



Official State Historical Center of the Texas
Rangers law enforcement agency.

**The Following Article was Originally Published in the
*Texas Ranger Dispatch Magazine***

The *Texas Ranger Dispatch* was published by the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum from 2000 to 2011. It has been superseded by this online archive of Texas Ranger history.

Managing Editors

Robert Nieman 2000-2009; (b.1947-d.2009)

Byron A. Johnson 2009-2011

Publisher & Website Administrator

Byron A. Johnson 2000-2011

Director, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame

Technical Editor, Layout, and Design

Pam S. Baird



Funded in part by grants from
the Texas Ranger Association Foundation

Copyright 2017, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, Waco, TX. All rights reserved. Non-profit personal and educational use only; commercial reprinting, redistribution, reposting or charge-for-access is prohibited. For further information contact: Director, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, PO Box 2570, Waco TX 76702-2570.

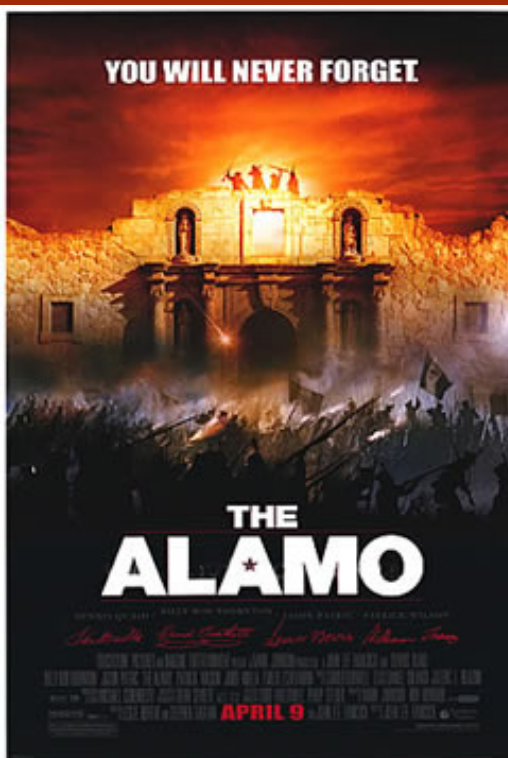

[Rangers Today](#)
[Visitor Info](#)
[History](#)
[Research Center](#)
[Hall of Fame](#)
[Student Help](#)
[Family History](#)
[News](#)

★ [Click Here for
A Complete Index
to All Back Issues](#)

★ [Dispatch Home](#)

★ [Visit our nonprofit
Museum Store!](#)

★ [Contact the Editor](#)



Movie Review by Stephen L. Moore

The Alamo

Starring Dennis Quaid, Billy Bob Thornton, Jason Patric, Patrick Wilson, Emilio Echevarria.

After four months of re-editing, Disney finally released its new Texas Revolution film, *The Alamo*. Sticking much more to the actual facts than John Wayne's 1960 epic of the same name, this rendition is directed by Texas native John Lee Hancock.

The early part of the film lingers on a bit as Hancock sets the stage for the 200-odd defenders' hopeless plight. After early reviewers complained of the film's length, Disney pulled *The Alamo* from its original December release and reportedly chopped about one third of the footage.

What's left is a film that takes too long to build up to the final, deadly Mexican assault on March 6, 1836. The actual battle sequences are quite good, however. Hancock would have done well to trim a few more minutes of the inconsequential drama during the first hour of the film.

As for the Alamo commanders, the Texians are in turmoil over whom they want to lead them. Patrick Wilson plays William Barrett Travis, the cavalry leader with little leadership experience who becomes commander of the Alamo post. He and another legendary frontiersman, Jim Bowie (played by Jason Patric), challenge each other for command of the volunteers and regulars at the Alamo. The troubled pasts of both Travis and Bowie are brought to life in order to help the viewers understand that Texas was more than just a place to acquire cheap land—it was a place to escape one's former life. Both Wilson and Patric handle their roles admirably, with Patric's Bowie being forced to a cot with a chronic ailment.



Director Hancock shies away from having his Travis actually draw a line in the sand with his sword. As Travis, Wilson gives a moving speech in which he allows his fellow Alamo defenders the choice of whether or not to remain with him and fight to their deaths for Texas.

The highlight of the film is Billy Bob Thornton as former Tennessee Congressman David Crockett, who had told his former statesmen that they could "Go to hell! I'm going to Texas!" Thornton portrays Crockett as a man who must live in the shadows of his own legend. From all the tall tales spun about him, Crockett is certainly larger than life, and those holed up in the Alamo look to old Davy for inspiration.

Once inside the Alamo, Thornton's Crockett is a breath of humanity as he relates one of his past Indian battles to an eager, young crowd. Whether he is entertaining with his fiddle, taking a potshot at Santa Anna, or leading an offensive outside the Alamo walls to burn buildings, Crockett is the unofficial leader of the volunteers. His final demise is a highlight, albeit played up a bit too much for my taste, with one-liners obviously written to give Thornton some funny dialogue. I did not come in expecting a comedy.



After the fall of the Alamo, the film moves full speed through the Runaway Scrape, when Texas settlers flee before the advancing Mexican Army. It concludes with General Sam Houston's stunning defeat of Santa Anna's troops at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836.

Hancock does not shy away from showing how the Texians

brutally massacre Mexican troops in the forests and swamps at San Jacinto. General Sam Houston, portrayed by Dennis Quaid, must put aside his bottle and fight to keep control of the unruly Texian volunteers he commands. The film is portrayed out of sequence in terms of historical accuracy, showing Houston in command of his army at Gonzales before the Alamo's fall. The scene of Houston's describing for some of his officers his strategy for bringing Santa Anna's army to battle did not actually occur. That is one of the troubles with the film: at times, the director seems to be trying too hard for characters to explain situations that the viewer might not otherwise understand. Only the future director's-cut DVD might show how much good footage was lost between the Alamo and San Jacinto for the sake of shortening this movie.



Hancock takes great pains to play up the Tejano involvement in the campaign, making Captain Juan Seguin a trusted sidekick of General Houston's. Contrary to what the movie shows, Sam Houston never issued orders in person to Seguin nor to Colonel J. C. Neill forbidding their return to the Alamo.

Emilio Echevarria as Santa Anna appears a few years too old for the part, but otherwise manages to portray the arrogant dictator that he was. One important element completely overlooked (and possibly lost in editing) is how Santa Anna orders the execution of hundreds of Texians at Goliad.



The edited movie is a little choppy at times and overly dramatic at others. Concerning the actual battle scenes, there is surprisingly little gore for what was such a bloody battle. This is something that may have played out differently had Ron Howard remained to have his way. These points aside, The Alamo is an entertaining film that helps the viewer to see the besieged fortress as it was in 1836.