





SAN ANTONIO

San Antonio Int'l Airport

Alamo Heights

Terrell Hills

Fort Sam Houston

Kirby

San Antonio Museum of Art

Joe & Harry Freeman Coliseum

Alamo Dome

SOUTH SIDE LIONS PARK

Stinson Municipal Airport

Brooks Air Force Base

SAN ANTONIO

SAN ANTONIO PAST

Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca (1490-1560) is believed to have been the first outsider to camp at the headwaters of today's San Antonio River in the 1520s, about two dozen years after Columbus discovered the New World. The Spanish government claimed the territory until 1821.

When the Spaniards came to the San Antonio River valley in the 1680s, the village and the river located at the site of present-day San Antonio was occupied by the Payaya Indians and known as Yanaguana, which translated into "refreshing waters" in their language. When a French settlement was rumored as being initiated on the Texas coast, the Spaniards, to protect their claim to Texas, instituted the mission system. Between 1690 and 1792, they established 36 missions in the state. As they progressed northward, they were confronted by Apache and Comanche Indians on horseback.

The Mission San Antonio de Valero—named in honor of **Saint Anthony of Padua** (1195-1231) and the Spanish viceroy, the Duke of Valero—was established in May 1718 and moved to its present site in 1724. When an earlier 1744 church building collapsed, a new one was started on the three-acre rectangular compound in 1758. Measuring 154 yards by 54 yards, it was framed by stone walls three feet thick and nine to 12 feet high. This was one of the five Spanish missions established by Franciscans in what is today San Antonio to Christianize and educate the native Indians, even if they already had a culture of their own. The mission that is today known as the Alamo was secularized in 1793.

To keep Texas in Spanish hands, the King of Spain in 1723 approved a plan whereby Spanish settlers would inhabit the region and keep it for the Crown.

Following a sea and land voyage lasting more than a year, the first group of weary travelers arrived at the *presidio* (a defense compound) of San Antonio on March 9, 1731. Totaling 55 or 56 persons, they had immigrated to Texas from the Spanish Canary Islands by order of **King Philip V** (1724-46). On July 2, 1731, they began to lay out La Villa de San Fernando by choosing a site on the east side of the Plaza de las Islas (now Main Plaza) for the church and a site on the west side, now Military Plaza, for the *casa real* (government building). On July 19, the captain of the *presidio*, **Juan Antonio de Almazan** (birth and death

dates unknown), read to the settlers the decree of the viceroy naming them and their descendants persons of nobility. On August 1, when the new city council met to elect an *alcalde*, akin to today's mayor, this was probably the first election held in Texas.

La Villa de San Fernando was renamed after the Texas Revolution to San Antonio de Bexar in 1837. "San Antonio was to Texas what Boston and Philadelphia, combined, were to the original Thirteen Colonies," observes Sandy Sheehy in her book titled *Texas Big Rich*.

In 1772 San Antonio became Spain's capital in Texas, and the Spanish Governor's Palace became the residence of its official representative. It remained such until 1827, when the capital was transferred to Saltillo, Mexico.

Manuel Ignacio Rodriguez built the city's first two-story building in 1803; it took 42 years before the first three-story structure, The Plaza House, was built. In 1883, construction began on the J. H. Kaupmann building, San Antonio's first four-story building that also had the first elevator.

Victor Blanco (birth and death dates unknown), a mulatto, a Mexican official, and a Texas legislator, became the first and only African-American mayor of San Antonio in 1809.

Following an 11-year struggle against Spain, Mexico won its freedom in 1821, when **Augustin de Iturbe** (d. 1824), a Spanish general turned rebel, became emperor of the new nation. Under him, American colonists could settle in Texas, provided they took the oath of Catholic faith. San Antonio de Bexar came under Mexican rule. Mexico was bankrupt and unable to govern itself. It had 13 presidents—from liberal-leaning Federalists to dictatorial Centralists—all struggling for power, during its first 15 years of independence.

"Unsuccessful in escaping debt through traditional business pursuits, **Moses Austin** (1761-1821) developed a plan in 1819 for settling an American colony in Spanish Texas," notes the Texas State Historical Association, but was rebuffed by **Gov. Antonio Maria Martinez** (d. 1823), the last governor of Spanish Texas, until Austin met, on Military Plaza, the self-proclaimed **Baron de Bastrop** (1759-1827), an early acquaintance from New Orleans. The Old Three Hundred, Stephen F. Austin's first colony, was settled in 1821 near Washington-on-the-Brazos by Austin's son. The official census of Bexar then listed the town's population as being 1,814 persons.

In 1823, the Mexican government passed the Imperial Colonization Law, the first of several to encourage settlement of Texas territory. Farming heads of families received 177 acres of land, those who raised cattle 4,428 acres. No tax would be assessed for the first six years. ". . . there shall be neither sale nor purchase of slaves in the empire," stated article 30 of the law. Federalist **Gen. Guadalupe Victoria**/Manuel Felix

Fernandez (1786-1843), Mexico's first president—and the only one in the first 50 years of Mexico's history to serve out his full term—established the liberal Constitution of 1824 that angered Gen. Santa Anna and eventually led to the battle of the Alamo, 12 years later.

When Mexico redefined its territories in 1824, Texas, its northernmost territory, was joined to Coahuila and the capital was moved from San Antonio de Bexar to Saltillo, 365 miles away. The Texas settlers had only about one-sixth the representation that Coahuila had. Citizens, armed and angry, petitioned for a separate statehood with the Declaration of Causes. To add pain to the injury, the Law of April 1830 forbade further colonization of Texas by U.S. settlers, levied taxes that were enforced by army garrisons, and sent convicts to live in the colonies. The settlers hoped to convince the Federalists that Texas wanted to preserve the 1824 Constitution, which guaranteed equal rights to all persons living in Mexico. "Like the American colonists in 1776, the Texians felt their freedoms betrayed," notes historian Lewis F. Fisher.

Santa Anna, who had seized control three times in 1833 alone, advocated that all foreigners, meaning Anglo-Americans, be thrown out. **Stephen F. Austin** (1793-1836) traveled to Mexico City in 1833 to deliver a petition to the new president. Upon his return, he was arrested on suspicion of inciting rebellion and imprisoned for 18 months, part of it in solitary confinement. Santa Anna dispatched his brother-in-law, **Gen. Martin Perfecto de Cos** (1800-1854), to disarm the nettlesome "ingrate" Texans. He also ordered him to expel all Americans who had come to Texas since 1830 and to arrest Texas patriots opposing Santa Anna's government.

The first shot of the Texas Revolution was fired in Gonzales, a village about 50 miles east of San Antonio. The town had a six-pound cannon on loan from the Mexicans since 1832 to defend itself against Indian attacks. Cos feared the cannon might be used against his troops and demanded it back. Gonzales refused. A banner was made to fly over the cannon, taunting "Come and Take It." After one Mexican soldier was killed, the Mexican army retreated, but Gonzales flamed into the Lexington of Texas, and the Texas Revolution began. A ragtag Texas army marched on to San Antonio occupied by Cos.

General Cos had brought 1,200 Mexican troops to San Antonio de Bexar in September of 1835. In December, some 300 Texas volunteers under the command of **Col. Ben Milam** (1788-1835) battled Cos only about 400 yards from the Alamo compound. Fighting raged from street to street and house to house during the four cold and wet days. Ben Milam of Frankfort, Kentucky, was shot on the third afternoon. After more than 200 of his troops were killed, Cos retreated to the Alamo and surrendered on the morning of December 9, giving the Texans all

public property, arms, and ammunition. Cos signed the surrender papers in what is now known as the Cos House in La Villita (see entry) and agreed to withdraw across the Rio Grande River, which he did on Christmas day. The vanquished garrison was even given a cannon and guns with ammunition to protect themselves against the Indians.

But when General Cos arrived in Mexico City and told **Gen. Santa Anna** (1794-1876), a five-time president of Mexico, the story of his humiliating defeat and surrender, the dictator exploded in rage and swore to crush the insurgents as an example to others throughout the country.

Texans, although weary of Santa Anna, did not anticipate that Cos's humiliation would provoke him into gathering 8,000 men, some among them foreign adventurers, and sending them across the Rio Grande River into Texas in mid-winter. Several hundred men and animals perished from hardships, but Cos doggedly pushed on to drive "those perfidious foreigners" out of Texas. He crossed the Rio Grande around February 17. The Mexican army had covered 365 miles in 29 days, from San Luis Potosi to San Antonio. Cos was back, with the same men and arms, in spite of what he had agreed to just weeks before.

In January 1836, **Sam Houston** (1793-1863), the former governor of Tennessee and commander of the revolutionary troops, sent **Col. Jim Bowie** (1796-1836) and two dozen other men to San Antonio with instructions to destroy the Alamo. Bowie and **Lt. Col. James C. Neill** (1790-1845) could not retrieve the 24 captured cannons for lack of oxen or horses. They did not want to leave the artillery inside the mission. Instead, while Neill tended to his seriously ill family, starting on February 11, Bowie began reinforcing the Alamo. **Colonel William Barrett Travis** (1809-1836) arrived on February 2 with a small cavalry company, bringing the number of the Alamo defenders to 130 or so. On March 2, Texans signed Texas's declaration of independence from Mexico.

(Please see the Alamo heading in the SIGHTS AND ATTRAC-TIONS chapter for details about the protracted Alamo siege and its major protagonists.)

In April, Gen. Santa Anna was brutally defeated at San Jacinto and forced to acknowledge Texas's independence. The Mexican Congress rejected the surrender and refused to recognize Texas. When the Republic of Texas became the 29th state of the United States, border conflicts turned into war. As a result of the Manifest Destiny doctrine, U.S. Marines were in Mexico City two years later. The Mexican government surrendered and signed a treaty in 1848.

From 1820 to 1865, San Antonio owed allegiance first to Spain, then to Mexico, then to the Republic of Texas, then to the United States, then to the Southern Confederacy, and then, finally to the United States again.

Slavery was legalized after Texas became an independent republic, and the practice continued when it became a state in 1845, although most European immigrants were entirely opposed to the enslavement of anyone. Texas joined the Southern Confederacy in 1861. Between 1820 and 1865 more than 5,000 slaves are believed to have crossed into Mexico, where slavery was illegal. In 1866, St. Paul United Methodist Church was established in the Alamo City. Located at 508 North Center, it is the oldest African-American church in the city.

The Congress of the Republic of Texas was eager for settlers after winning its independence in the same year that **James Madison** (b. 1751), the fourth president of the United States, died. The Congress actually offered newcomers free land and companies inducements to bring settlers to the new republic.

Elsewhere in Texas, in 1846, the settlement of Dallas had four families and two bachelors. Fort Worth was first settled in 1849 as an outpost along the Trinity River and was so named after **Gen. William Jenkins Worth** (1794-1849), a commander of the Department of Texas and hero of the Mexican War. Worth never saw the fort or even knew it was named after him because he died of cholera at San Antonio just a few weeks before, one of six hundred such deaths in the Alamo City.

Also in 1846, the San Antonio town council created the post of city marshal, with a salary of \$50 a month, but James Dunn, the first marshal, served less than one month.

“When, as the one inland city in Texas, it began to attract settlers and traders—not only Anglo-Americans, but French and German colonists, who had commenced settlement in central Texas in the middle 1840s—this rude, violent, isolated outpost acquired an unexpected cosmopolitan tone,” observes a publication by the San Antonio chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Compared with the Canary Islanders, San Antonio’s German settlers were young, well-educated political idealists.

In 1850, the first federal census listed the population of the Alamo City at 3,488, including 1,167 native Texans, 678 from other states, 572 from Mexico, 455 from Germany and Prussia, 128 from Ireland, 92 from France, 48 from England and Scotland, and 262 “Negro” slaves. Ten years later—when William Menger’s five-year-old Western Brewery, the first commercial one in Texas, was San Antonio’s largest industry—the population figure stood at 8,235.

When landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, the designer of New York City’s Central Park, visited the Alamo City in 1856, he found the city a “jumble of races, costumes, languages and buildings,” while performances of a local theater company were “death on horrors and despair.” Olmstead thought the Alamo to be “a mere wreck of its former grandeur.”

In 1859, when the city's population was 10,000, Carl Hilmar Guenther, a German immigrant milling flour in Fredericksburg, bought land along the San Antonio River, south of downtown, to find a bigger market. He built a stone home that would be the family's residence until 1948; it is a restaurant and museum today (see DINING chapter). His Pioneer Flour Mills is still the nation's largest and oldest family-owned mill. A German-language newspaper, *Die Freie Presse fuer Texas*, began publication in 1865 and was published for the next 80 years.

Between 1856 and 1861, **Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee** (1807-70) was stationed in San Antonio with the U.S. Army and also served as a dedicated Sunday school teacher. On February 16, 1861, a mob of secessionists confronted him outside his office on Main Plaza and urged him to join their cause. He swore loyalty to his home state, Virginia, which then was still in the Union. The dissatisfied mob escorted Lee by force and sent him out of town without his personal belongings. He never returned.

Two months before the firing on Ft. Sumter, in April 1861, a coup took place at the Alamo. It was carried out by a secret white supremacy group called the Knights of the Golden Circle (KGC) and made possible by **Gen. David E. Twiggs** (1790-1862), temporary commander of the U.S. troops in Texas. An assumed pro-slavery Southerner and strong advocate of state's rights, Twiggs surrendered his troops and \$3 million in military supplies to the local KGC and resigned his commission. "Twiggs's unwillingness to fire upon Texans in the streets of their own cities was not appreciated in the North," notes the Texas State Historical Association, adding, "What he viewed as an attempt to avoid bloodshed, most Unionists saw as part of a Southern conspiracy for which Twiggs was mercilessly vilified."

He was dismissed from federal service by **President James Buchanan** (1791-1868) on March 1 and on May 22 was commissioned as the senior major general in the Confederate States Army. The Union Army condemned Twiggs as a traitor; the Texas State Legislature proclaimed him a patriot. Confederates occupied the Alamo for four years, but they were continuously resisted by Europeans, particularly the Germans, who overwhelmingly rejected slavery. "A number of them disputing Confederate conscription laws were shot or hanged," according to Lewis F. Fisher's book, *San Antonio: Outpost of Empires*.

After **Abraham Lincoln** (1809-65) was elected president of the United States in 1861, KGC pushed for a convention in Austin. Although he was a slave owner himself, Gov. Sam Houston opposed secession. Elaborate plans to fortify San Antonio were made by the Confederates during the Civil War, encircling the city with an outer ring of earthwork forts and an inner ring of trenches.

The Alamo then had outside steps, which led up the center of the

building to the second floor, ending in a platform. The platform was a slave market, where a “hardy Negro brought anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,500. The thin ones were not rated so high. Men brought bigger prices than women and boys because they could pick more cotton,” according to one account in the *San Antonio Express* in 1917.

During Reconstruction, the Army moved back into the Alamo until a new base, named Post San Antonio, now known as Fort Sam Houston (see entry), was established in 1876 on the open spaces of Government Hill, which then was beyond the northeastern limits of San Antonio.

In 1866, a cholera epidemic hit the city and killed 292, which, several years later, led to what is now Santa Rosa Medical Center. In 1869, rainfall from midnight, July 6, until the morning of July 6, reached 14 and a half inches. The city was estimated to have 12,256 inhabitants in 1870.

Confederate veteran, Col. T. C. “Tom” Frost arrived in the Alamo City in 1868 and joined his brother in operating a mercantile and auction business on Main Plaza. Within a few years, Frost began operating a private bank to finance his customers’ wool transactions. He was once authorized to issue currency with its own name on the bills. The bank withstood the bank runs during the Depression and became San Antonio’s largest bank. Today, Frost National Bank, now Cullen/Frost Bankers Inc., is the only one among the state’s ten largest banks that survived Texas’s oil and real estate bust of the 1980s. The Cullen name dates from 1977, when it merged with a Houston-based bank. It is now the state’s largest independent bank and the only one to survive the upheavals of the 1980s without government help.

By 1872, the Reconstruction era ended in the Alamo City and the French-educated architect Francois Giraud became its mayor. But the Alamo City had all the trappings of the Old West. Cowboys and wagon trains crowded the narrow streets and the open-air market on Military Plaza, according to author Fisher. San Antonio dominated Texas trade with Mexico. Saddle makers and bootsmiths, vaudeville theaters and saloons sprang up. A red light district boomed south of today’s Market Square/El Mercado.

“After the Civil War, with the frontier again protected by the army and new markets for beef opening in the East and Midwest, San Antonio found itself the southernmost hub of a new cattle empire grown from the ranching subculture of the Spanish,” writes Fisher.

In 1867, the Chisholm Trail started south of San Antonio and ended in Abilene, Kansas. San Antonio profited greatly from the thousands of head of cattle that were sent north and east after the Civil War. The trail was named after **Jesse Chisholm** (1806-68), a half-breed Cherokee trader from Tennessee who drove his wagon and goods from

Oklahoma to trading posts near Wichita, Kansas. Cattle drivers followed his wagon to Abilene and other Kansas towns and extended the route southward all the way to the Mexican border. In 1867, only 35,000 longhorns went to Kansas; two years later the number rose to 350,000, and by 1871, more than 700,000 cattle were trampling the Kansas pastures.

The cowboy became the king of the prairie. He was described thus: "He enjoys a coarse, practical joke, or a smutty story; loves danger but abhors labor of the common kind; never tires of riding, never wants to walk, no matter how short the distance he desires to go. He would rather fight with pistols than pray; loves tobacco, liquor and women better than any other trinity. His life borders nearly upon that of an Indian."

Cowboys on the trail, generally, were young men in their early 20s and described by an older cattleman as "prematurely bowlegged, with a streak of hell in their hearts." By the time they were 30, many were dead from too many long hours in the saddle. They worked from sunup to sundown, earning about \$30 a month and all the beans they could eat. When a cowboy rode alone, he carried between the folds of his yellow slicker a frying pan, some bacon, salt, coffee, flour, and a bottle of sourdough.

"The cowboy firmly believed that God made some man large and some men small but that Colonel Colt, with his .45, made them all equal," notes author Caleb Pirtle.

The beast that made the cowboys indispensable was the longhorn. "The longhorn is the totem of Texas, its sacred beast, its quintessential symbol," notes a *Dallas Morning News* feature. "A few generations ago, the longhorn lifted the state from the ruin of war, then became the foundation of a vast economic empire." Because of the longhorn, the horseback laborer who tended him became America's most popular folk hero. It is because of the longhorn that the world thinks of Texas the way it does. Some believe that no more than 4,000 longhorns are left in the United States. The Texas longhorn is the result of natural selection and survival of the fittest.

Its evolution probably began in 1493 when Christopher Columbus brought a load of cattle from Spain to Santo Domingo on his second voyage to the New World. Two centuries later, Franciscan friars drove cattle across the Rio Grande into Texas to provide beef for their missions. Over the years, some of the animals wandered away or, more likely, were chased away by Indians. They became wild beasts, breeding in the wilderness where the odds of survival were slim.

By the 1830s, when English-speaking settlers began occupying the newly independent Republic of Texas, wild cattle roamed from the Rio Grande all the way north to the Red River. Only the strongest survived the rigors of the harsh Texas wilderness and the summers lacking in

water. Over the decades they developed into a new kind of cattle, the Texas longhorn, “a breed as tough as the land that spawned it.” By the end of the 1884, the Chisholm Trail was virtually abandoned. Ranchers were turning to rail shipments.

On February 19, 1877, the first train, that of the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio Railway, arrived on the Sunset Line in the Alamo City—the last among the nation’s major cities to obtain a railroad. A parade of 8,000 San Antonians greeted the trainload of 200 dignitaries, including the governor. “For two days, and far into the night, San Antonio celebrated the momentous event with revelry, torchlight parades, and speeches,” observes author Frank Jennings. From then on, the cattle would be transported to Kansas without having to undertake a three-month trek north.

Streetcar service was inaugurated in 1878 with mule-drawn cars. Faster electric cars appeared in 1890 and soon monopolized the city transportation options. At the turn of the century, the San Antonio Street Railway Company gobbled up all of its competitors. Starting in 1933, streetcars were phased out and replaced by buses.

The Grand Opera House, an opulent venue for large touring shows, opened at Crockett Street and north Alamo Plaza in 1886. Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth performed here for up to 1,500 at a time, as did the classical pianist Ignace Paderewski. The play *Ben Hur* was performed in 1910 with horses and other animals on stage. The building fell in status to serving as an H. L. Green variety store and fell again when it became a Ripley’s Believe It or Not (see entry) showcase in 1987.

When architect **Atlee B. Ayres** (1873-1969) came to San Antonio in 1887, he observed 70 years later, there were no paved streets or paved plazas. What the city had were the chili stands on Alamo, Main, and Military Plazas, and they were the most picturesque at night. The stands consisted of tables covered with oil cloths, tin hexagon lanterns, colored glassware, and flowers. But what Ayres found the most charming were the “attractive, colorfully dressed Chili Queens who served the splendid typical Mexican food.”

If the Anglo settlers found the Chili Queens charming, the Hispanic residents of Bexar County resented perhaps the ever-encroaching English speakers. “The establishment of the San Antonio Club in 1881 marked the unification of the city’s non-Hispanic elite, who were mostly German and English,” notes the *San Antonio Current*, a city alternative weekly. “In the process of this unification, the Alamo became a symbol to justify Anglo privilege.”

In 1888, San Antonio was cosmopolitan enough to justify the city’s first fair, the Great International Exposition, held in today’s Roosevelt Park. This is the very spot where **Theodore Roosevelt** (1858-1919)

camped his Rough Riders ten years later. **Porfirio Diaz** (1830-1915), the Mexican president, sent his personal band to perform at the fair, which was intended as a trade show for Mexican and American exhibitors. About 10,000 attended on the first day, November 13. The following year, there were 125,000 fairgoers, while the Alamo City had barely 35,000 residents.

The city had 36,673 inhabitants by 1891. **Lieutenant Benjamin Foulois** successfully flew the first military aircraft in the world, a 1909 Wright Brothers biplane assembled by soldiers on the post, on March 2, 1910. It marked the birth of the U.S. Air Force.

Burnett Green was hired as San Antonio's first black police officer in 1894, six years before Elizabeth Dunn Hardy became the first female police officer, monitoring female prisoners.

At the turn of the century, a transplanted Mississippian **Florence Thornton Butt** (1864-1954), moved to Texas in search of a more suitable climate for her husband Clarence, who suffered from tuberculosis. After a year in San Antonio, the family, which included three young boys, moved to Kerrville, where she started Mrs. C. C. Butt's Staple & Fancy Grocery on the ground floor of the family's two-story home. By 1945, H-E-B—named after Howard Edward Butt, Florence's third and youngest son—had 50 stores.

After several failures to grow, Howard (d. 1991) moved to the Rio Grande Valley, expanded to San Antonio in 1942, and by the 1950s H-E-B was a leading food retailer in South and Central Texas. The company moved to San Antonio's historic Arsenal Building on the San Antonio River in 1985 and now claims revenues of \$7 billion and 270 stores.

As the century wound up, San Antonio was the fastest growing city in the state. It had 53,321 inhabitants, as opposed to 44,653 for Houston and 42,638 for Dallas. The Alamo City's population was one-third German as late as 1880. San Antonio's ethnic makeup changed again when several hundred thousand refugees sought relief from political unrest in Mexico under the dictator Porfirio Diaz. Tens of thousands came to the Alamo City's West Side, and in 1913 the Spanish-language *La Prensa* became their source of news from Mexico.

A major flood hit downtown San Antonio in 1913. After oil was discovered on the Stringer Ranch near Electra, Texas, "Farmers, in debt for breakfast, were millionaires by dinner time." Another disastrous flood, on September 8-10, 1921, caused the loss of 51 lives, washed away 21 bridges, and cost millions of dollars. It was the deadliest natural disaster ever to strike San Antonio.

The last man executed by hanging in Bexar County was the 32-year-old Clemente Apolinar in February 1923 on Cameron Street, convicted of killing a boy of 14. Starting the following year, all Texas executions

took place in Huntsville. By then, more than a 1,000 out-of-town visitors crowded the city daily to take in its sights and attractions.

In 1924, the year that the Scottish Rite Cathedral (see entry) was dedicated, the San Antonio Conservation Society was also founded. These “little old ladies in tennis shoes” as they sometimes refer to themselves, now number some 3,500 and have helped preserve numerous structures some of which they own, and fought to save many more. Were it not for these courageous women, many of whose husbands have been pillars of the business community over the years, San Antonio would be visibly different today and not nearly as attractive as it is. The society, still largely a volunteer undertaking, is located in the historic Wulff House, 107 King William St.; (210) 224-6163, Internet www.saconservaion.org. Its offices are open to the public Mon-Thu 9:30 am-3:30 pm.

The Olmos Dam was constructed farther up the river in 1926 to control future floods as a result of the disastrous flood of September 1921, when the water depth reached 12 feet at Houston and North St. Mary's Streets downtown. That year, Municipal Auditorium (see entry) was also completed, along with the state's first Civic Grand Opera. It was followed by the city-built, Greek-Revival-style San Pedro Playhouse three years later and is still standing in San Pedro Springs Park (see entry).

The stock market crashed on the day that the Express Publishing Company dedicated its new building two blocks north of the Alamo. “Whereas at the beginning of the Depression, the nation was chastened to learn that one-third of Americans was ill-fed, ill-clothed, and ill-housed, in San Antonio in the late 1930s that figure amounted to more than half the local population; close to 40,000 families in the Alamo City lived in dire conditions,” according to the *Texas Observer*. The city's worst bank failure came in 1931, when the City Central Bank and Trust, holding nearly 20 percent of the municipal funds, went belly up.

To add insult to injury, the 1936 centennial celebrations of Texas independence were centered in Dallas, a city that did not even exist a hundred years earlier.

“San Antonio,” English novelist **Graham Greene** wrote in 1939, “is more Mexican than American—not quite genuine Mexican (it is far too clean for that) but picture-postcard Mexican.”

“While the cities across the South burned in the backlash against integration during the 1950's and 1960's, San Antonio managed to desegregate peacefully,” claims the *San Antonio Express-News*, adding that “the city's tolerant climate and its diversity” helped desegregate the city's schools, restaurants, and shops. Before 1954, segregation was common in San Antonio as it was all across Texas. There were separate schools for African-Americans, Hispanics, and Anglos. Blacks had to

sit in the back of buses and watch movies from the balconies of the theaters, including San Antonio's Majestic.

But the saddest day in modern Texas history, even in San Antonio, is probably November 22, 1963. The dugout of **John Neely Bryan** (1810-77), the founder of Dallas, stood roughly where, 122 years later, President **John F. Kennedy** (b. 1917) was assassinated.

But let's go back to the previous day, November 21, when Kennedy spent the last afternoon of his life in the Alamo City. He made San Antonio his first stop on a two-day visit to five Texas cities that ended, senselessly, in Big D. He was the first president to visit San Antonio while holding office since **Harry Truman** (1884-1972) came in 1948. The presidential jet set down at San Antonio International Airport at 1:30 pm. It was 78 degrees when John and Jacqueline Kennedy began their 26-mile motorcade down Loop 410 to Broadway, to Houston Street, to St. Mary's Street, to Roosevelt Avenue, and to Brooks Air Force Base, while some 125,000 spectators greeted them along the way. Texas governor **John Connally** (1917-93) and his wife Nellie—for whom San Antonio was a second hometown next to Floresville—sat in the presidential limousine, just as they did the following day in Dallas, smiling approvingly.

The president spoke to 10,000 present at the dedication of a \$6-million addition to Brooks's School of Aerospace Medicine. "I want to thank you and your fellow officers for the fine job you have done this afternoon," the president was quoted as telling the police sergeant in charge of security, as the motorcade approached Kelly Air Force Base from which he continued north. A "tanned, smiling John Kennedy, his hair blowing in a gust of South Texas wind," according to the *San Antonio Express*, boarded Air Force 1 and left the Alamo City for Fort Worth at 3:55 pm. "President Kennedy has spent two hours and 25 minutes of his last afternoon soaking in the warmth of San Antonio and its citizens," concluded the *Express* in an article published on the day of the ignominious assassination that took place 274 miles away.

Connally's mentor, vice president Lyndon B. Johnson (1908-73) was sworn in as the next president before he left for Washington, D.C. **Lee Harvey Oswald** (1939-63), a 24-year-old New Orleans-born employee of the Texas School Book Depository, was arrested and charged with the murder. The investigative Warren Commission concluded in its report, issued in 1964, that Oswald acted alone, although many conspiracy theories have flourished ever since. Two days later, and in front of TV cameras, Oswald was fatally shot in the basement of the police station in downtown Dallas by **Jack Ruby**, a Dallas nightclub owner. Ruby was convicted of murder the following March, but died of cancer at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, like Kennedy and Oswald, in 1967, while awaiting retrial.

Lila Cockrell in 1975 became San Antonio's first woman mayor and the first female mayor of a major U.S. city. She served on the city council from 1963 to 1970 and again from 1973 to 1975. Her second stint as mayor lasted from 1989 to 1991. Since then, she has served as deputy director for civic and community affairs for the San Antonio Museum of Art, where she was also on the board of trustees. Although born in Fort Worth in 1922, Cockrell, whose father died when she was one and a half years old, considers herself a San Antonian.

The Texas economy was booming and, after its premiere in 1978, so was the televised fantasy about Dallas, where a mythical television *Dallas* family ruled amid cheating, back-stabbing, and adultery. Until then a record 80 million Americans tuned in to see who shot J. R. Ewing, the fictional Dallas businessman and fraud, in an episode televised in 1980. The soap opera ended 13 years later as the second longest-running television fluff ever, and the Texas economy too was in trouble well before the series expired in 1991—the year, incidentally, when **Queen Elizabeth II** and **Prince Philip** visited San Antonio.

While killings on the Dallas television show were make-believe, killings at Fiesta's Battle of Flowers Parade in 1979 were real. As more than 200,000 spectators lined the parade route on Friday, April 27, a 64-year-old sniper, a war veteran and retired truck driver, parked his recreational vehicle near the corner of Broadway and East Grayson Street. With a cache of 15 weapons and ammunition, he "unleashed a fusillade on the crowd," while shouting, "Traitors! Traitors! Traitors!" The sniper killed two women, wounded 55, including 13 children and six policemen, and shot himself. The police and the sniper, "drifting into paranoia and madness fueled by the street drug PCP," exchanged gunfire for more than 30 minutes, starting at about 1 pm. The parade was immediately canceled.

Barely a month later, an assassin shot U.S. District **Judge John H. Wood Jr.** Wood, who was known as Maximum John, for his harsh sentencing of drug case defendants, died on the parking lot of his North Side townhouse. Charles Harrelson, the father of actor Woody Harrelson, was alleged to have accepted \$250,000 to kill the judge, and was convicted on federal charges. The case was still being appealed in 2000.

Also in 1979, **Mohammad Reza Pahlavi** (1918-80), the overthrown Shah of Iran, then in exile in the Bahamas, came to San Antonio to be treated for cancer, but died the following year.

Henry G. Cisneros (b. 1947) served as San Antonio's mayor from 1982 to 1990, then headed to Washington to join the Clinton administration as secretary of housing and urban development.

Cisneros's roots go back to 1885 and his grandfather **Romulo Munguia**, who was born that year in Guadalajara, Mexico. A foe of the Porfirio Diaz regime, printer Munguia lived in Puebla when the

revolution broke out. As opposition forces captured a town, it was his job to take over the newspapers and back the revolution.

After escaping death by firing squad several times, Munguia migrated to San Antonio and in 1933 opened the first all-union print shop in the city. It is largely thanks to him that the Alamo City has a permanent extension school of Mexico's Autonomous National University (UNAM) because Munguia urged the school to send teachers from Mexico City. Munguia died in 1975 at the age of 90.

His grandson Henry in 1981 became San Antonio's first mayor of Mexican descent since Juan Seguin in 1841, and the first Mexican-American mayor of a major American city, then the tenth largest in the United States. He received a bachelor of arts degree from Texas A&M University, an M.A. in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, and a Ph.D. in public administration from George Washington University in 1975, the year he was also elected to the San Antonio city council. He was reelected mayor in 1983, in 1985, and again in 1987. San Antonio mayors are now limited to two consecutive terms.

In 1988, the *San Antonio Express-News* broke the story about his relationship with a married 39-year-old political fund-raiser who declared to a columnist, "He's the love of my life," then in 1994 filed a civil suit against Cisneros, claiming he reneged on a promise to pay her financial support. Cisneros supposedly "decided against seeking a fifth mayoral term in 1989" because he wanted "to lower his profile to the point where he could divorce his wife of 19 years" without undue attention from the news media, according to the *Express-News*.

One columnist noted that "Between 1981 and 1989, San Antonio went from being a big sleepy town that was the butt of 'manana' jokes to being a dynamic community that was recognized as one of the nation's up-and-coming cities." He credits Cisneros for the change. The West Side native is a "national figure with the ability to gracefully walk the tightrope between business and community interests," claims the *Express-News*.

Cisneros served as housing secretary from January 1993 to November 1996, when he resigned to become president of Univision Hispanic television network. Initially, he pleaded not guilty to charges that he lied to investigators during a routine background check before President Clinton named him to his first Cabinet. He is the only San Antonian ever to serve in such a position. Cisneros, once the rising Democratic superstar, was interviewed for the 1984 vice-presidential nomination. He was alleged to have underreported the amount he had paid his former mistress—who worked for Cisneros while mayor—and about the timing of those payments.

The Cisneros investigation lasted four and a half years. In

September 1999, he pleaded guilty to a single misdemeanor charge of lying to the FBI about those payments. He agreed to pay \$10,000 fine, but served no time in prison or on probation. "I hope that all who follow me in public service learn the lesson that truth and candor are important in the process of selecting our leaders," said Cisneros in a statement.

The federal investigation of Cisneros cost at least \$10 million, prompting the *Dallas Morning News* to exclaim in frustration that the prosecution "is an example of officials running amok at taxpayer's expense." Critics condemned the case as an abuse of the independent counsel law. Even the counsel investigating him noted that Cisneros's life had been "dedicated to public service." His legal fees were estimated to exceed \$2 million. His former mistress, by then divorced and living in Lubbock, who pleaded guilty to 28 charges of bank fraud and obstruction of justice, was sentenced to 42 months in a Fort Worth federal prison. Her sentence was reduced to three years' supervised release after she had served 18 months, assuming that she continued getting "appropriate psychiatric treatment at her cost for her long-term inability to cope with severe depression." President Clinton pardoned Cisneros and his former mistress before leaving office in 2001, along with more than 100 other persons.

In the spring of 2000, Cisneros was on the short list of superintendent candidates for "the huge and beleaguered" Los Angeles school district, although a former Colorado governor was selected because Cisneros was not interested.

Cisneros served as president and chief operating officer of Univision, a Spanish-language television network known for its popular *novelas* (or soap operas) and top ratings in cities like Los Angeles, Miami, and San Antonio. Univision has a 90-percent-plus hold on Spanish-language television viewers, be they Cubans in Miami, Puerto Ricans in New York, or Salvadorans in Los Angeles. To sign on at Univision, Cisneros earned a \$1 million bonus. In 1999, his income surpassed \$4.5 million. In mid-2000, he partnered with homebuilder Kaufman and Broad in a venture to build affordable housing projects aimed at revitalizing urban neighborhoods. Cisneros is the venture's majority owner and chief executive officer. The following year, he became chairman of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

One of five children, Henry Cisneros's "little brother," is the "visionary" artist **George Cisneros** whose \$200,000 wall of video monitors public-arts project, titled *In the Light of Passing Measures*, at the International Center downtown, culminates his 26-year-career in the arts. A *San Antonio Express-News* art columnist noted in 1999 that "Cisneros is often ahead of his time, yet anchored by his community."

When **Nelson Wolff** followed Cisneros as mayor, from 1991 to

1995, “there were only two things people recognized about San Antonio,” said the former mayor. “That was the [basketball team] Spurs and Henry Cisneros.”

In 1997, **Bill Thornton** (b. 1945), a Baylor-educated dentist and city councilman, became a one-term mayor by being voted out of the office. He was followed by **Howard W. Peak** (b. 1948), who had been a city councilman since 1993. (For more information about Howard Peak, see the chapter SAN ANTONIO TODAY.)

In the spring of 2001, **Ed Garza** (b. 1969), a Hispanic urban planner, captured the San Antonio’s mayor’s race with 59 percent of the vote. At age 32, he became the youngest-ever mayor of the Alamo City and only the second Hispanic to hold the office in modern times, although San Antonio is nearly 59 percent Hispanic.

His opponent, one of 11 in all, 39-year-old Caucasian lawyer and fellow City Council member Tim Bannwolf, received less than 29 percent of the vote.

Fewer than 15 percent of the city’s 680,000 registered voters went to the polls, supposedly because of the second-round National Basketball Association playoff game between the San Antonio Spurs and the Dallas Mavericks.

The comparisons with Henry Cisneros, the first contemporary Hispanic mayor, became inevitable and started in 1997, “the day I first walked into City Hall as a council member,” observed Garza, who had won 45 percent of the affluent and conservative vote in the predominantly white North Side districts. That was a margin that even Cisneros could never attain.

A third-generation San Antonian, Garza grew up in the older, mixed middle-class neighborhood around Jefferson High School, six miles northwest of downtown. His first political campaign was for student council president at Woodlawn Elementary School. He lost.

“He makes eye contact, listens carefully, and responds astutely,” observed the weekly *San Antonio Current*, which interviewed him before the elections. “Our poor, tired, cynical hearts want to believe him, but the weary reporter in us cautions to keep our eyes on the ball—when money’s involved there just might be a hustler.”

Garza graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor’s degree in landscape architecture and a master’s degree in land development. He planned to marry his fiancée Anna Laura Gonzalez, a San Antonio bilingual education teacher, late in 2001.

One of Garza’s predecessors at City Hall, former mayor Nelson Wolff, became Bexar County judge in 2001.

Outside the mayoral elections, lawyer, art collector, and philanthropist **Gilbert Denman** had a vision in the 1980s of a cultural festival that was patterned after the Salzburg Festival in Austria. It opened

in 1983 and presented the Berlin Opera and Ballet with opera stars Birgit Nilsson and Frederica von Stade, along with jazzman Ray Charles and various regional groups. Although budgeted at \$2.5 million, it was “deemed an enormous success” and supposedly broke even financially. The 1984 festival was “another artistic success,” but it lost \$400,000. However, being staged in what some would consider “the capital of northern Mexico,” the audience for European arts—ballet, opera, and symphony—is relatively small. The festival “limped on for the rest of the decade” and was eventually folded into Arts San Antonio, (210) 226-2891, e-mail info@artssanantonio.com, which now stages its productions at different locations, including Shakespeare in the Botanical Gardens.

In 2001, an article published in the faraway *Los Angeles Times* created a furor in San Antonio. In it, the director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health & Culture at the University of California at Los Angeles reminds his readers that Latinos have become the majority in his city. Will Los Angeles remain vibrant and productive, or will the Latino majority become a dead weight, dragging the region down into mediocrity, dysfunction, poverty, and racial antagonism? asks the author.

He gives the readers examples of two cities that, in his opinion, offer radically contrasting models for what L.A.’s demographic shift can mean to the region: Miami and San Antonio, both having more than 50 percent Latino populations, but each radically different.

“Latino entrepreneurship has turned Miami into a bustling center of international trade, self-declared gateway to the economies of Latin America and self-appointed music center of Latino USA,” claims the author, adding that Latino politicians run the city and county and are involved in the fine arts, academia, journalism, and broadcasting.

“San Antonio, by contrast, is a city with a majority Latino population that is barely visible in civic life,” he continues, noting that Latinos here are not movers and shakers in the fine arts, academia, or business. What did Miami do that the Alamo City did not? he asks, answering his own question:

Miami welcomed Latino contributions and invested in them, while San Antonio shunned them. He goes on that “the transition was more virulent in San Antonio, where the Texas Rangers were specifically charged to ride herd on ‘the Meskins.’” He writes that the Latino population in San Antonio was, at best, tolerated; “at worst, they were shunted aside through legal and social segregation.”

The Latino community in San Antonio did not develop to its full potential, claims the author. After nearly 300 years of history, Latinos are on the margins of civic life of the city they founded. Los Angeles, he argues, is poised, in a policy sense, at the fork of two roads, “one leading to economically stagnant San Antonio, the other to booming Miami.”

The outcry on the San Antonio streets, in homes, in the bars, and in the media was immediate. One Anglo *San Antonio Express-News* columnist noted tartly that Los Angeles has more than 1.9 million people—more than the entire population of the Alamo City—living below poverty. She cited San Antonio archbishop Patrick Flores, local novelist Sandra Cisneros, and politician Henry Cisneros (who left Los Angeles to return to San Antonio) as examples that San Antonio has little to be ashamed of. She added that there are more than 10,000 small Latino-owned businesses in the city.

Earlier that year, the *Express-News* ran a ton of testimonials from residents congratulating themselves on becoming “trendy” and the city finally being “cool.”

“San Antonio long has struggled with an inferiority complex, a sense of being perpetually outdone by its more cosmopolitan sisters, Dallas and Houston,” observed the daily in a hefty page-long feature. “It hasn’t stacked well against Austin, either, for ages an undisputed hub of music and intellect.”

The Alamo City, by contrast, has been cast as a backwater—a town of retired colonels in Cadillacs, poor Latinos, and tourists in search of green margaritas and the commercialized Hispanic Experience. But things are changing, claims the Anglo writer. San Antonio is becoming the city of choice for artists, writers, filmmakers, and intellectuals in general who are drawn to the city by affordable housing, manageable traffic, and an authentic culture. The provincial little San Antonio may be transforming into “the Next Cool Place.”

“Austin has turned into a high-tech morass; Houston is enshrouded in pollution; Dallas has become synonymous with pretension,” claims the *Express-News*, quoting a well-known Austin cinematographer as saying that “San Antonio is the last city in Texas with any soul left in it.”

The article out of California must have felt somewhat like a slap in the face of community pride, and residents questioned its premise loudly.

The reaction compelled the author of the original *Los Angeles Times* article to “truly apologize,” through one-third of another page of clarifications, if his original article “offended” anyone.

But as the dust settled a bit, another columnist asked his readers whether “Hispanic surnames” are indeed proportionately represented among the owners or top managers of banks, construction companies, house-builders, communications companies, and law firms. How many Hispanic citizens are in San Antonio’s most prestigious charity balls, country clubs, arts boards, and Fiesta organizations, he asked without directly answering his question. While he thought the tide has turned in San Antonio, he concluded that “we haven’t gone very far yet in terms of real results.”