

Trip 2 – Episode #16 – San Antonio Part 2 – The Alamo (What we may not remember)

We started 2022 with a traditional Eggs Benedict - my first attempt at making it in Charles, and it turned out okay.



But of course, if you're in San Antonio, you **have** to go to the Alamo, right?

Okay, full disclosure. I didn't really know much about the Alamo. I knew about Davy Crockett, only because my brother Ted always watched it on TV and, of course, he had a raccoon hat. And because at that age, I always wanted to do what he wanted to do, I watched it too. That's it.

Jim had a bit more knowledge about the Alamo, mostly because he was older when he was watching Davy Crockett. Wearing his raccoon hat. (Jim tells me he was also "riding his horse" – sitting astride his piano bench.)

And of course, everyone knows the phrase "Remember the Alamo". But I didn't really understand what it meant and why people should remember it.

So we went, prepared to learn what it was all about. Well.

The Alamo is probably the most popular tourist destination in Texas. There are tours you can pay for, but you can also just go in and do your own "self-guided" tour for free, although you have to reserve a time. We did that, plus we bought the audio tour, which added a little colour and detail. We went on New Year's Day and there were lots of people there.

When you first arrive, you walk through the Mission, which has a history that begins long before the Texans strove to fight off the Mexicans to maintain their independence.

It has mostly to do with the settlers' attempts to convert the Native Americans to Catholicism.

You're not allowed to take pictures in the Mission, but that's okay, because really it has little to do with the story of the Alamo as far as I can tell.



The grounds are interesting and pleasant. Apparently, a woman named Clara Driscoll is responsible for the fact that the grounds exist and that there are maintained gardens. She fought for that back in the 1920s. And today, the whole place has the look and feel of a park.







It's so peaceful... Until you realize that in each of these arches there's a cannon.



Because, of course, the battle at the Alamo is what this place is all about.



Throughout the exhibits, you get regular references to the “heroes” and the “survivors”.

And there’s a garden with statues of the important players, like Davy Crockett of course. He’s slated as a “Frontiersman, American Humorist, Politician and Alamo Defender.”



And Susannah Dickinson, the wife of one of the defenders, who took refuge with her baby daughter in the church during the Alamo siege. She’s a noted “Alamo survivor”.

And William Barrett Travis, who died at the Alamo and made famous the cry “Victory or death!”

The plaque beside this statue explains that after moving to Texas, he “quickly became involved in opposition to what many saw as tyrannical laws passed by Mexican administrators fearful of unruly American colonists in Texas.”



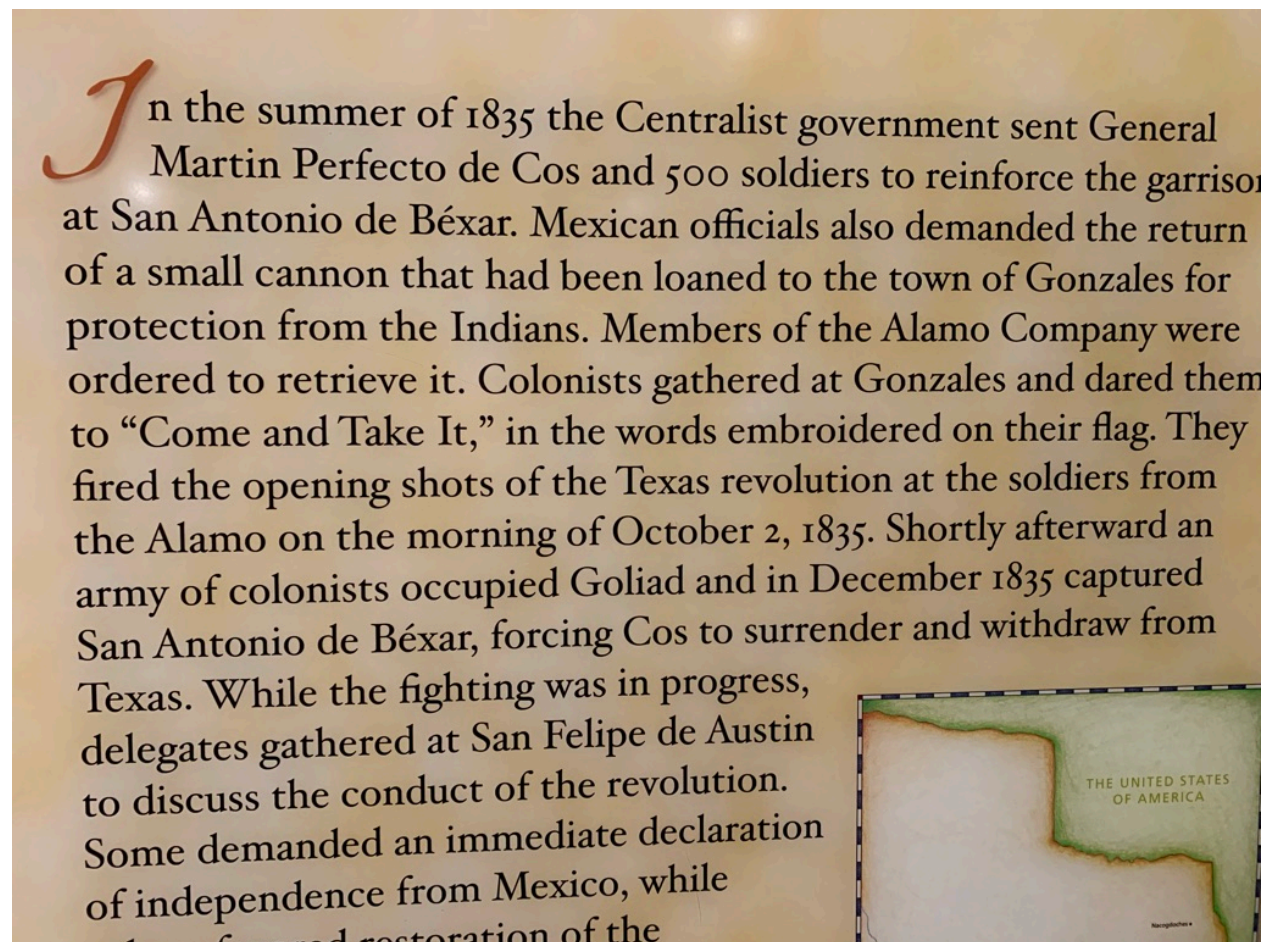
But it's only inside when we went into one last building that we got a kind of play-by-play of the events that led to the Alamo siege. And there were some very interesting phrases that leapt out. Like for instance in this one, which explains that the Mexicans feared the immigration of too many Americans. Isn't that ironic?!

1821-1836

The Mexican government, in order to increase the population of Texas and make it more productive and serve as a buffer against the Comanche, invited colonists from the United States and Europe to settle here. The terms by which they offered land to colonists were so favorable that by 1830 about 30,000 immigrants from the United States had moved to Texas. The Mexican government, fearing that its institutions would be overwhelmed by the new settlers, tried to prohibit further immigration.



And this one, explaining the origin of the phrase “Come and Take It” which is now shouted by the Second Amendment defenders to protest any moves toward gun control.



I kept searching for information that would explain why the Alamo was actually important and what led to the battle. The story told at the Alamo was that Mexicans wanted a kind of centrist government control, while the Texans believed in independence and “states’ rights”.

I found it really interesting that so much of what Texas and Texans are today goes back to the state’s beginnings.

But none of the telling of the story sat right. So much seemed to be missing. There was the question of whether the Texans really had rights to the territory which Mexico “won” during the war of independence against Spain.

And then, I kept wondering about the rights of the Native Americans whose land it was in the first place. The only mention of them was that they were the common enemy of both the Mexicans and the Texans / Americans.

We left the Alamo, and came upon the huge monument that lionizes all the valiant defenders. But I still didn't get it.



So, afterward, I did some reading. And I learned that one of the main reasons the Texans demanded their own rights was that the Americans who were coming into Texas wanted to bring their slaves, and the Mexican government opposed slavery.

In other words, the Texans wanted the right to be free to enslave others. Huh.

Further reading explained that Mexican opposition to slavery was not exactly altruistic. Their concern was that if the American immigrants brought their slaves, they'd be able to run huge cotton plantations, flourish more successfully and become dominant over the Mexicans.

I also came to realize that "Remember the Alamo" has become an anti-Mexican slogan, especially to remind Mexicans that the Americans eventually won.

Maybe this is all common knowledge to most of you. I suspect it isn't to most of the tourists who go through that site every day. And at a time when many Americans (and Canadians) are asking for an honest telling of our history, the Alamo is way out of date.

So from now on, this is how I'll Remember the Alamo: As a place where history is told the way it was in the days when Davy Crockett was a TV star.

With all this whizzing around in our heads, we returned to our nice little KOA campground, watched an awesome sunset and prepared for our next day's journey.

