Cos, to Texas to disarm the Texans. The first conflict was at Gonzales. The Mexicans sent Lieutenant Francisco de Castaneda with 100 dragoons to take the cannon that was given to the Texans to defend Gonzales from Indians. The Texans raised a banner over the cannon that said, “Come and take it,” and they drove off Castaneda and won the battle with few casualties for either side.[[7]](#footnote-7) A few days later, Cos was at San Antonio.

A Texan army under Austin began marching for San Antonio. When Bowie joined the army and suggested an attack, Austin disagreed. Bowie advanced anyway, and he took about 90 volunteers to establish a position at a bend in the San Antonio River.[[8]](#footnote-8) Bowie beat Cos in a skirmish, and Cos retreated into San Antonio. Austin arrived after the fight, and morale was high. During the siege of San Antonio, the Texans began to get bored, and many of them returned to their homes.[[9]](#footnote-9) Tired of waiting, the remaining men attacked San Antonio. The fighting lasted 3 days, and Texas was victorious. The Texans allowed Cos to surrender and retreat. Texas now had control of San Antonio, the location of the famed Alamo Mission.

In early 1836, Houston sent Bowie to the Alamo with orders to destroy it and fall back. Bowie disobeyed the orders and decided to defend the Alamo with William Barret Travis. Bowie and Travis believed that Santa Anna would wait until after winter to attack. They were wrong, and Santa Anna arrived on February 23, 1836. Crockett arrived with more reinforcements on March 1st. Travis wrote for reinforcements, but none came. Santa Anna decided to attack on the morning of March, 6th, 1836. Santa Anna had around 3,000 troops, while the Texans only had about 185.[[10]](#footnote-10) Santa Anna’s assault on the Alamo took 3 charges to break the wall, and even then the Texans fought to the last. Santa Anna had heavy losses, but his numbers allowed a victory.[[11]](#footnote-11) According to some accounts, there were survivors, including Crockett, who were captured and executed after the battle. During the siege, Texas declared independence and Houston became commander of the Texan army.

Santa Anna advanced, and Houston retreated in what is known as the Runaway Scrape. Houston trained his men during the retreat, and he received new volunteers as he marched east toward the U.S.-Texas border. Santa Anna used the opportunity of Houston’s retreat to try to capture the leaders of the Texan government at Harrisburg. He split his army and marched to Harrisburg, but the Texan leaders evacuated by the sea when he arrived. Houston heard about Santa Anna’s movement and decided to cut Santa Anna off from his main force. Houston and Santa Anna met at the San Jacinto River. Houston’s men grew restless, and they attacked the Mexican force with a cavalry charge. The charge failed, but was rescued by another group of Houston’s army.[[12]](#footnote-12) The entire event happened without any orders from Houston. The next day, April 21st, 1836, Houston remained inactive, and Santa Anna assumed that there would be no attack. Santa Anna also received reinforcements from Cos on that day, and he ordered Cos’s men to rest, as their forced march put them in no condition to fight.[[13]](#footnote-13) Houston, perhaps through the restlessness of his men, made a decision.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, Houston drew up his men in battle lines. He was hidden by a hill, and Santa Anna’s assumptions provided Houston with the element of surprise. Houston began to advance, and his men remained undetected because of their position and the Mexicans’ fatigue. When they got close, the Texans charged with the battle cry, “Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!”[[14]](#footnote-14) The Mexicans were routed in less than 20 minutes.[[15]](#footnote-15) Santa Anna was captured and brought to Houston. Houston had Santa Anna order the withdrawal of his remaining troops, and they complied because they did not want to endanger the POWs taken by Houston.[[16]](#footnote-16) Santa Anna gave Texas its independence, although Mexico failed to recognize it. Houston became the first president of the Republic of Texas, which lasted from 1836 to 1846, when it was annexed by the United States.

The Alamo and Houston’s final battle have wrapped the Texas Revolution in legend, and it came to be viewed as a fight for a heroic cause. Some common views on the causes of the revolution are the loss of Texan rights, freedom of religion, slavery, free trade, and racism. These views are all false. The loss of Texan rights makes no sense because Mexico never took away rights, it only revoked land grants given to immigrants once without notice.[[17]](#footnote-17) This caused an early conflict called the Fredonia Rebellion in 1826. Texas saw oppression from one act of Mexico, while Mexico saw rebellion as a plan by the United States to acquire Texas. This only heightened tensions, but did not lead to the revolution.

The other reasons for the Texas Revolution are similarly unfounded. Freedom of Religion appears to make sense at first, as the official religion of Mexico was Catholicism, and it was against the law to practice anything else. But Mexico did not intervene when Texans practiced other religions. Mexico even changed the law in 1834 and officially began to allow other religions.[[18]](#footnote-18) Slavery is another commonly viewed reason for revolt because Mexico outlawed slavery. American immigrants brought slaves into Texas. Mexico proposed a gradual freeing of Texan slaves, but Texas resisted the movement.[[19]](#footnote-19) Mexico began to allow slavery in Texas in 1829, so Texans had no reason to revolt over slavery. Mexico also put trade restrictions on Texas that forbade Texans from trading with the United States. While this sounds like a good reason to revolt, Texans took to smuggling in goods and slaves from the U.S.[[20]](#footnote-20) This smuggling made it so that free trade was no longer a viable reason to go to war with Mexico, as the smuggling itself was the same as free trade, perhaps even more profitable. Racism is the final reason that is held as a view for the Texas Revolution. It is also untrue, as the Texans did not revolt because of racism. The view holds that Texas felt superior to Mexico and resented being ruled by an inferior country.[[21]](#footnote-21) The reason why this theory has no grounding is that there were Mexicans in Texas, called Tejanos, who fought for Texas. Since the Texans allowed Mexicans to fight with them, then racism was clearly not a reason to revolt against Mexico. All of the reasons explained so far are not legitimate reasons for the Texas Revolution, but there were some reasons for the revolt.

Many modern reasons for the cause of the Texas Revolution are, as explained above, false, but greed and Manifest Destiny are not false. Many new Texans from America were greedy land speculators who wanted the land for themselves. Some of them believed in Manifest Destiny and wanted war so that Texas could become part of the United States. These men were often rowdy, and they made Texas unstable.[[22]](#footnote-22) By 1830, there were 2 Americans for every Mexican in Texas.[[23]](#footnote-23) Mexico responded to this increase of Americans by strengthening the garrisons in Texas and by passing laws to stop U.S. immigration on April 6th, 1830. This law failed to stop immigration and was repealed in 1833. By 1835, there were about 3,500 Mexicans, 30,000 Americans, and 3,000 slaves in Texas.[[24]](#footnote-24) Manifest Destiny is the belief that the United States was destined to expand and bring Democracy and civilization to wild lands in the west. This created interest in Texas, as the South wanted Texas for more slave land, and the North wanted Texas to be free to prevent the expansion of slavery.[[25]](#footnote-25) Some believed that Texas was part of the Louisiana Purchase. As some of the men who entered Texas were slaveholders, they would have wanted slavery to survive. They wanted to give Texas, as a slave state, to the United States to ensure the survival of slavery. These men were part of the radical group led by Houston during the 1833 Texas State Constitutional Convention that determined Texas’s desires from the Mexican government for its support in the Civil War.

One of the only commonly held views of the cause of the Texas Revolution is Santa Anna’s usurpation from president to a dictator with absolute power. Many Texans fought for the re-establishment of the Mexican Federal Constitution. Failing that, some among them wanted to fight for an independent Texas. The Texans often identified themselves as Americans, and they believed in federal and democratic governments. Texas supported the federals, and Santa Anna, in the Mexican Civil War. Although they supported them for their own benefit, they also supported the federals for the democratic ideals that federalism represents. When Santa Anna showed his true colors and became a dictator, the Texans were furious with this sudden change of government, even though it did little to directly affect them. Some other states of Mexico also revolted against Santa Anna before Texas, and Santa Anna made an example of those rebels to discourage other rebellions.[[26]](#footnote-26) The Texans remained untamed by this show of force, and they rebelled, for ideals and for greed.

The battle of the Alamo was not a military necessity for either side, but the strong opinions and beliefs of the commanders at the Alamo required that the battle take place. Saying that the Alamo was not required may seem absurd, but a closer look at the facts of geography and Bowie’s orders suggest that the Alamo was never a military necessity. The Alamo could have been bypassed by any opposing army, and the garrison was too small to be able to do any real harm to an army on the field of battle.[[27]](#footnote-27) The garrison in the Alamo would have been forced to sit and watch an entire army march by, which likely would have been more demoralizing then the siege was. Bowie was also ordered by Houston to destroy the Alamo and fall back, but, as the historian H.W. Brands said, “Bowie was the wrong person [for the] order,” and he disobeyed.[[28]](#footnote-28) The defenders of the Alamo also had the opportunity to retreat after Santa Anna had first arrived, as it took a few days for the rest of his army to arrive and encircle the Alamo.[[29]](#footnote-29) This is further proof that the Alamo was never a required part of the Texas Revolution.

The personalities of the leaders and the beliefs of the fighters resulted in a battle at the Alamo, despite the fact that it was an unrequired part of the war. Bowie was a tough fighter who did not like to back down, and he believed that the Alamo was strong enough to survive attack because of the improvements made by the garrison’s engineer.[[30]](#footnote-30) Bowie’s trust in the strength of the fort and his fighter mentality prevented thoughts of retreat. Travis’s position on retreat versus battle was clearly stated in a letter he wrote just after the siege began:

The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise the garrison will be put to the sword, if the fort is taken … I shall never surrender or retreat. … I am determined to sustain myself for as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country – VICTORY OR DEATH[[31]](#footnote-31)

Travis’s demeanor clearly shows that he wants to fight to the death over the Alamo. Crockett was a famed Congressman whose reputation followed him wherever he went. His reputation, which was as great during his lifetime as it is now, would have forced him to stay and fight. According to James Crisp and many other historians, Santa Anna, the emperor of Mexico, “wanted vengeance and glory” where Cos failed.[[32]](#footnote-32) His position of power relied on his military victories, so a victory at the Alamo would have strengthened his political power in Mexico.[[33]](#footnote-33) He also wanted to crush the Texan morale, which he believed could be done with an early and swift victory.[[34]](#footnote-34) This desire can be seen in his forced marches to hurry his men up to the Alamo.[[35]](#footnote-35) The fateful battle of the Alamo was secured as a reality by the fact that the defenders thought Santa Anna would attack in the spring, and that they believed reinforcements were on their way to relieve that siege.

Jim Bowie was one of the defenders who thought help was on the way, and he became a hero of the Alamo. Bowie is seen as a man who fought for the betterment of Texas, and died trying. Bowie did not fight for this, but he did fight because of his various illegal actions, including land fraud, that he wanted to continue. He was born in Kentucky in 1796, and at 18 he enlisted under Jackson the War of 1812. He and his brother arrived at New Orleans too late, and this lack of glory likely gave him a desire to earn glory in the future. When the land office decided to find out who owned land in the Louisiana Purchase, Bowie committed land fraud. He filed fake claims for 60,000 acres. Norris Wright, a sheriff, was unhappy with his illegal dealings, and he shot Bowie in a confrontation. Bowie’s brother gave him a knife with a nine inch long and half inch wide blade, which became the famous Bowie knife after the Sandbar Fight.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The Sandbar Fight started as a duel between Bowie’s friend Warren Hall and Dr. Thomas Maddox, a friend of Wright. The two men fired twice at each other, and ended the fight when neither round killed or wounded a man. But the parties of the two men had not settled their differences. Bowie and a member of the Maddox party traded shots, but after two rounds Bowie was out of ammo and drew his knife. Wright approached to shoot Bowie, but was hit by a man in Bowie’s party. Wright shot Bowie in the lung, and Bowie was hit by another round in the thigh as he lunged for Wright.[[37]](#footnote-37) Bowie fell, and Wright and another attacked him with sword canes. Bowie grabbed Wright, whose straightening reaction to the attack pulled Bowie up to his feet. Bowie said, “Now, Major, you die!” as he stabbed Wright through the chest.[[38]](#footnote-38) This fight made his knife famous, and it was made for use by others.

Bowie went to Texas in the spring of 1830 because his land fraud was beginning to catch up with him. He would likely be jailed on either his fraud or his debt, as he had bad spending habits.[[39]](#footnote-39) When he was in Texas, Bowie smuggled goods and slaves across the border, which broke laws on smuggling and on slavery. He was a friend of the pirate Jean Laffite, who helped Bowie smuggle slaves into Texas.[[40]](#footnote-40) Bowie continued his land fraud in Texas as well.[[41]](#footnote-41) Because Bowie was likely turning a profit, which he likely promptly spent, he had a reason to fight for Texas. He also would have wanted more fame and glory to increase his reputation even more. Bowie fought because he enjoyed fighting, and because he wanted to continue his illegal activities, which caused shared enmity to grow between him and the Mexican government. The hatred between the two gave Bowie another reason to fight. Bowie never fought because he was an upstanding citizen with a reputation of justice because he was not one.

Houston was the most questionable of the heroes of the Texas Revolution in terms of motive, as it is not completely clear. He had a secret agenda with his old friend Andrew Jackson. He was born in Virginia, 1793, and he travelled to Tennessee at an early age. He befriended Jackson with his fighting prowess in the War of 1812. He became governor of Tennessee in 1827, but left office soon after his wife left him. While meeting with Jackson in D.C., Houston challenged William Stanberry to a duel after Stanberry insulted him. When Stanberry refused, Houston beat him on Pennsylvania Avenue with a cane, and he was charged with assault.[[42]](#footnote-42) He lost the court case, and decided to go to Texas. Before leaving the country, he met Jackson, who gave Houston a passport and a cover story about investigating Indian troubles.[[43]](#footnote-43) Houston never followed up on his cover story. He arrived in Texas in mid-1832 and became an important figure in Texan politics in less than 6 months. Houston strove for the annexation of Texas into the Union. The speed in which he becomes involved in politics and his blatant disregard for his cover story show that Houston had a secret agenda. His agenda was likely given to him by Jackson at their meeting. The fact that he had a secret agenda shows that he was not a completely trustworthy citizen. He may have fought for strong ideals, but was driven by greed and the desire to have Texas in the Union.

Houston’s mission to make Texas part of the United States became realized after Jackson’s death. Houston used President Tyler to annex Texas. Annexation was achieved when Tyler called it a treaty with Texas that involved a majority in the House and the Senate, instead of the usual two thirds in the Senate.[[44]](#footnote-44) Tyler signed the annexation treaty 3 days before he left office, but this accomplishment caused the Mexican-American War. Houston’s goal of the unity of Texas with the United States Jackson can be seen most clearly when he refused the Confederate oath of office as governor when Texas seceded from the Union.[[45]](#footnote-45) Houston believed in the Union of the people more than the ideals of the Texas Revolution.

Houston and David “Davy” Crockett became friends in the War of 1812, when they both fought under Jackson. Crockett was never called “Davy” in his lifetime, and he never wore a coonskin hat, but he remained the most law-abiding hero of the Texas Revolution. Most of his legends are false ones that he himself made up, but he still led an interesting life. He had many jobs in his lifetime. He was a justice of the peace, a town commissioner, a colonel in the Tennessee militia, a member of the Tennessee legislature, and a Congressman. Crockett lost the 1831 election when Jackson supported his competitor because Crockett did not support some of Jackson’s policies. As a result, Crocket said, “I would rather be a man and lose then be elected and be a puppy dog.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Crockett won again in 1833, but when he lost in 1835, he told his competitors, “You can go to Hell, and I will go to Texas.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Crockett also had a bad marriage to escape from. Crockett may have followed the law, but he was still a reject when he came to Texas. He joined the fight after it had begun, and, on account of his record of lying, it is hard to tell what his motives were.[[48]](#footnote-48) Crockett was likely fighting for the ideals of democracy, as that is what most volunteers fought for.[[49]](#footnote-49) One thing that is certain was Crockett’s fame made him an instant hero of the Revolution.

Crockett’s death became wrapped in controversy soon after his death. The traditional view of his death was that he died while fighting to the last. There have been some primary accounts found over the years that suggest that Crockett was captured and executed by Santa Anna, and these accounts caused an uproar that put their validity into question. The primary accounts include the diary of Enrique de la Pena, who was as officer under Santa Anna. His story says that Crockett and 6 others were captured in the battle, and that Santa Anna ordered their execution, even though his officers asked for the lives of the prisoners.[[50]](#footnote-50) Another one of the accounts was by Santa Anna’s secretary, who claimed there were five prisoners that met the same fate as those in la Pena’s story, but Crockett was never mentioned.[[51]](#footnote-51) Against these reports is the one of the mayor of San Antonio, who was asked by Santa Anna to show him the bodies of Travis, Bowie, and Crockett after the battle.[[52]](#footnote-52) Santa Anna would not have asked for Crockett if he had knowingly executed him, but it is possible that Crockett never revealed himself after being captured. The controversy brings the traditional view of him into question, and some do not know how he should be remembered.

Some believe that if he surrendered, then he was not the hero that everyone believed him to be. If Crockett was indeed executed by Santa Anna, then he became a more influential martyr and a hero because of it. His execution, if it was found out or publicized to the Texans, would have caused a greater hatred of Santa Anna. To the people of Texas, Santa Anna’s honor as a soldier would have been thrown into question because he killed men who surrendered. He killed in cold blood those who offered to throw down their arms and put their lives into his hands. The hatred that would have grown out of this would have fueled Houston’s army by filling it with more volunteers and by making it fight fiercer. The details of Crockett’s death should do little to change our opinion of how we remember him. He should be remembered as a charismatic legend who fought for what he believed in, and who would die for a cause that he believed was just.

The Texas Revolution could have been avoided with more collaboration and agreement between the two sides because most of the reasons for rebellion were unfounded. If Texas was allowed to be its own state, then the war would have likely been avoided. The Alamo was only a necessary battle because of the personalities of the commanders fighting. Bowie was a criminal who fought for personal gain. Houston fought for a secret agenda, which included the annexation of Texas to the United States. Crockett remained a law-abiding citizen, but still came to Texas rejected by more than half of his state. We should remember the Alamo as a great last stand of heroes, but we need to remember that they did not need to fight there. We must remember that, despite their heroism, the Texans had little reason for revolt except for personal gain. It is important to understand the whole truth about events and people before giving honors or enmity to them because if educated decisions cannot be made about the past, then they cannot be made about the future.

Word Count: 4,489

Annotated Bibliography

"Alamo." *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*. Ed. John Hartwell Moore. Vol. 1. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 67-70. *U.S. History in Context*. Web. 24 Nov. 2013.

* Very little as a source, but it gave good insight on how the Alamo is viewed today and why people began to view it as a racist event.

"Alamo." *The United States and Mexico at War*: *Nineteenth-century Expansionism and Conflict*. Ed. Donald S. Frazier. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998. *World History in Context*. Web. 5 Jan. 2014.

* This source contained mostly background information, with very little specifics for its length

"Alamo." *Violence in America*. Ed. Ronald Gottesman and Richard Maxwell Brown. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1999. *U.S. History in Context*. Web. 24 Nov. 2013.

* Very good overview of the Texas Revolution, and it filled up the holes in the basic background while providing for minor information on how the violence started

Brands, H. W. *Lone Star Nation: How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence, and Changed America*. New York: Doubleday, 2004. Print.

* Best source on Texas Revolution, it goes into the specifics of battles, as well as Houston’s secret agenda. Gave good character background information on major heroes, as well as some accounts by other rank-and-file. It also pointed me toward the Travis letter.

Bruns, George, Thomas Wakefield. Blackburn, Rod Morris, Texas Jim, and Jack Richards. *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*. Broadway, 1954.

* Song, only used in one quote to help emphasize Crockett’s fame and legend.

Crisp, James E. *Sleuthing the Alamo: Davy Crockett's Last Stand and Other Mysteries of the Texas Revolution*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

* Good source, provided me with key information on Crockett’s death and it pointed me toward the de la Pena diary. It also gave good personality information on Santa Anna for the battle of the Alamo and why the Alamo was not required.

Davis, William C. *Three Roads to the Alamo: The Lives and Fortunes of David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Barret Travis*. New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1998. Print.

* Very good source, gave me detailed information on hero origins for Crockett and Bowie. Also provided very detailed information on Sandbar fight and Bowie’s knife. Unfortunately, most of it could not be used due to word restrictions.

Henderson, Timothy J. *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007. Print.

* Good source, provided great information on Santa Anna’s personality and qualities, both good and bad. Also provided reasoning for the battle of the Alamo.

"Texas Revolution." *Encyclopedia of the American West*. Ed. Charles Phillips and Alan Axelrod. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1996. *U.S. History in Context*. Web. 23 Nov. 2013.

* Best background source by far. Provided basis for background and reasons why the war started. Also said why some of the reasons were false.

Primary Sources

De La Pena, Jose E. *Reseña Y Diario De La Campaña De Texas Por Colonel José*

*Enrique De La Peña, 1836.* N.p.: n.p., n.d. Web.

* Good narrative on Crockett’s death.

Travis, William B. "Texas Treasures: Travis Letter from the Alamo." Letter to People of

Texas & All Americans in the World. 26 Feb. 1836. *Texas Treasures: Travis Letter from*

*the Alamo*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Jan. 2014.

* This letter gave a good description of the Alamo at the beginning of the siege, as well as Travis’s position on defending the Alamo. Also gave information on food stores, which I used for two paragraphs describing possible ways that the Texans could have won at the Alamo. The portion had to be deleted due to too many words and it not being very relevant to the thesis.

Bibliographical Essay

The writing process began with picking a topic, which was, surprisingly, not the most difficult part. My first thought was to do a paper on the Boy Scouts of America because of my affiliation with the organization, but I chose not to do that for two reasons. The first is that the topic would have been difficult to research because of the controversy related recent gay rights movements. The second is that I am working on my Eagle Scout Project this year, and I felt that writing a paper on the organization would be too much writing about scouts (there is paperwork for the projects to be approved/reported on). I was inspired to pick the Alamo as a topic because I just randomly happened to remember two things: “The Ballad of the Alamo,” which is on a western cassette that I used to listen to as a child (and that was in *The Alamo* movie with John Wayne), and a more recent Alamo film, with Billy Bob Thornton playing Crockett, that I saw on T.V. a year or two ago. Both of these thoughts combined into an idea to research the Alamo for my thesis. I consulted my parents with the ideas before finalizing them.

I got my sources from the Newton Free Library and from the Gale Encyclopedia online database on the Newton North website. The most useful source was definitely, *Lone Star Nation: How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence, and Changed America*, by H. W. Brands, which gave me a lot of background information, as well as a good general basis for fact and argument that the other books could improve upon. The book was also written extremely well, and I would suggest it for anyone interested in the era who wants to learn about the Texas Revolution. Another useful source was the one written by William C. Davis, as it gave detailed narratives of the lives of Crockett and Bowie. The book by James E. Crisp was also a very good source, as it provided great evidence as to why the Alamo was not necessary.

The fun part about the writing process was being able to report on the battles, although much of this had to be removed because of too many words and not much of a relevance to the paper. My favorite part to write, which has also been removed, was an analysis on how the Texans could have won the Alamo. I mostly wrote this because it was fun to theorize strategies which I believe could have worked. I had to remove it because it was taking up too much space and, sadly, was not relevant enough for the paper. (In hindsight, I probably should have changed the thesis just enough to make it relevant). The part that was the least fun, and most difficult and time consuming, was cutting down the paper to make it fit the required word length. There was a lot that I did not want to cut, but I wound up needing to because it was not relevant to my thesis. The other not very fun part was time management in regards to the thesis which was the first time that I had bad time management with an important paper. I waited until the last two days before working on them. For the rough draft, a camping trip with the scouts got in the way of my long weekend for writing the thesis, so I only had the Monday and Tuesday to write it. The final draft delaying was just plain and simple bad time management.

I arrived at my final draft using mostly the list of what did not meet expectations and of what did. I also used a short meeting with Mr. Bedar to try to get some final ideas. The markings on the rough draft were most of my edits, and I tried to re-word and add small portions to my argument section of the paper to try and tie in what was being said about Bowie/Houston and why it is important for the paper, but I will not truly know how well that went until after I get back the graded final (hopefully it went better than I think it did.). Unfortunately, a little background information remains for Bowie, Houston, and Crockett because they received no background information in the background section. Overall, I would say that if I had been better with time management, then my final draft would be better.

1. *Gale Encyclopedia of the American West,* “Texas Revolution.” Web. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. H. W. Brands, Lone Star Nation: How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence, and Changed America (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 204 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Brands, 204 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Gale Enc. American West* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Brands, 246 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., 263 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Brands, 275 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., 290 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 357 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid., 371 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Brands, 446 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid., 448 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., 451 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 463 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Gale Enc. American West* [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Gale Encyclopedia of Race and Racism,* “Alamo,” Web. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Gale Enc. American West* [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
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