THE TOUGHEST BAR IN TEXAS:
The Alamo Bar Association

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I. Introduction

You can’t buy a drink in or even visit the toughest bar in Texas. That’s because it was never formally established in brick and mortar but was instead an association forged by blood, bravery, and sacrifice. The toughest bar in Texas was—and still is—the “Alamo Bar Association.”

A total of 6 lawyers perished at the Alamo in March 1836: (1) Micajah Autry; (2) Peter James Bailey; (3) James Butler Bonham; (4) Daniel William Cloud; (5) Green Berry “Ben” Jameson; and (6) William Barret Travis. They ranged in age from their early 20s to their mid-40s. Only one of their number had formally earned a law degree, two had previously

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1 An earlier version of this article was originally published at Dylan O. Drummond, The Toughest Bar in Texas: The Alamo Bar Association, Est. 1836, J. TEX. SUP. CT. SOC’Y, Winter 2014, at 7.

2 The author would like to extend special thanks to (1) David A. Furlow, Executive Editor of the Journal of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society, upon whose original idea this article is based; and (2) Bryan McAuley, Site Manager at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site.


4 See Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211; see also Amelia W. Williams, A Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and of the Personnel of its Defenders, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. 1, 244 (Jul. 1933) [hereinafter Critical Study].
been opposite each other in court, and another pair may even have been second cousins.

Each trod a unique path in their journey to the Alamo, but all earned the eternal respect of future Texans and attorneys through their shared valor.

II. The Lawyers of the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers

The tale of how half of the lawyers who defended and perished at the Alamo came to be in that old, crumbling Spanish mission just outside of San Antonio de Béxar on March 6, 1836 traces back to the former Congressman from Tennessee, the Honorable David Crockett.7

Fig. 1 – Portrait of Davy Crockett. Chester Harding, David Crockett (1834), available at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:David_Crockett.jpg (last visited Apr. 2, 2015).


7 See Blood of Heroes, at 162.
Crockett’s bid for a fourth term in the House during the summer of 1835 was a difficult one. His opponent was a savvy, peg-legged attorney whose candidacy was enthusiastically supported by Crockett’s onetime political mentor and military commander, President Andrew Jackson. By Crockett’s second term in Congress in 1830, he had begun to publically and repeatedly denounce President Jackson for what Crockett believed to be Jackson’s political opportunism. Crockett chiefly blamed Vice President Martin Van Buren for the political faults he saw in President Jackson. Crockett said, “I am still a Jackson man, but General Jackson is not—he has become a Van Buren man.”

It was perhaps little surprising, then, that President Jackson hand-picked Vice President Van Buren as his electoral successor. Such was Crockett’s disdain for Van Buren that he vowed to “leave the [U]nited States” if Van Buren was elected. Crockett’s very public criticism of the President and Vice President infuriated both men. In return, Jacksonians gerrymandered Crockett’s congressional district just prior to the election of 1835, which weakened his electoral base.

Never one for political ambiguity, Crockett famously made clear on the campaign stump that, if his constituents elected his Jacksonian-backed rival, “You may all go to hell and I will go to Texas.” On the morning of November

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8 Id. at 156.
9 See id. at 143–44, 155–56.
10 Id. at 143, 154.
11 Id. at 154.
12 Id.
13 Id. at 143.
14 Id. at 156.
15 Id. at 143.
16 Id. at 152.
17 Id. at 144, 156.
1, 1835, less than three weeks after his defeat by just 252 votes, Crockett made good on his promise and headed to Texas.\(^{18}\)

Crockett—then just a year shy of 50 years old—crossed the Sabine River into Texas near the end of December 1835. He was sworn into the Texian Volunteer Auxiliary Corps for a 6-month tour on January 12, 1836.\(^{19}\)

He and his party set out for Washington-on-the-Brazos on the El Camino Real (called the “Old San Antonio Road” by the Anglo-Texians),\(^{20}\) where they hoped to receive their orders from the newly-appointed general of the Texian Army, Sam Houston.\(^{21}\) Crockett rode with some 16 to 18 companions, most of whom were educated professionals from Tennessee and Kentucky, who called themselves the “Tennessee Mounted Volunteers.”\(^{22}\) Three of the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers were attorneys who would come to their end with Crockett at the Alamo.\(^{23}\)

\(^{18}\) Id. at 157–58.

\(^{19}\) Id. at 160–61; see also Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 165.

\(^{20}\) See Blood of Heroes, at 162; Adéle B. Looscan, Micajah Autry, a Soldier of the Alamo, 14 Sw. Hist. Q. 315, 322 (Apr. 1911) [hereinafter Alamo Soldier].

\(^{21}\) Blood of Heroes, at 162; see also Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 165.


\(^{23}\) Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 167, 244, 251.
Daniel William Cloud was a 22-year-old attorney from Logan County, Kentucky. He had traveled westward through several states and territories seeking a suitable place to begin his law practice. Although he nearly founded his practice in Arkansas, he decided to journey farther on to Texas upon hearing of the Texians’ plight.  

Cloud showed that, despite his youth, he already possessed the rhetorical skill that would have made him a fine

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**Fig. 2** – Map of the El Camino Real and Old San Antonio Road. El Camino Real Trail Partners, El Camino Real Map, http://www.elcaminorealtx.com/images/mapLg.jpg (last visited Apr. 3, 2015).

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A. Daniel William Cloud  

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25 See Blood of Heroes, at 162; Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B. J. at 211.
The appellate advocate lawyer in practice, and perhaps even suited him for service as a judge in his newfound home. He described the Mexican government’s treatment of the Texian settlers as a “monarchial tyrannical, central despotism.”

“Ever since Texas has unfurled the banner of freedom and commenced a warfare for liberty or death,” he wrote his brother, “our hearts have been enlisted in her behalf.”

A little over two months before he would meet his fate at the Alamo, Cloud wrote that, “If we succeed, the Country is ours. It is immense in extent, and fertile in its soil and will amply reward all our toil. If we fail, death in the cause of liberty and humanity is not cause for shuddering.”

He enlisted as a private in the Volunteer Auxiliary Corps of Texas on January 14, 1836 in Nacogdoches, Texas. He later arrived at the Alamo with Crockett around February 11, 1836. During the battle, Cloud fought alongside Crockett on the wooden palisade running between the Alamo chapel and the gatehouse, and fell on March 6, 1836.

26 Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211.
27 Blood of Heroes, at 162.
28 Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211.
29 See Cloud; see also Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 165, 167, 251.
30 Blood of Heroes, at 282.
31 See Cloud; Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 159.

B. Peter James Bailey

Peter James Bailey was a friend of Cloud’s and a fellow native of Logan County, Kentucky. He was an 1834 graduate of Transylvania University Law School in Lexington, Kentucky, and was the only lawyer at the Alamo who had earned a law degree. Bailey left Kentucky in the fall of 1835

32 Blood of Heroes, at 162; Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211.
33 Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211; see also Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 244. Transylvania University established the first law school in the West in 1799. Transylvania Univ., About Transylvania: Timeline, http://www.transy.edu/about/timeline.htm (last visited May 13, 2015). Stephen F. Austin was another notable Texan graduate of Transylvania University. Transylvania Univ., About Transylvania:
alongside Cloud in search of the site of his future law practice.\textsuperscript{34} At the age of 24, he enlisted as a private on January 14, 1836 in Nacogdoches, Texas, just two days after their leader, Davy Crockett, was sworn into the Texian Volunteer Auxiliary Corps.\textsuperscript{35} Bailey perished with his fellow Kentuckian, Cloud, when the Alamo fell on March 6, 1836.\textsuperscript{36} Because of his service to the Republic, Bailey’s heirs received parcels of land in what are now Archer, Baylor, and Hamilton counties. In addition, Bailey County in the Texas Panhandle now memorializes his name.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{C. Micajah Autry}

The third lawyer in Crockett’s party was also the oldest lawyer at the Alamo.\textsuperscript{38} Micajah Autry was 43 years old, and hailed from Sampson County, North Carolina.\textsuperscript{39} He was a veteran of the War of 1812, in which he had fought at the tender age of 17.\textsuperscript{40}

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\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J.} at 211
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\textsuperscript{36} \textit{See Bailey; Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q.} at 159.
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\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Bailey}.
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\textsuperscript{38} \textit{See Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J.} at 210–11.
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\textsuperscript{39} \textit{See id.} at 211; \textit{Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q.} at 167, 244.
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\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Blood of Heroes, at 162; Bill Groneman, Autry, Micajah, Handbook of Texas Online, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fau16} (last visited Nov. 11, 2014) [hereinafter \textit{Autry}].
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Autry was admitted to the Tennessee Bar in Nashville around 1828 or 1829.\textsuperscript{41} He built a thriving law practice in Jackson, Tennessee with his law partner, Andrew L. Martin, from 1831 to 1835.\textsuperscript{42} He lived during this time not far from the Hermitage, the home of President Andrew Jackson.\textsuperscript{43} Autry was later forced to sell his house and lands after speculating in a dry-goods venture with Martin, but this indignity paled in comparison to the loss he was soon to suffer.\textsuperscript{44}

While out at a camp meeting one evening, Autry and his wife returned home to find the youngest of their three children, Edward, drowned after having climbed into a bathtub—an accident that occurred despite being left in the care of a nurse.\textsuperscript{45} Grief-stricken and near-destitute, Autry heard tales of “Austin’s Colony” in far-away Texas. He decided to scout it for himself and his family.\textsuperscript{46}

Autry met up with Kentucky attorneys Cloud and Bailey on the road into Texas.\textsuperscript{47} He wrote his wife, Martha, that he was “determined to provide for you a home or perish.”\textsuperscript{48} In a January 13, 1836 letter, he explained the prospects for his family in Texas and the motivation driving his journey: “I go the whole Hog in the cause of Texas. I expect to help them gain their independence and also to form their civil government, for it is worth risking many lives for. From what I

\textsuperscript{41} Autry.
\textsuperscript{42} See Autry; Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211; Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 167, 244.
\textsuperscript{43} See Blood of Heroes, at 162; Alamo Soldier, 14 Sw. Hist. Q. at 316.
\textsuperscript{44} See Blood of Heroes, at 163; Alamo Soldier, 14 Sw. Hist. Q. at 317; Autry.
\textsuperscript{45} Blood of Heroes, at 163.
\textsuperscript{46} Id.
\textsuperscript{47} Id. at 163–64.
\textsuperscript{48} Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211.
have seen and learned from others there is not so fair a portion of the [E]arth’s surface warmed by the sun.”

Autry was sworn into the Texian Volunteer Auxiliary Corps as a private on January 14, 1836 in Nacogdoches. Municipal Judge John Forbes recorded the oath Autry and the other members of the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers took after administering it to the men:

Know all men by these presents: That I have this day voluntarily enlisted myself in the Volunteer Auxiliary Corps, for and during the term of six months.

And I do solemnly swear that I will bear true allegiance to the provisional Government of Texas, or any future Government that may be hereafter declared, and that I will serve her honestly and faithfully against all her enemies whatsoever and observe and obey the orders of the Governor of Texas, the orders and decrees of the present and future authorities and the orders of the officers appointed over me according to the rules and regulations for the government of the Armies of Texas.

So help me God.

He arrived at the Alamo on or around February 9, 1836.

A letter Autry wrote to his wife on February 11, 1836 is still on display there.

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49 See Blood of Heroes, at 164; Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211; see also Alamo Soldier, 14 Sw. Hist. Q. at 319 (relaying to his wife that, in recompense for his service in the Texian Army, he would “be entitled to 640 acres of land … and 4444 acres upon condition of settling my family here”).

50 See Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 167; Autry.


52 Compare Blood of Heroes, at 178, with Autry.

53 Autry.

Autry was reputed to be an able marksman, and it is said that he had only a single clear shot at Santa Anna during the Alamo siege, which he took but missed.54 Autry was assigned to defend the wooden palisade between the Alamo chapel and gatehouse alongside Cloud, where he fell with several of his fellow Tennessee Mounted Volunteers on March 6, 1836.55

54 Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 211.
55 See Blood of Heroes, at 282; Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 159.
III. THE LAWYERS IN COMMAND AT THE ALAMO

The remaining three attorneys who fought at the Alamo each put their legal training and ingenuity to much-needed use by bravely leading the Alamo defenders during their darkest hours.

A. Green Berry “Ben” Jameson

Green Berry “Ben” Jameson was another Kentuckian who made his way west to join the Texian fight, arriving in Texas sometime between 1828 and 1830—before any of his fellow Alamo lawyers.\(^{56}\)

Perhaps inspired to law by his grandfather, who had served as an early Lieutenant Governor of Virginia,\(^{57}\) Jameson opened his law office in the capital of Austin’s Colony, San Felipe.\(^{58}\) His law office was located on Lucas Aleman Street between First and Second Streets, which he purchased on February 4, 1828 for $60 ($20 in cash and $40 in cattle).\(^{59}\) By September 6, 1830, Jameson was advertising his law practice in the *Texas Gazette*.\(^{60}\) He later practiced mainly as a sales agent in Brazoria for the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company.\(^{61}\)

When the Texas Revolution began, Jameson enlisted in the Texas Army at Gonzales in October 1835, saying, “When I left home it was with a determination to See [the] Land free


\(^{58}\) Id.

\(^{59}\) Lot 69.

\(^{60}\) Id.

\(^{61}\) *Blood of Heroes*, at 98.
and independent, Sink or Swim[,] die or perish.” 62  Just before the end of December, after having taken part in the Siege of Bexar, Jameson remained and was appointed as Chief Engineer to the Alamo. 63  Upon his appointment, Jameson achieved the rank of ensign, although there is no record that he ever had had formal training in engineering. 64

His task of fortifying the Alamo was a challenging one, as it was in dire need of repair after the Texian force’s bombardment during the Siege of Bexar, which had just concluded earlier that month after seven weeks. 65  Jameson met this engineering challenge with ambitious fervor, and soon impressed his commander, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Neill, and later James Bowie and Alamo Commandant William B. Travis. 66

Although Jameson had more grandiose plans to fortify the Alamo—including the construction of a moat, a drawbridge, and trap doors—his construction efforts were limited by lack of manpower. 67  Instead, he focused the garrison’s efforts towards fortifying the northern wall of the Alamo compound, which had been battered by Neill’s cannon during the Siege of Bexar. 68  He and his crews set about buttressing the limestone and adobe walls of the compound with log braces, digging

63 See Whole Hog, 71 Tex. B.J. at 210; Blood of Heroes, at 98; Jameson.
64 Compare Blood of Heroes, at 98, with Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 266. All “engineers of the Texan Revolutionary Army were called ensigns.” Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 266.
65 Blood of Heroes, at 175, 282.
68 Id. at 99, 174–75.
69 Id. at 175.
trenches outside the walls, erecting banquettes, and building an *abatis* composed of felled trees with the branches sharpened and pointing toward advancing forces.\(^{69}\) They also constructed a wooden palisade of eight-foot-high cedar timbers to buttress the weakest spot in the Alamo’s perimeter, between the chapel and the main gate.\(^{70}\) It was on this palisade that Autry and Cloud would later perish.\(^{71}\)

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**Fig. 5**– Map of the Alamo compound in 1836. James Donovan, *The Blood of Heroes*, inside flyleaf (2012).

Jameson kept his crews working in shifts, day and night, throughout the siege of the Alamo.\(^{72}\) Despite their heroic and determined efforts, the Alamo remained in much the same condition in March 1836 when it fell to Santa Anna as it had

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\(^{69}\) *Id*. at 175, 177, 184. Banquettes were elevated steps dug along the inside of a rampart or parapet, by which marksmen could fire upon enemies.

\(^{70}\) *Id*. at 177.

\(^{71}\) *See Blood of Heroes*, at 282; *Critical Study*, 37 *Sw. Hist. Q.* at 159.

\(^{72}\) *Blood of Heroes*, at 237, 242–43, 272.
been in December 1835 when it fell to Neill, Ben Milam, and Edward Burleson.\footnote{Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 18; see also Blood of Heroes, at 90; Siege of Bexar.}

On the first day of the Alamo siege on February 23, 1836, Jameson was sent by Bowie to carry a message to the Mexican forces regarding a rumored parley by the Mexicans, which defiantly concluded, “God and Texas!”\footnote{See Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 16; Jameson.} He gave his life on the last day of the siege on March 6, 1836.\footnote{See Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 160; Jameson.}

**B. James Butler Bonham**

James Butler Bonham grew up just 5 miles from William Barret Travis—reputedly his second cousin\footnote{See Bill Groneman, Bonham, James Butler, HANDBOOK OF TEXAS ONLINE, \url{https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fbo14} (last visited Nov. 12, 2014) [hereinafter Bonham].}—in the farm country of Edgefield County, South Carolina.\footnote{See Blood of Heroes, at 110; Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 247.} Bonham came from a line of Revolutionary War veterans, so his embrace of the Texas Revolution was unsurprising.\footnote{Blood of Heroes, at 110.} He was also a passionate supporter of the secession and nullification movements, which, in addition to protests of campus regulations requiring prompt attendance at classes even in inclement weather, may have contributed to his expulsion during his senior year from South Carolina College.\footnote{Compare id., with Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 248, Milledge L. Bonham, Jr., James Butler Bonham: A Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. 124, 126 (July 1931) [hereinafter Consistent Rebel].}
He was admitted to the South Carolina bar in 1830.80 Shortly thereafter, he gained many distaff admirers for caning an opposing counsel who had insulted Bonham’s female client.81 He was held in contempt of court for refusing to apologize to the lawyer, and was sentenced to 90 days in jail.82 While imprisoned, it is said that he was routinely brought both food and flowers by admiring and appreciative women.83

80 See Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 126; Blood of Heroes, at 110.
81 See Blood of Heroes, at 110; Bonham.
82 See Blood of Heroes, at 110; Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 127; Bonham.
83 See Blood of Heroes, at 110; Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 127.
By October 1834, Bonham moved his law practice to Mobile, Alabama, where he led a rally in support of the Texian cause at the Shakespeare Theater a year later on October 17, 1835. His support of the Texian cause was no doubt fanned by regular correspondence he maintained with Travis, with whom he had remained fast friends since childhood. After raising a volunteer band dubbed the “Mobile Greys,” Bonham set out for Texas. He arrived in San Felipe in November 1835, and joined Travis in the recruiting office of the Texian Army.

On January 18, 1836, General Sam Houston ordered Bonham and Bowie to the Alamo. Bonham was a 29-year-old Second Lieutenant in the Texian Cavalry, but Travis referred to him in correspondence as “Colonel”—likely a nod to the rank Bonham had previously received from the Governor of South Carolina. He remained at the Alamo until about February 16, 1836, when Travis sent him to Goliad to obtain reinforcements from Colonel James Fannin. Around 11 a.m. on March 3, 1836—66 hours before he was to sacrifice his life—Bonham solitarily bore through the Mexican lines and returned to the Alamo. He had had with him two companions, both of whom refused to enter the Alamo upon seeing it encircled by the Mexican army. It is said that

84 See Bonham, Blood of Heroes, at 110.
86 See Blood of Heroes, at 110; Bonham.
87 Compare Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 248, with Blood of Heroes, at 110; Bonham.
88 Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 248; see Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 129.
90 See Blood of Heroes, at 196; Bonham.
91 See Blood of Heroes, at 244–45; Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 31; Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 131; Bonham.
92 Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 129.
Bonham’s lifelong friendship with Travis drove him to re-enter the fort against such overwhelming odds, perhaps inspiring a subsequent description of Bonham as “as chivalrous a soul as ever fought and died for liberty.”

Bonham brought word from Robert McAlpin Williamson, a future Associate Judge of the Republic Supreme Court better known by his nickname, “Three-Legged Willie.” Williamson was in charge of organizing volunteers in Gonzales, and implored Travis to hold out until reinforcements from Goliad and Gonzales arrived, rumored to already be on the march to the Alamo.

Bonham’s valor in the desperate waning hours of the fall of the Alamo is regarded as equal to that of Travis, Bowie, and Crockett. Indeed, the Alamo monument on the grounds of the Texas Capitol lists Bonham’s name atop the names of fallen Alamo defenders, alongside those of only Travis, Bowie, and Crockett. He fell on March 6, 1836, either manning one of the cannons inside the Alamo chapel or after fighting his way to the fort’s magazine in an attempt to ignite it to take with him as many Mexican soldiers as he could.

93 See id. at 131.

94 See Blood of Heroes, at 245; Bonham; see also James L. Haley, The Texas Supreme Court: A Narrative History, 1836–1986, 24, 235 (Univ. of Tex. Press 2013) [hereinafter Narrative History]. Judge Williamson’s nickname originated from a lame leg he suffered from as a result of a bout with juvenile tuberculous arthritis, which he compensated for by using a wooden crutch strapped behind his afflicted leg. Narrative History, at 24, 101. Judge Williamson is also credited with convening the first regular session of a district court in the Republic of Texas. Id. at 101.

95 See Blood of Heroes, at 245; Bonham.

96 Compare Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 136, with Bonham.


98 Compare Consistent Rebel, 35 Sw. Hist. Q. at 134, with Bonham; see also Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 159.
To honor his sacrifice, the Republic Congress rechristened the former town of Bois D’Arc in what would become Fannin County as Bonham, Texas.99

C. William Barret Travis

William Barret Travis was reared in Edgefield County, South Carolina, and met his reputed second cousin—Bonham100—while attending the Red Banks country school there.101 His family moved to Alabama in 1818, where he received a formal elementary education.102 Thereafter, he studied law with one of the most prominent attorneys in Alabama, James Dellet, while teaching during the interim in order to make ends meet.103

During this time, Travis—then 19 years old—fell in love with one of his students—herself just 16—and they soon married.104 Travis gained admission to the Alabama bar before he turned 20.105 Within a few years, however, both his professional life (he had founded a newspaper, the Claiborne Herald, in addition to his law practice) and his personal fortunes turned for the worse.106 He came to believe his bride had been unfaithful to him, so he left her, his young son, and

99 See Bonham.
100 Bonham.
101 Critical Study, 37 SW. HIST. Q. at 80; see also Archie P. McDonald, Travis, William Barret, HANDBOOK OF TEXAS ONLINE, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ftr03 (last visited Nov. 12, 2014) [hereinafter Travis].
102 Critical Study, 37 SW. HIST. Q. at 81.
103 See Blood of Heroes, at 11; Critical Study, 37 SW. HIST. Q. at 81; Travis.
104 Blood of Heroes, at 11.
105 Id.
106 Id. at 12; Travis.
unborn daughter, with access to a sizeable bank account and headed for Texas.\textsuperscript{107}

He arrived in San Felipe in the spring of 1831, and promptly put $10 down for title to the one league of land (4,428 acres) available to Texas settlers.\textsuperscript{108} He established a law practice first in the sparsely populated coastal town of Anahuac, and later in San Felipe in 1832 once his local prominence had expanded.\textsuperscript{109} His law office was located between Nicholas Bravo and Vicente Guerrero Streets on First Street.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{107} See Critical Study, 37 SW. Hist. Q. at 81; Blood of Heroes, at 12; Travis. Travis would later pay off his debts in Alabama after successfully establishing his law practice in Texas. Blood of Heroes, at 17. His wife filed for divorce in 1834, charging Travis with desertion, which was granted by the Alabama legislature in November 1835. Compare id. at 18, with Travis; see Critical Study, 37 SW. Hist. Q. at 86–87.

\textsuperscript{108} Blood of Heroes, at 12–13.


\textsuperscript{110} Lot 50.
Green Berry “Ben” Jameson’s residence and law office were located on adjoining lots 130 and 69, respectively, and are circled above to the east of Constitution Square. William Barret Travis’s law office was located on lot 50, directly across First Street from the house in which he boarded for a time, located on adjoining lots 82 and 117. Both are circled above between Constitution and Commerce Squares.

His practice consisted mainly of land dealings, slavery transactions, wills, colonization cases, and criminal defense matters. In November 1833, Travis began boarding at the house of town widow, Jane Wilkins—which was located across First Street from his law office—and stayed there until at least the following spring. In January 1836, the *Telegraph and Texas Register* published an advertisement for what

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111 *Blood of Heroes*, at 17.

112 Lot 50.
would be Travis’s final law partnership. Travis’s partner, Franklin J. Starr, evacuated their law office in San Felipe during the “Runaway Scrape,” and relocated the practice to Nacogdoches.

**Fig. 8** – Advertisement for the law offices of Travis & Starr. Telegraph and Texas Register, Jan. 20, 1836.

Travis soon became a leader in the Texas Revolution alongside San Felipe’s alcalde, the Republic’s future Supreme Court Judge, “Three-Legged Willie” Williamson. Travis’s fame resulted in General Santa Anna’s issuance of arrest warrants for Travis and Williamson—dubbed by Santa Anna as “obnoxious Texans.” By late fall, General Sam Houston appointed Travis the chief recruiter for the Texian Army, and soon promoted Travis to the rank of Major in the artillery

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114 See id. at 19, 21; *Critical Study*, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 83. And with that, Santa Anna quite unintentionally coined the term, “obnoxious Texan,” as a badge of honor for future generations of Texans.
corps.\textsuperscript{115} Travis preferred the cavalry, however, and accepted yet another promotion to Lieutenant Colonel of the Texian Cavalry on Christmas Eve, 1835.\textsuperscript{116}

The following month, Houston ordered Travis to reinforce Colonel Neill at Bexar.\textsuperscript{117} Once there, Travis worked with fellow Alamo Bar attorney Ben Jameson to fortify the mission.\textsuperscript{118} A few years before they came together to fight at the Alamo, Travis and Jameson were opposite one another in court,\textsuperscript{119} where Travis bested Jameson and won a $50 judgment for his client.\textsuperscript{120}

The oratorical and drafting skills Travis learned as a practicing lawyer in frontier Texas aided him greatly within the walls of the Alamo. He famously exhorted his comrades to stay and defend the Alamo by stepping across a line he drew in the sand with his sword,\textsuperscript{121} and sent several impassioned letters seeking reinforcements. He penned the most renowned of these communiques on February 24, 1836, swearing and underlining three times the phrase, “Victory or Death!”\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{115} See Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 83; Travis.
\textsuperscript{116} See Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 83–84; Blood of Heroes, at 22; Travis.
\textsuperscript{117} See Critical Study, 37 Sw. Hist. Q. at 84; Travis.
\textsuperscript{118} See Blood of Heroes, at 99, 113, 174–75; Travis.
\textsuperscript{119} Blood of Heroes, at 174.
\textsuperscript{120} Id.
\textsuperscript{121} Blood of Heroes, at 270, 346, 357–60.
\textsuperscript{122} See id. at 212–13; Travis. Perhaps no better recitation of this letter can be found than that recorded in 1968 by another great Texan—Willie Nelson. WILLIE NELSON, TRAVIS LETTER (RCA Records 1968), available at http://youtube/Q43iuW1JUU (last visited Dec. 4, 2014).
At the age of 27, on March 6, 1836, Travis kept his promise while defending the north wall of the Alamo.\(^{123}\)

Less than four years after Travis perished at the Alamo, the new Republic had officially moved its capital from marshy Houston to the former frontier outpost of Waterloo—now renamed Austin to honor the revered founder of Texas.\(^{124}\) It is both fitting and revealing that the Republic congress thought no Texan revolutionary hero more deserving to forever serve


as the namesake of the county in which the nation’s capital would be built than Travis.\footnote{125}

\section*{IV. Conclusion}

The first bar association in Texas, although fleeting in duration, has proven enduring in reputation. While never formally founded, the Alamo Bar Association nevertheless marked the first organization of \textit{Texan} attorneys.

Before they entered the walls of the Alamo, these lawyers had each been admitted in different states, come to their legal education through disparate paths, and practiced law with differing aims, acumen, and application. But after they each took their final posts within the Alamo, their valor and courage formed a legal and historical bond that would persevere through the ages—the Alamo Bar Association.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{alamo.jpg}
\caption{Photograph by Dylan O. Drummond (May 2, 2015) (on file with author).}
\end{figure}

\footnote{125 See \textit{Seat of Empire}, at 70; \textit{Travis County}.}