

# Alamo Plaza Restoration Project

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## A STAR REBORN

The dramatic story of the Alamo is known throughout the world for its universal themes of courage and self-sacrifice. As our nation, the State of Texas, and the City of San Antonio enter into a new and hopeful era, a bold and fresh vision for presenting our proud and storied past is also on the rise. It is an effort and a concept that embraces all the elements that a world famous site must have – authenticity, reverence, and integrity – all interwoven into the fabric of a world-class presentation.

## COMPLETING THE ALAMO EXPERIENCE

The goal of the **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project** is to enhance the visitor's pilgrimage to the "Cradle of Texas Liberty" by providing a historic atmosphere for personal reflection, inspiration, and learning. We want to encourage people to seek out their heritage, explore the rich and diverse history of the region, and immerse themselves with the texture of the past. In today's fast-paced and ever changing world, we need our historic places to remind us of who we are; both as a nation and a people. We thirst for value-based bastions – like the Alamo – so that we may contemplate on the heroic deeds of brave and noble men, connect with altruistic ideals, and recall the timeless lessons of Duty – Honor – Country.

Alamo Plaza needs to be a place that provides an environment that promotes a dignity and a reverence befitting of the courageous men who "gave their last full measure of devotion" by shedding their life's blood onto what is now consecrated ground. We who support the **Plaza Restoration Project** believe the time has come for Alamo Plaza to evolve....to be the extraordinary place of inspiration and national pride it was meant to be.

## ALAMO PLAZA RENOVATION FEATURES:

### 1) Closure of vehicle traffic on Alamo Street. Restore the integrity of the original mission compound and its historical boundaries.

Visitors to Alamo Plaza are often bombarded by an onslaught of traffic noise. Car horns, loud music, screeching tires, noisy vehicle engines, and malodorous exhaust fumes, mar any chance for people to experience something authentic. Pedestrian safety also remains a great concern due to Alamo Street's close proximity to the Plaza, the Alamo Cenotaph, and other local attractions.

### 2) Recreate southern enclosure of the Alamo compound including the Low Barracks, defensive lunette, and main gate entrance.

The Low Barracks and the Alamo's main gate are of particular historical significance. An east room of this large stone structure is where legendary hero James Bowie is reported to have been killed when Mexican *soldados* burst into his room as he lay ill. Additionally, one of the three locations where the famous frontiersmen David Crockett is said to have died is by one of the rooms of the Low Barracks. The defensive lunette – an earthen fortification – was constructed for the purpose of protecting the main gate.

### 3) Recreate the southwest corner of the Alamo and the entire length of the original West Wall to Houston Street.

The ground where the West Wall of the Alamo once stood also has important historical value. Along the western wall of the old plaza, several adobe structures existed. During the famous siege in 1836, these adobe buildings offered protection for both the Texan defenders and non-combatants alike. The Alamo's largest cannon, the famous 18-pounder, fired defiance at Santa Anna from the southwest corner. Most importantly, the headquarters of the Alamo was situated along the west wall. From this location, the young commander of the fort, fiery William Barret Travis, composed his famous letter of appeal. The **Plaza Project** proposes the old structures that presently occupy the western boundary of the Plaza be removed/relocated and the West Wall of the Alamo be restored to its 1836 appearance. This initiative includes the recreation of Travis' Headquarters and the 18-pounder gun position.

### 4) Relocate the Cenotaph to either the southern end of the Plaza near Alamo Street and directly in front of the Menger Hotel, or along the old Alameda on Commerce Street.

The Alamo Cenotaph is a powerful tribute to the ordinary men who did extraordinary things. This beautiful monument to heroism and self-sacrifice is too large for its present location and actually dwarfs the "Shrine." By moving the Cenotaph to a different location, the Alamo

can once again, become the focus of attention. Additionally, the Plaza will become a “true” Plaza by creating a natural space typically associated with Spanish architecture.

### **5) Transform the old Post Office/Federal Building at the north end of Alamo Plaza into a major world-class multi-media center and museum. It will also house the new Center for Texas History for educational and interpretive workshops, and digital linkage to international institutions.**

Acquisition and conversion of the old Post Office is the corner stone of the **Plaza Project**. This huge, under-utilized facility is owned and operated by the federal government, has the potential necessary for becoming a first-class museum. The architecture blends-in with the historic theme of the Plaza. The location is ideal – built on the section of north wall where Travis is believed to have fought to the death – it is already part of the Alamo. Its immense size of three hundred thousand square feet would provide enough space to accommodate all of Texas’ historic treasures as well as state-of-the-art interactive and interpretive exhibits, with room for lecture halls, archeological workshops, and an artifact repository. The proposed permanent themes are: The Texas Revolution – The Spanish and Tejano Legacy – The Westward Expansion – Plaza History – Pop Culture.

### **6) Increased emphasis on the role of the Tejano community and the Tejanos who fought for Texas independence.**

Many have the misconception that the fight for independence was a conflict between white or Anglo Texans and the Mexican Army led by General Santa Anna without realizing the significant contributions and sacrifices Tejanos made in the cause of freedom. A clearer and more complete interpretation of the historical events that forever shaped Texas’ social and political landscape needs be presented.

## **THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE ALAMO**

Shortly after the fall of the Alamo in March of 1836, Santa Anna departed San Antonio de Bexar to continue his eastward drive in pursuit of Sam Houston and his rag-tag army of volunteers. Before marching off, he would leave behind one thousand *soldados* with orders to refortify the Alamo so the Mexican Army could use it as a base of operations while quelling the Texas rebellion. In late April, General Santa Anna’s army closed-in on Houston’s haggard group of anxious rebels, spoiling for a fight – he soon got one. Houston launched a surprise attack in the late afternoon of 21 April, 1836. In a lop-sided victory, the larger Mexican Army was thoroughly beaten in the battle of San Jacinto and Santa Anna was forced to surrender, securing Texas’ independence. While negotiating for his life, the Mexican President sent new orders to San Antonio – withdraw from the town and demolish all the fortifications in the Alamo so that it could never again be used as a fort. By the time the Mexican Army left Bexar in May, the Alamo was a total ruin...much of the Plaza was

destroyed. The departing army tore down all the outer walls and adobe structures, leaving only the strong stone buildings intact. Although the old mission would never again hear cannon boom from its walls or see blood spilled in darkened rooms, its battles and struggle for survival had just begun.

In the few years that followed, the Alamo would see occupational forces from both Texas and Mexico occasionally utilize the old "Long Barrack," but never for long. With the exception of looters, the homeless, transients, and vandals, the Alamo would remain a quiet, almost forgotten ruin. Some of the local Tejanos would rebuild a couple of the destroyed structures (Charli House and Trevino House) and live in them for a period of time, and Texas hero Samuel Maverick would build a homestead on what use to be the northwest corner of the Plaza. But it wouldn't be until after the United States annexed Texas in 1845 – nine years after the famous battle – that the Alamo would be "pressed into service" for military duty again....this time by the U.S. Army.

By 1847, the U.S. Army saw fit to recognize the Alamo; not for its vital role in Texas' fight for independence but rather because of its usefulness as a convenient ammunition depot and warehouse for the military. When the military made the decision to convert the noble mission into a storage area in 1845, Edward Everett, a young army volunteer and artist was tasked with the renovation. Long before the early conservation and preservation movement of the 1900's existed, the young artist noticed the importance of the Alamo church. The construction crew went about their business remodeling the Convento and adjoining Long Barracks *"without remorse, but the church we respected as an historic relic, wrote Everett, "and as such its characteristics were not marred by us."* He went on to condemn the *"tasteless hands"* and the *"wanton destruction...by relic hunters, or other vandals and iconoclasts."* Both the Long Barrack and the battered two-story "Convento" – the structure that served as the Alamo hospital – underwent a huge facelift and the battle-scarred walls were dramatically altered...perhaps forever from its 1836 appearance. The Alamo Church would remain largely unchanged until 1850 when the U.S. Army repaired and modified the

Over the course of the next several decades, the Alamo battlefield – as well as Alamo Plaza – was subjected to rapid commercial development. To make room for businesses, the remaining west wall structures were razed and the "Low Barrack" – the building that served as the mission's main gate and Jim Bowie's quarters – was demolished. By 1871, all that was left standing of the famous fort was the church, the remodeled remnants of the Long Barrack, and two-story Convento – about 30% of the original mission.

One of the first to exploit the Alamo for profit was a Frenchman by the name of Honore Grenet, who in 1871 purchased the Long Barrack and Convento courtyard from the Catholic Church. Grenet, a merchant, built a wooden framework around the south and west side of the structure – complete with fake battlements and cannon towers. The silent stone rooms – where both Texan volunteers and Mexican *soldados* fought to the death – were now used for selling groceries and liquor. Grenet managed his store until 1884 when he sold it to the company of Hugo and Schmeltzer, who maintained the Long Barrack and Convento as a mercantile business. Throughout this period, the Alamo hardly resembled the once mighty edifice where acts of gallantry and sacrifice were acted out. One tourist to the area felt *"amazement and disgust upon this my first visit to the old church fortress of the Alamo at*

*finding the structure, so famous not only in the history of Texas but the annuals of liberty...filled with sacks of salt, stinking potatoes, odorous kerosene, and dirty groceries." How can "the great state of Texas...permit a historic building like the Alamo, once consecrated to deity and latterly baptized in blood of heroes like Travis and Crockett, slain in the cause of liberty and democracy, to become a grocery warehouse?"*

In 1889, the historic buildings that became the Hugo and Schmeltzer grocery store stood idle – condemned by the city. The neglected property was drawing the attention of real estate developers and the owners were anxious to sell the gaudy structure. It was beginning to appear as if the Long Barrack and Convento – a part of the Alamo – were on the verge of disappearing forever. Fortunately for the old mission, Adina de Zavala, granddaughter of the first vice president of the Republic of Texas – Lorenzo de Zavala, stepped in. Adina, who described herself as "*a student and jealous lover of Texas history,*" was a member of a preservation society whose goal was to "*keep green the memory of the hero's, founders, and pioneers of Texas.*" In 1893, she affiliated with the fledgling preservationist organization, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) and formed the De Zavala Chapter. In 1902, Adina, who was deeply concerned with the fate and the future of the Alamo as well as other historical sites in Texas, secured a promise from Hugo and Schmeltzer to give the DRT first option to purchase the old building, if and when they decided to sell. A year later, in 1903, Gustav Schmeltzer informed De Zavala that a hotel syndicate had made an offer to buy the structure with plans to demolish it and build a hotel in its place. Adina took immediate action to preserve what she believed was priceless Texas history. She contacted Clara Driscoll, a wealthy young lady who shared her passion for protecting the Alamo from the ravages of commercial development and neglect.

Clara Driscoll, a descendent of early Texas colonists, including a veteran of San Jacinto, was born in 1881 in Refugio County and grew up as a wealthy rancher's daughter. She teamed with De Zavala and the DRT to protect what remained of the Alamo from civic expansion, commercial encroachment, exploitation, and the elements. To obtain the required \$75,000 Hugo and Schmeltzer were asking for, the two determined women tried to raise the necessary funds by appealing to Texan patriotism. Thousands of flyers titled "A Plea for Texas" were mailed to residents with the high expectation that the money would "come pouring in." As confident as the DRT was, they were only able to raise a little more than one thousand dollars, far short of the amount needed to keep a portion of the Alamo from destruction and certain oblivion. Disappointed but undeterred, the determined young socialite stepped forward, and in 1904, bought the building with her own personal funds. Clara Driscoll was hailed as the "Savior of the Alamo" by the newspapers. Shamed into action, the state reimbursed Driscoll for the full amount in 1905. Additionally, the State appointed the DRT as stewards of the Alamo to ensure "the proper care, protection, and preservation of the old Alamo mission."

The victory achieved by the DRT was believed to have secured the remaining historic structures. Instead it initiated what was to be called the "second battle of the Alamo." A conflict erupted between Adina de Zavala and Clara Driscoll over the issue – and future – of the Long Barrack and two-story Convento. Driscoll envisioned the Alamo Church as a stand-alone shrine, free and clear of unattractive distractions and advocated the removal of the very building she fought to save. "*This building should be torn away at the earliest possible*

*moment. The daughters are not in favor of keeping anything ugly on this ground and are always in favor of things beautiful."* Adina, on the other hand, believed the remnants of the Long Barrack and Convento were historically significant and should be restored – not razed. *"The proposition to demolish the Hugo & Schmeltzer building cannot be considered,"* she maintained. After all, she correctly pointed out, much of the horrific fighting and dying occurred in the very rooms of the Convento and Long Barrack while the Alamo Church saw limited carnage. The bitter infighting that ensued caused the DRT to split into two competing factions with De Zavala on one side and Driscoll on the other.

In February 1908, as the two paragons of Texas antiquities squared-off for control of the DRT and the Alamo. State and city politicians as well as local business leaders became embroiled in the fray and sided with Driscoll. In an act of desperation, Adina barricaded herself in the Long Barrack for three days, claiming Clara Driscoll was *"pandering to the rabid desires of the money-getters, who for business reasons only, want to tear down 'unsightly walls.'"* In a 1935 interview with Pearl Howard for Holland's magazine, Adina related her experience.

*"I had been told, on good authority, that a syndicate which had an option on the property back of the Alamo intended to seize the Alamo and tear it down, so as to use the space as part of the plaza, a sort of front yard to the hotel or amusement palace which they expected to erect on the property back of the Alamo--on which also they had an option."*

*"My lawyers on whom I depended were out of the city; but I had heard that 'possession is nine points in the law.' Something had to be done, and quickly. So I took possession, and engaged three men to guard the old mission-fortress night and day."*

*"At dusk, just as I was giving them some last instructions, the raid was made. The agents of the syndicate threw my men out bodily, expecting to take possession. They did not know I was in an inner room, and when I hurried out to confront them, demanding by what right they invaded the historic building, consternation reigned. They withdrew outside the building for whispered consultation. The instant they stepped out, I closed the doors and barred them. That's all. There was nothing else for me to do but hold the fort. So I did."*

De Zavala was successful in garnering public support for her cause, but in the end the courts legitimized the Driscoll faction – The Alamo Mission Chapter – of the DRT as the rightful custodians of the Alamo. Shortly after, the DRT banished Adina and her supporters from the organization. The decision was condemned as *"shameful...against a poor woman who had worked so hard to save all that was a memento of sincere, true patriotism."* In spite of the court's decision, the bickering and the struggle for the ultimate vision of the Alamo would continue in the ensuing years.

By 1911, the fate of the historic building was still unresolved. It remained a very contentious and emotional issue. The newly elected governor, Oscar Colquitt, felt the problem had tarried far too long and needed to be settled once and for all. In late December, he convened a meeting at a hotel in San Antonio. Inviting all interested parties

who may have information vital to his assessment to attend and state their case. Both Adina and Clara were there – as well as others – to explain their views and ideas on how to best interpret and present Texas history. The governor listened earnestly to both sides and toured the Alamo property. He thanked all the participants for their keen interest and information and returned to Austin to take their concerns under advisement. He meditated on the impasse for a few months, and in March of 1912 came to a decision to strip the DRT of their custodianship of the Alamo declaring the organization had done nothing in six years to improve the historic site. He then announced his own plan to restore the Long Barrack and Convento to its original appearance.

The process of rebuilding the old Convento and Long Barrack began almost immediately. The governor had the entire wood framework stripped away from the exterior of the building and left the two-story west and south walls intact. But the renovation project ran out of money before the job could be completed. Sensing an opportunity, Driscoll and her supporters in the DRT renewed their efforts to – at the very least – have the second floor of the structure demolished; maintaining their claim that – in spite of its historical significance – the old Convento was an eyesore, it dominated Alamo Plaza and overshadowed the church, which Driscoll insisted was the “real” Alamo. Governor Colquitt could not be swayed by the DRT entreaties. He remained committed to the restoration of the Long Barrack and refused to back down. However, in 1913, while Colquitt was away from Texas – purportedly on state business – Lieutenant Governor William Harding Mayes yielded to the Driscoll faction and allowed San Antonio officials to remove the upper-level walls from the Convento/Long Barrack structure. The first level of the west and south walls are all that remain of the original building.

In the years that followed, Clara Driscoll and the DRT worked tirelessly to create an attractive environment to enhance the visitor experience to the Alamo church. They acquired adjoining properties; removed unsightly buildings that crowded or detracted from the “Shrine,” and developed the surrounding grounds into a park-like setting. Beautiful...yes, but it didn't impress Adina de Zavala. “*You cannot learn the history of the Alamo by visiting the church of the Alamo today,*” she warned.

## THE WEST WALL: THEN AND NOW

In the early morning hours on the 6th of March, 1836, General Santa Anna's attack force, a total of some fifteen-hundred *soldados*, were poised to overwhelm the sleeping and unsuspecting Texan garrison fortified inside the Alamo. Santa Anna's battle plan called for four assault columns to simultaneously storm the walls of the mission-fortress from four directions; north, south, east, and west. But the north wall would receive the heaviest blow. It seemed a perfect plan.

Sometime after midnight Santa Anna quietly moved his assault columns into position within easy striking distance of the Alamo – silence was imperative. Eleven-hundred *soldados* lay flat on their stomachs on the frozen ground while another four-hundred *soldados* held in reserve stood in the cold night air. Denied blankets, overcoats, or anything that would

hinder speed, the anxious Mexican troops would suffer and shiver as they awaited the attack signal and their fate.

At about 5:00 A.M., a supremely confident Santa Anna appeared at the north cannon battery where he had positioned his reserve column. At just the right moment, Santa Anna would instruct his bugler to sound the attack. The shrill bugle call would be followed by signal rockets. At that moment, all the assault columns would race toward the Alamo, place their scaling ladders against the walls, and capture the fortress with minimal resistance.

As the hour neared, Santa Anna had his attack columns stand at the ready. He would quickly dispatch the Alamo's defenders and capture the fortress; his losses should be light. But something unforeseen occurred that infuriated Mexico's president-general. Some overly-anxious *soldados* could no longer restrain themselves and began to scream "Viva Santa Anna! Viva la Republica! Viva Mexico!" The cheering rapidly spread throughout the assault columns; the element of surprise had vanished.

Inside the Alamo, adjutant Captain Baugh was checking on the lightly manned north wall when he was alerted to the presence of the *soldados*. Baugh was quick to raise the alarm as he raced toward Colonel Travis's quarters. "The Mexicans are coming! The Mexicans are coming! Colonel Travis, the Mexicans are coming!" The Texans, aroused from their deep slumber, began to stumble out of the Long Barracks and other rooms and race to the walls. Travis too, was now rushing to his post at the north wall battery to meet the threat; "C'mon boys, the Mexicans are upon us and we'll give them Hell!"

Realizing the Alamo garrison had been alerted, General Santa Anna gave the command for the signal rockets to fire and for the bugler to sound the *Deguello*, the call of no quarter...no mercy. Eleven-hundred determined Mexican *soldados* were now surging forward with scaling ladders at the forefront. Santa Anna's plan of light resistance and a quick capture of the fort went up in smoke as the guns of the Alamo erupted into thunderous flame. The garrison delivered a hail of devastating cannon and musket fire, killing and wounding scores of *soldados* rushing toward the fort. Only a few of the ladders needed to scale the walls could be found. Within a few minutes, a thousand *soldados* from Santa Anna's assault force were crowded at the base of the north wall in one confused mass. Although greatly outnumbered, the defenders were making the Mexican army pay a fearful price in dead and wounded.

From his place of observation, Santa Anna believed his attack had stalled and he quickly ordered his reserves into battle. Once again, the Alamo's cannon inflicted heavy casualties on the attackers as the four hundred men of the reserve column joined the battle. The additional men initially added to the confusion but the sheer amount of *soldados* eventually overwhelmed the dwindling number of defenders. Colonel Travis may have been the first of the garrison to fall as the Mexicans gained a foothold at the northwest and northeast corner of the plaza. Hundreds began to assail the thinly defended west wall and the Texans were forced to fall back.

The 100-man assault column assigned to capture the main gate and the defensive lunette was forced to divert its point of attack to the southwest corner where the Alamo's largest and most dangerous cannon, an eighteen-pounder, was positioned. The swiftness of this attack caught the defenders by surprise. The Mexicans placed two ladders against the wall



and began to climb up. A brief but vicious hand-to-hand struggle ensued for control of the southwest corner. The Texans fought heroically and the Mexicans exhibited great courage in the life or death contest but the defenders were too few and were quickly overpowered. The Mexicans were now in control of the gun position and were pouring into the plaza. Some of the surviving defenders would try to make last stands in the Long Barracks and the Church, but the battle and the Alamo were already lost.

Today, there is scarcely a trace of the West Wall to be found. The places where some of the most intense fighting occurred are gone. The destruction begun by Santa Anna's troops was completed through urban sprawl. With the exception of a remnant of foundation, all vestiges of the West Wall structures have been eliminated; its history nearly lost; buried beneath layers of asphalt and concrete. Although the buildings and walls that witnessed the birth pangs of Texas independence are no more, the ground is unchanged. It is just as sanguine, just as historic, and just as significant. It is hallowed ground; consecrated long before it was developed for commercial use, it retains its value as sacred soil. There is still a story to tell to those who will listen; it still has meaning for those who treasure Texas history.

At present, the west wall of the Alamo is unrecognizable; transformed by commercialism from the noble edifice it once was. Gone is the place where the eighteen-pound cannon fired the opening shot of defiance. Gone is the Alamo headquarters where Travis slept and penned his historic letters of appeal. Gone is the Castaneda House where Juana Alsbury – cousin to Ursula Bowie and niece to Jose Antonio Navarro – took refuge with some of her family during the siege.

Looming large in place of these historic locations are carnival-like attractions that pander to the young, and the dilapidated buildings that house the commercial oddities have no real history of their own. The historic ground adjacent to the northwest corner of the Alamo remains in a neglected and depressed state. Gutted and untenable structures marked with graffiti, numerous vacant buildings, trash receptacles, and parking lots occupy the space where hundreds of Mexican *soldados* battled with the defenders of the Alamo, many losing their lives in defense of their country. Is there not a more appropriate way to recognize bravery and sacrifice? Can we not do a better job interpreting and presenting our storied past?

## **ALAMO PLAZA UNDER SIEGE: A PERPETUAL TRAGEDY**

Although the Alamo we can see and visit today – the Church and the Long Barrack – remains protected from the developer's wrecking-ball, it is not immune to the encroachment and the ravages of exploitation from commercial enterprises and self-interest groups. From a certain standpoint, it remains under siege. Alamo Plaza is an extension of the mission that, in 1836, became an ensanguined battlefield and then an enshrined symbol of freedom. Today, Alamo Plaza has turned into a haven for tawdry businesses, political rallies, demonstrations, grandstanding, parades, disruptive protests, and snack vendors. The

increasing threat of vandalism has prompted the DRT to install monitoring equipment and hire full-time guards in order to keep the Alamo protected.

## **SELF-SACRIFICE vs. SELF-INTEREST**

Since its construction in the early 1700's, the Alamo has been a mission, a sanctuary, a refuge, a fort, a storage depot, and a shrine. During its many years of existence it has been used, abused, neglected, and disparaged. Throughout its turbulent history, the Alamo has unselfishly offered itself for the benefit of others. The region has long benefited from its affiliation with the Alamo and it's time to give something back to this treasured and inspiring symbol that has given so much to the people of Texas.

Today, visitors to the Alamo and Alamo Plaza who search the western boundary for structures of significant historical relevance will be disappointed. Instead of locating remnants of the past, they will be greeted by wax figures, the bearded lady, a ghoul, a dinosaur, and other entertainment oddities. Visitors will often find themselves verbally accosted by a carnival barker yelling and taunting as they pass by in search of authentic history. Does this non-historic atmosphere fit in with the "**DEEP in the HEART**" philosophy?

## **CLASS vs. CRASS**

The **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project** offers a vision and a solid plan that will endow the city of San Antonio and Texas with numerous and long-lasting benefits. It provides for respectful and accurate interpretation of historic characters and events. It will replace the carnival-like environment found in Alamo Plaza with a quality presentation of Texas' rich and diverse history. It places emphasis on educational and cultural enlightenment while providing a pathway into Texas' unique and colorful past.

What type of image does the region want to project to corporations, small businesses, tourists, or to people who are seeking to relocate to a new location? The "Alamo City" has a proud and legendary history that is intertwined with a rich and diverse culture, and yet, San Antonio lacks uniqueness. It looks very much like any other major metropolitan area in the United States. The tourism industry injected \$8.5+ Billion into San Antonio's economy in 2008 and yet, it is so far below its potential. For San Antonio to be financially competitive with other cities throughout the country, it needs to make a firm commitment to move forward and establish proactive measures to develop and present its storied past in a way that will encourage visitors to return – again and again.

**Today's traveler is better educated**, increasingly sophisticated, financially prudent, and more discriminating with their choice of destinations. The people who make the trip to San

Antonio want to see and connect with the Alamo. They come to discover the UNIQUENESS of the famous site, tread in the footsteps of legendary hero's, learn of the courageous battle, and experience history that is AUTHENTIC. The West Wall, as it currently exists, will not be on their agenda. Visitors want to see quality interpretation and exhibits, become engaged with the topic, and be lead on a thematic journey, whenever possible.

## WHAT IS HISTORIC?

What makes a location or a building historic? What is the criterion for designating something as a historical place? What distinguishes "historic" from "non-historic?" Is age the deciding factor, or is it something more? If the answer is "age," then where do we draw the line between a structure that is historic and another that is just...old? By strict definition, a site or a building that is truly historical will have some significant or unique event attached to it – like the Alamo. These questions must be answered honestly and logically as we debate the disposition and value of the old buildings on the west side of Alamo Plaza.

One of the key proposals in the **Alamo Plaza Project** is the reclaiming of the western property and the re-establishment of the West Wall structures. To accomplish this essential part of the plan, the existing buildings known as the "Crockett block buildings" will have to be removed by providing for their relocation to a new venue. Moving a building is not an uncommon feat. In fact, it happened right in San Antonio in April of 1985.

To make room for the proposed Rivercenter Mall, the Fairmount, a classic Victorian three-story brick and iron commercial hotel/retail building built in 1906, was moved five blocks from its original location at the corner of Bowie and Commerce to its new home on South Alamo next to La Villita National Historic District. The Fairmount relocation project provided an additional benefit to Texas history as significant artifacts from the Battle of the Alamo were found that verified the location was one of Santa Anna's artillery batteries. The project was successfully accomplished with the generous support of the San Antonio Conservation Society. This achievement of engineering can be replicated in Alamo Plaza.

Of the buildings in question only the actual "Crockett building" – which dates back to 1882 – is aesthetically pleasing. The remaining buildings, however, are unattractive and have had their interiors gutted to accommodate their present tenants. Although labeled as historic, they do not meet the "historical" criterion for many people and should not be identified as such. These rundown and partially vacant structures are little more than eye-sores and aside from their age may have no true significant historic value or uniqueness.

## INTERPRETING ALAMO HISTORY

Questions have arisen as to the period of history the **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project** intends to focus on. Will it center on the early mission period when the Spanish Church first established Mission San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo) and the other river missions? Will the era when the mission Indians inhabited the buildings and worked the land be represented? What about when the mission was secularized and Spain – then Mexico – used the Alamo as a military outpost? Is the Project going to focus exclusively on the historic battle? What about the history of the Alamo after Texas won its independence? The answer to these questions is simple: The plan and the goal of the **Plaza Project** are to present the whole story of the Alamo but with emphasis placed on the military usage of the mission.

As we have seen by examining the mission's post-revolution history, the Alamo has existed on a tenuous lifeline beginning almost immediately after the famous battle. In the decades that preceded the heroic battle, the town of San Antonio experienced substantial growth in its population. Land, especially within the city limits, was a highly sought commodity and the Alamo witnessed significant property development on its ever-shrinking borders. Buildings of different shapes and sizes began to spring-up all around the Alamo to the point where the revered old mission was being crowded out and threatened with extinction. Even up until the early 1900's, real estate speculators and developers cast a hungry eye upon the mission property – indifferent to its unique and diverse history. But the Alamo survived total destruction due to the role it played in Texas' struggle for independence. Were it not for the famous battle and its links to legendary hero's, the mission would have succumbed to urban sprawl and been destroyed in favor of city expansion. It's safe to conclude that, were it not for the vital function it served during the revolution, the Alamo would have garnered little more than a footnote in our history books. Were it not used as a military post and a bastion for freedom, the Alamo would have become an innocuous memory, its history unknown...its story untold with nothing more than an obscure and faded signpost to mark its existence.

## RESTORATION vs. "ARTIFICIAL"

The Alamo itself has already been dramatically altered from its original appearance. The historic Convento and adjoining Long Barrack were physically changed by the U.S. Army in 1847-48 and then again by the DRT and the city in the early 1900's. Very little of the structure we view today is original. Most of what visitors see is actually a recreation. The Alamo Church was subjected to restoration work in the 1850's and had its 1836 appearance altered. In the 1930's, an arched walkway or "arcade" was built against the southwest corner of the Church giving the impression it is part of the Alamo. And yet, in spite of these structural changes in the original and historical architecture, the vast majority people seem to accept the restored buildings without making the emotional charge of "fake."

In Texas, several historical places were restored or rebuilt for the visitors benefit. The Texan stronghold "Fort Defiance" at Goliad defended by Col. James Walker Fannin and nearly 400 Texan volunteers was recreated and looks quite authentic. Through the efforts of the San Antonio Conservation Society, the Mission San Jose was beautifully restored to its early 1800 appearance. The fact that these structures were greatly improved upon from their original condition does not detract from them in any way, nor does it diminish a visitor's experience. They were restored tastefully and accurately. Tourists appreciate the opportunity to see and touch history as it may have appeared some 200 years ago.

There are a great many battlefields and historical sites throughout our country. Each location employs restored buildings or other significant structures to accurately present the story to the inquiring visitor. Historic places like Gettysburg, Bull Run, Shiloh, Antietam, Valley Forge, Mount Vernon, Yorktown, Jamestown, and Williamsburg all utilize rebuilt and historically accurate structures using the identical materials (where possible) with scholarly support to enhance the visitor's experience and to provide a more correct interpretation about the event that occurred at that particular setting. Fully reconstructed in 1976, Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site in eastern Colorado features an 1840's adobe fur trading post that attracts thousands of visitors each year. The fact the fort is a total re-creation has not kept tourists from exploring their heritage and having a positive experience.

So as we can see, authentic re-creations are quite common to our national battlefields and numerous historical sites around the country. Not only are they widely employed by the National Park Service, they are universally accepted by millions of tourists because they help tell the story. Faithful and complete historical reconstructions help provide for a more accurate interpretation and a greater emotional impact for the visitor and student.

The **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project** is committed to excellence and authenticity. The restored South and West Wall will not be constructed from non-authentic materials. The Project will consult some of the most knowledgeable historical authorities available in the re-creation of the Plaza. The materials utilized will be identical to what the Spanish builders used when the Alamo was built in the 1700's – stone and adobe brick. Every effort will be made to construct the buildings to exact specifications – accurate in every detail. It will appear to the visitor as if the structures have always been there.

## **FROM THE OLD POST OFFICE TO TEXAS HISTORY CENTER AND MUSEUM**

On the foundation and the ramparts of the north wall of the Plaza – the location where Travis fired his cannon and died – rests the old Post Office and Federal Building. The **Plaza Project** envisions this historic and grand structure as the home to the proposed **Texas History Center and Museum**. This spacious facility provides ample opportunity for the **Plaza Project** to get creative with the telling of the Texas story. There will be a wide range of high-tech and interactive exhibits, intuitive displays, historical art, and educational laboratories.

For this phase of the **Plaza Project** to be successful, the civic leaders of San Antonio will need to petition the federal government and request a transfer of the historic Post Office to city ownership. Once the transfer is complete, the city, in cooperation with the planners of the **Plaza Project**, will convert the beautiful but under-utilized building into a comprehensive and dynamic museum. The structure will then become a magnet and hub that will attract and redirect many visitors and students to other sites in San Antonio and Texas.

Despite recent efforts by the Federal government to revitalize the Old Post Office and Federal Building at Alamo Plaza with tens of millions of dollars, the building's future no longer works for the long term benefit of this vital historic site. The function and required security of this massive structure is absolutely contrary to the nature of a pedestrian oriented area that is trying to accommodate substantial doses of heritage tourism. Even the building's largest tenant, the FBI, recently moved out because this site can never meet the Homeland Security guidelines it needs. Simply, the ideal role for this 300,000 square foot building is to house a world class multi-media interpretive center and museum that can present the massive story of Texas and the American West to an international audience. The new facility would provide sorely needed space to house the tens of thousands of stored artifacts and priceless collections that currently have no home for public viewing.

But the vision doesn't stop here. The new Texas History Center at Alamo Plaza would also serve educators and students from afar with distance learning programs as well as training centers for new technologies that would assist educators and advanced scholars. The ongoing activities and research programs would dramatically stimulate a higher level of consciousness for needed growth in the immediate downtown area, something all San Antonio leaders have sought. And this, of course, stimulates more economic growth with industries that complement the burgeoning technologies in related communication and educational fields. The city of San Antonio has the opportunity to accommodate, present, and promote its unique and diverse heritage in ways that are truly authentic, tasteful, and inclusive. What more could you ask in the transformation of a famous battlefield?

## **2006 DESTINATION SAN ANTONIO STUDY**

An economic study on San Antonio tourism was conducted by CSL (Conventions, Sports and Leisure) International and presented to the city in March 2006. This 37 page report – **DESTINATION SA: Strategic Planning for Visitor Industry Growth in San Antonio** – details the impact of tourist dollars on the city's economy. This vital study made numerous observations which were then followed-up by many insightful recommendations. CSL International stressed the importance of investment in the regional tourism industry and cautioned the city that a lack of "historic authenticity" and "local culture" in area attractions would cause a reduction in annual revenue. In short, the study strongly suggests San Antonio do everything in its power to strengthen its image and appeal by investing resources into its rich and intriguing history or run the risk of financial loss and increased unemployment.

Below are excerpts from the 2006 CSL study. The following comments either directly or indirectly support the concepts of the **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project**.

1. Investment in the visitor industry can bolster local tax revenues thereby reducing the tax burden on residents, can improve the quality of life aspects for residents, and can increase the exposure of the destination to business leaders from around the country and globally. The importance of comprehensive policy, development and organizational planning with respect to this industry is difficult to overstate.
2. Past studies have estimated the economic impact of the visitor industry in San Antonio at nearly \$7.2 billion, generating nearly \$100 million in taxes and fees to the city of San Antonio and supporting 86,380 jobs within the economy.
3. The visitor industry will continue to play a very important role in supporting the overall economic health of the region.
4. Either continued investment and positioning of the visitor industry in San Antonio will take place or the positive impacts enjoyed by residents will begin to erode.
5. Tax revenues generated by the visitor industry will not remain static. Without continued strategic investment, combined with policies and structures to guide these investments, these revenues can decrease.
6. By assessing opportunities to extend the stay of current visitors, expand into other visitor markets, increase the level of spending per visitor and increase convention activity, growth in economic impact of 30 percent is a realistic and achievable target. This would represent over \$2.0 billion in added annual impact to the San Antonio economy and an added \$29 million in annual City tax revenues.
7. **City policies may not fully encourage “Authentic”** - in several ways, Current City policies don't reflect an appreciation of bringing the authentic character of the destination to the visitor and resident.
8. Every effort must be made to bring the history and culture of San Antonio to the visitor (in most cases they won't work very hard to find it themselves).
9. However, over time, if these issues are not addressed, a significant opportunity to expand the economic base of the community will be lost, and the current positive impact of the visitor industry in San Antonio (at over \$7 billion annually) may begin to erode. As stated aptly by travel writers interviewed as part of this project, the biggest threat to the San Antonio product is gradual conversion to “generic”, or becoming just another Dallas or Houston.
10. Any future visitor industry development initiatives must be infused with the authentic San Antonio features of art, culture and history.
11. In some sense, planners perceive the River Walk and Alamo as the “hook and bait” needed to lure the attendees, with the other attractions serving to extend the visitor stay and ensure return visits.
12. To realize the return visit potential from first time visitors, it will be very important to offer an extensive package of amenities, sufficient to create motivation for return visits.
13. Greater emphasis could be placed on attracting non-Texas visitors and on drawing them to the destination for return visits.

14. Participation from a variety of public and private sector entities will be necessary to realize the potential.
15. Maintaining the historical and cultural integrity of the San Antonio area represents a *significant opportunity* for future visitor industry growth.
16. That a community-wide authenticity campaign be initiated to protect the unique (and highly marketable) assets and character of the destination.
17. The mission of a San Antonio authenticity program should be simply to encourage the public and private sector to make decisions with respect to policy and development that protect and highlight the history and culture of the destination.
18. An authenticity campaign...will help deliver on a promise to visitors and residents that when they travel to San Antonio, their experience will be unique not generic - and authentic not artificial.
19. Research clearly indicates that visitors respond positively to the unique historical and cultural characteristics of the San Antonio destination. As such, a formal effort should be undertaken by the City with a primary goal of protecting and enhancing the “authenticity” of the San Antonio destination. A committee of visitor industry and community leaders should be commissioned to review a wide variety of San Antonio assets and policies with a fundamental question in mind: **“have we represented to the fullest extent possible, the unique and authentic attributes of our community?”**

## **ANTICIPATED BENEFITS**

The foreseeable economic benefits to San Antonio and to Texas are both obvious and numerous. Currently, the Alamo attracts approximately three million visitors annually. These visitors contribute significantly to the eight billion dollars tourists add to the local economy. It is believed a fully realized **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project** will appreciably boost visitor numbers and participation and thusly increase earnings. Employment opportunities will likewise rise as new workers will be needed to accommodate waves of additional tourists to the region. All visitor related businesses; hotels, car rental, restaurants, gift shops, area attractions, and neighboring establishments should experience a surge in customer patronage; necessitating additional hiring's. The supplementary increase in tax revenue collected by the city could aid in reducing the annual tax burden to residents.

Alamo Plaza – an intrinsic part of the Alamo – is not merely open space but a sanguine battlefield; baptized with the blood of hundreds of men caught up in the epic struggle to define the future of Texas. It is ground with a robust history that needs to be protected. With the presentation of its intriguing past, San Antonio and Texas will enjoy many benefits that come with the telling of the complete Texas story.





## Summing it all Up

**“Wow...is that all there is?”** This is the typical query that echoes loud throughout Alamo Plaza from many thousands of visitors. The reason for this is simple; presently it’s not a real Plaza, but a convoluted park. Therefore, the Alamo cannot reach its potential because the Plaza isn’t designed for success. Tourists become dissatisfied with the poor presentation or the absolute absence of authentic Texas history. It’s no wonder few people plan on a return visit to the Alamo. If the city continues on this course, tourists and businesses could look to invest their hard-earned dollars elsewhere.

**Alamo Plaza has always struggled** both physically and fundamentally to fulfill its many meanings. As one of America’s most famous historic sites, the Alamo and Alamo Plaza fail to reward the typical visitor (or the community) who naturally expects to feel that something quite extraordinary took place here. In the context of the intruding modern cityscape, there is less and less focus on history, and more on commercialism. From the incursion of the sideshow attractions and sidewalk vendors to the throngs of people who use the Alamo as a backdrop to express themselves, this historical and sacred place has the appearance of a downtown carnival.

But this trend doesn’t have to continue; it can be reversed. If adopted and implemented, the **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project** can transform and revitalize the historic region by taking visitors on a thematic journey, providing them with the authentic experience people crave, and by intelligently engaging them. One of the primary goals is to have the average visitor so awe-struck and grateful that he/she made this trip that they’ll continue on with a new-found direction, interest, or passion that they never knew was really there. We envision Alamo Plaza from a sense of abundance, not scarcity. The whole Texas story will be presented and told in numerous and creative ways. An open Plaza becomes a new, colorful, and active arena as visitors will be able to experience living history demonstrations, see, feel, and touch the past as history comes alive through the use of quality interpretive exhibits, cultural programs, and dynamic re-creations.

Although Alamo Plaza is an inherent part of the Alamo Church, the focus of the **Alamo Plaza Project** is the revitalization and transformation of the Plaza itself. It is not in competition with the DRT’s stewardship and their vital work. Rather, the **Plaza Project** seeks to enhance the educational opportunities and historical experience by completing the Plaza and presenting a more comprehensive understanding of the whole Alamo story.

Alamo Plaza should be a place of dignity and pride. It is ground where brave and noble men gave their lives for what they believed in. With the support of the citizens of San Antonio, “the people of Texas,” and from “all Americans in the world,” we can effect positive and meaningful changes to the venerable old fortress and leave behind a proud and lasting legacy that will benefit generations for years to come. Let us remember the Alamo...again.

The **Alamo Plaza Restoration Project** will be funded largely by grants received from historic foundations, businesses/corporations, and private donations from the general public.

**REMEMBER – RECLAIM – RESTORE – THE ALAMO**

## QUOTES FROM NOTABLE INDIVIDUALS

***"You cannot learn the history of the Alamo by visiting the church of the Alamo today," (Adina de Zavala, Texas Preservationist)***

***"Achieving the status of a great city requires two main ingredients: VISION and COURAGE." (Gary Foreman, Film maker, Photographer)***

***"Like those who initiated the practice centuries before, we certainly have become experts at killing that which we love the most. When it comes to erasing our past, we are definitely masters at this business." (Gary Foreman, Film maker, Photographer)***

***"Could any society have a more worthy, more beneficial object, than that of keeping alive in a country its patriotic enthusiasm, which, after all, is the keynote to a national greatness?" (Clara Driscoll, Texas Preservationist)***

***"How many of you...today have really contemplated the old Alamo building...and learned the wonderful lesson of self-sacrifice? (Clara Driscoll, Texas Preservationist)***

***"The room(s) have since been demolished, together with the walls which Travis defended, and the barracks all are gone. The vandal hand of progress has done its work...while the truck-cart of traffic rumbles over the identical ground that drank in the life-blood of those devoted men." (John Sutherland, Alamo Courier, 1860)***

***"In many respects, this is the second coming of the Hugo Schmeltzer fiasco...we humans just never pay attention to history." (Gary Foreman, Film maker, Photographer)***

***"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has." (Margaret Mead, Anthropologist)***

***The "idea for a state-of-the-art museum in the old Post Office is right-on and much needed." (Paul Hutton, Historian, Professor of History at University of New Mexico)***

***"I'm afraid we're in danger of losing our history" (Richard B. Winders, Alamo Curator, Historian, Author)***

***"We're not doing a good job of telling the stories and letting people know what happened and why it's important." (Richard B. Winders, Alamo Curator, Historian, Author)***

***"A nation with no regard to its past will have little future worth remembering." (Abraham Lincoln, 16<sup>th</sup> President)***

***"There is still room for improvement – especially in the Plaza" (Richard B. Winders, Alamo Curator, Historian, Author)***

***"The Alamo stands out in high relief as our noblest exemplification of sacrifice, heroic and pure...Without the inspiration of the cry – Remember the Alamo – the great southwest might never have become a part of the nation." (Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32<sup>nd</sup> President)***

***"No visitor really sees the place where our heroes died." (Adina de Zavala, Texas Preservationist)***

***"Clara Driscoll set out to portray the Alamo as a fountain from which Texas, and the rest of America, could continually regenerate the values of sacrifice and patriotism, and where, during times of crisis, countryman could find the courage to persist and prevail." (Randy Roberts, James S. Olson – "A Line in the Sand")***

***The Alamo "was an example of unselfish heroism" and should "be sacred to every man in whose heart throbs one iota of patriotism and respect for the heroic dead." (Adina de Zavala, Texas Preservationist)***

***"A lot of what San Antonio has to offer is in the area of heritage tourism." (Sharon Wasielewski, San Antonio historic preservation officer)***

***"Heritage tourists stay longer and spend more money. Part of this process is finding the right balance for San Antonio" (Sharon Wasielewski, San Antonio historic preservation officer)***

***"Progress is starting to strangle an area that has to be maintained as a crucial part of Texas History. It has always amazed me that there is so little left to see of this important place. Who decided that having "Ripley's Believe it or not" and "Tomb-Rider 3D" on the historic site of the West Wall was a good idea"? (Phil Collins, Musician, Song writer)***

***"There is a plan afoot to replicate some of the compound so people/tourists/visitors can get a feel of the way it was back then. Though it won't be THE West Wall....though it won't be THE Low Barracks....it WILL make the Alamo story that the defenders, the brave Mexican soldiers, and the forgotten Tejano heroes fought for, come to life." (Phil Collins, Musician, Song writer)***

***"If you agree....the Alamo site should be restored or made more reverent, make your voice heard. It won't happen otherwise." (Phil Collins, Musician, Song writer)***

***"It hit me like a ton of bricks that there really was so little left of the compound. I was also surprised, dismayed and shocked that the row of normal shops from 1974 had somehow transformed into a row of tacky, second rate eye sores." (Phil Collins, Musician, Song writer)***

***"Change comes hard, and it is so much easier to sit and do nothing, than to be dynamic and make things happen. But this is exactly what San Antonio must do." (Mark Lemon, Artist, Author)***

***"The Alamo is pitifully presented today, to the point of being an embarrassment. Docents and guides constantly have to explain to tourists that it "wasn't just the church." (Mark Lemon, Artist, Author)***

***"The Alamo, which should be the Crown Jewel of Texas, huddles forlornly amidst noisy modern squalor and tacky tourist traps. Why the city does not take drastic and immediate action to rectify this mess is beyond me." (Mark Lemon, Artist, Author)***

***"Most politicians are content to just go along, and real movers are few and far between. I pray that from San Antonio will emerge political leaders with the real vision necessary to restore the plaza to a beautiful place of reflection, cultural pride, and historical relevancy." (Mark Lemon, Artist, Author)***

***"Alamo Plaza, the place where Texian, Tejano and Mexican soldiers fought and died during the Battle of the Alamo in 1836, has deteriorated into a site of crass commercialism that is embarrassing, to say the least. Unfortunately, the status of Alamo Plaza is the byproduct of ignorance and apathy. But something can be done to restore the dignity of a place that has inspired so many over the years." (Willian Chemerka, Historian, Founder of The Alamo Society, Editor of The Alamo Journal)***

***"The present state of Alamo Plaza eviscerates the memory of the event and people who fought there." (Col. Allen C. Huffines, US Army, Ret, Author, Historian)***

***"There are few battlefields that are known world-wide and the Alamo is one of them. Fewer still are such famous battlefields treated as an amusement park where barkers and tourists exchange coin where men suffered their last terrified moments in their world for a cause they believed in." (Col. Allen C. Huffines, US Army, Ret, Author, Historian)***

***"The battlefield was not just the church and convento buildings, it was the entire Plaza area." (Col. Allen C. Huffines, US Army, Ret, Author, Historian)***

***"Alamo Plaza could be a place that not only honors the memory of the dead, but also a place of pride and dignity for the people of San***

***Antonio and the State of Texas.” (Col. Allen C. Huffines, US Army, Ret, Author, Historian)***

***“Why can’t the Federal Building become an interpretive center for the history of the battle...or even more?” (Col. Allen C. Huffines, US Army, Ret, Author, Historian)***

***“As an historian, I often wonder how future generations will remember our present battlefield efforts. Will there be non-stop traffic through battlefield memorials? Will future generations commemorate our efforts with a carnival-like atmosphere comparable to the money-changers in the temple?” (Col. Allen C. Huffines, US Army, Ret, Author, Historian)***

***“We need visionaries to lead us out of this present wilderness and restore the battlefield to its rightful place in the world.” (Col. Allen C. Huffines, US Army, Ret, Author, Historian***

***)***

***“Today, we need a nation of Minutemen, citizens who are not only prepared to take arms, but citizens who regard the preservation of freedom as the basic purpose of their daily life and who are willing to consciously work and sacrifice for that freedom.” (John F. Kennedy, 35<sup>th</sup> President)***

***“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.” (Ronald Reagan, 40<sup>th</sup> President)***

***“We should work toward a physical use of the space that does a better job of honoring the history of the Alamo” (Jullian Castro, Mayor of San Antonio)***

***“A lack of reverence for the Alamo’s sacred battleground has turned much of the iconic site into a place no one remembers.” (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***



***"A shabby sidewall of Ripley's Believe It or Not faces what was once the southwest corner of the old fortress, where Alamo defenders positioned their largest piece of artillery, an eighteen-pounder." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"City of San Antonio erected a small plaque here a few years ago, but hardly anyone notices it amid all the commercial junk." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***The Crockett block buildings "have been taken over by a sad assortment of tawdry curiosities, such as the Tomb Rider 3D ride and arcade and the Guinness World Records Museum. A little farther down Alamo Street are the Louis Tussaud's Plaza Wax Museum and the Ultimate Mirror Maze Challenge." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"Three million people visit the Alamo every year, and hundreds of thousands of them must pass along this sidewalk (Crockett block) without realizing its historical significance or recognizing that this portion of the most iconic location in Texas has been allowed to go to seed." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"Visitors seldom fail to remark that the Alamo is so much smaller than they imagined, but that's because they are looking only at the church and the long barrack." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"Most of the fighting actually took place at the now nonexistent walls surrounding Alamo Plaza and within the plaza itself, which stretches as far west as the wax museum and as far north as the U.S. post office." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"Travis, shot through the head, fell about twenty feet from the post office's southwest corner, near what is now a stairwell leading to a nondescript side entrance....Yet the only clue that anything important took place here are two tiny bronze indicators on the sidewalks on either side of the post office, noting "Alamo Mission original property line." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"Considering the abuse heaped on it through the ages, it's a miracle the Alamo survives at all." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"People want to see the space, not signs" (Bruce Winders, Alamo historian and curator)***

***"...the DRT has always seemed more worshipful of the Alamo than respectful of its history, piously referring to the church as "the shrine."" (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"Whoever we Texans are as a people, it started here." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"No one has yet implemented a grand vision for giving the Alamo a comprehensive perspective, connecting the historical dots, as it were." (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"...there is plenty of room for improvement. The city could start by closing the remaining lanes of traffic on Alamo Street. It is not too late to remember the Alamo. Believe it or not" (Gary Cartwright, Senior Editor, Texas Monthly Magazine, Nov 2008)***

***"Anyone who has visited it (the Alamo) is shocked at how overwhelmed the site is by crass urban sprawl and two busy streets right through the plaza." (George Nelson, artist, archaeologist)***

***"Over-shadowed by tall modern buildings and surrounded by tourist traps it is very hard to grasp the size, shape and nature of the Alamo's original layout." (George Nelson, artist, archaeologist)***

***"The Alamo tells us much about the flow of cultures, people and the fate of landmarks left to the winds of greed and overpopulation." (George Nelson, artist, archaeologist)***

***"(We) need to protect and cherish our historical and natural landscapes from the tidal wave of human population and shortsighted greed."(George Nelson, artist, archaeologist)***

***"So far our culture has valued money and commercial interest over any common sense preservation of the Alamo compound, as well as***

***the landscape of Texas. We can do better." (George Nelson, artist, archaeologist)***