



In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends

Tuesday, February 23rd 2021 Day 37



I'm off to the fire museum. I parked at the Tower again, nobody in the kiosk, and walked about a mile to the museum.

**San Antonio
1873**

A docent took me around first and gave me the highlights, then I was free to wander on my own.



Horse Drawn Era

Horses served the San Antonio Fire Department from the 1880's until 1927. Not just any horse could serve as a fire horse.


Animals needed to be strong, swift, obedient and fearless. When an alarm sounded, they moved to their position by training and waited for their harness to be dropped from overhead. At the fire scene, they needed to stand in place in the midst of chaotic noise and the spectacle of fire.

It was often said that fire horses received better treatment than the firefighters. They were well fed, trained, groomed and exercised several times a day.

Fire equipment of the era fell into three categories: Steam Engines, Hose Wagons and Ladder Trucks. A steamer easily exceeded two and a half tons. The 1899 image illustrates horses that were matched for both power and beauty.

While horses were a beloved part of the fire service,

their place in history would be a relatively short span of time. Like most departments, San Antonio would start motorizing around 1910 and horses would become an obstacle to progress.



They had several life sized mock-ups like this including Haz Mat, Arson investigation, women firefighters, dispatcher and captains desk, but these were the most interesting.

Make sure you read the sign below.

This Is a Museum

The Fire Museum is filled with rare photos, antique tools, and firefighting equipment.

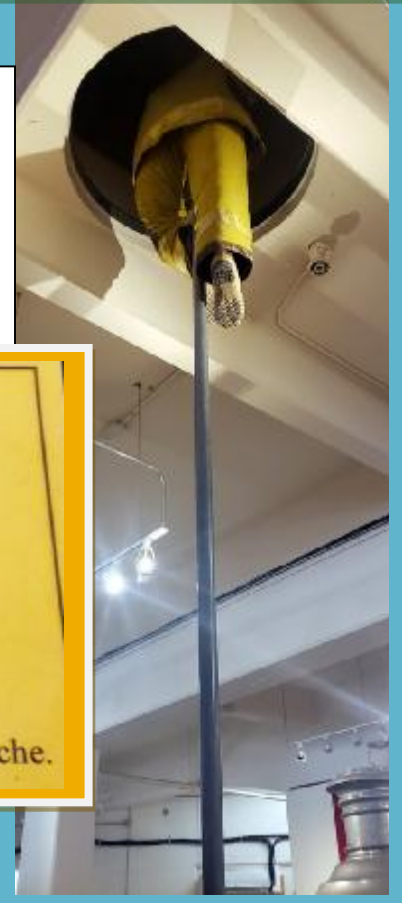
Do Not Remove Items From The Displays.

Speak with a Museum Docent if you wish to examine a particular item.

Do not climb on the vehicles.

Do not climb under, or over, railings.

Unattended children will be sold to the Comanche.



1912 American La France Hook and Ladder



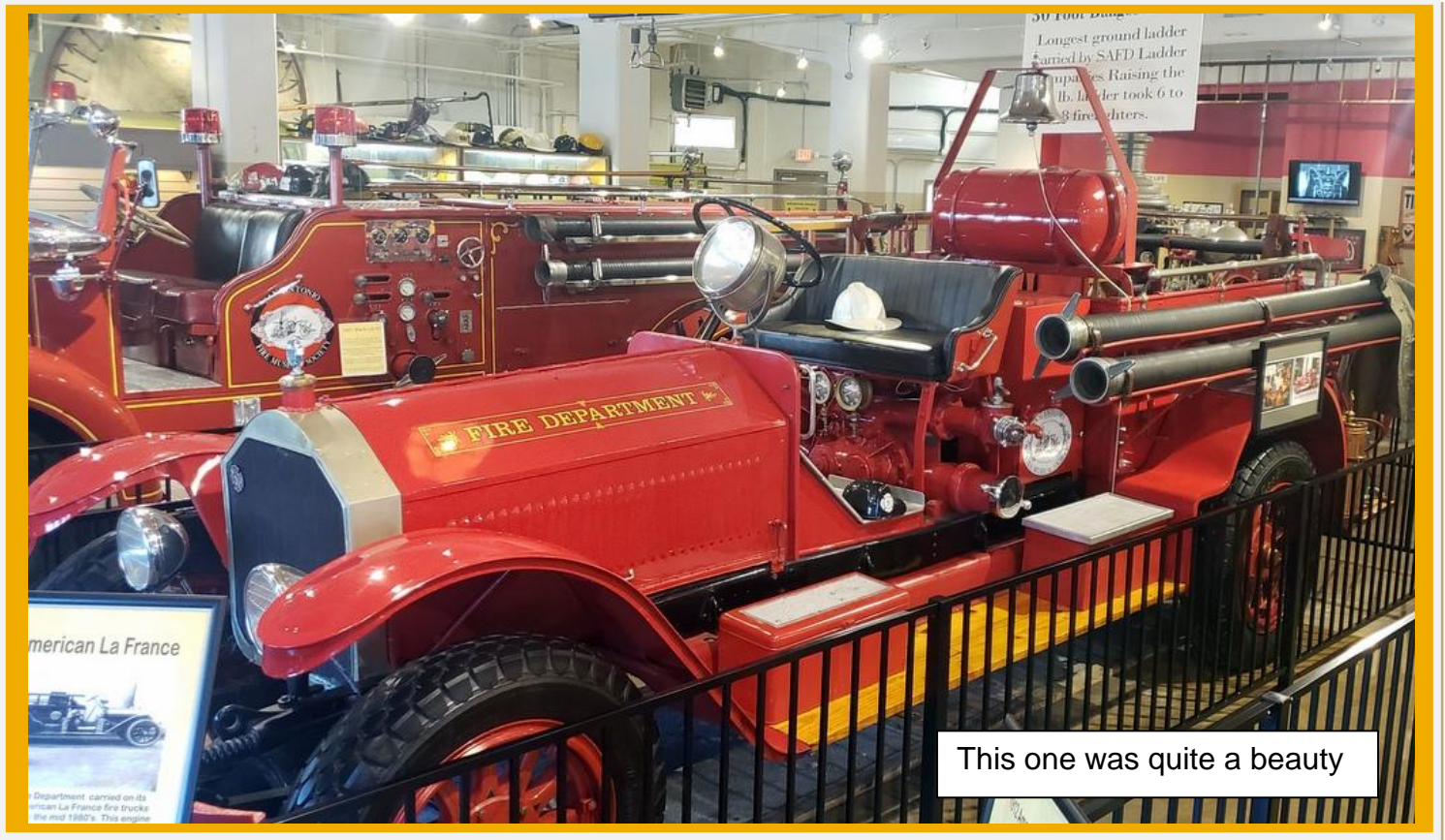
It's not easy to see because of the background, but this was pulled by firemen and it only carries ladders.

1927 American La France



The San Antonio Fire Department carried on its apparatus roster American La France fire trucks from the late 1800s to the mid 1980's. This engine was donated to the San Antonio Fire Museum Committee in 1999 by T. K Simmons. Thanks to Mullins Memorials, the Body Shop students at Edison High School, firefighters at station 34, fire museum restoration staff, retired firefighter Allen Cunningham and his crew of mechanics and

engineers she is now in perfect working condition. Because chains drive her wood spoked wheels her district is limited to the inner city where she serves as the Fire Chief's primary parade vehicle.



50 Foot Bangor Ladder

Longest ground ladder carried by SAFD Ladder Companies. Raising the 500 lb. ladder took 6 to 8 firefighters.



I would not want to try and haul this one around on my truck.

1951 Mack 750 GPM Pumper



They did not have anything from Pierce, which is the largest manufacturer of fire engines and is based in Appleton, WI



1892 Ahrens SteamFire Engine



Talk about a beauty, this one was fantastic. This goes back to the horse drawn equipment mentioned above. The steam engine is not for driving the wheels but for running a pump for the fire hoses. The horses were stabled directly behind the fire truck. When the bell sounded their stable doors opened and the horses moved into position on their own. Harnesses would drop from overhead right onto the horses and be fastened by a fireman while another hitched them to the tongue. There was a video of this being done and from the bell to the time the horses started off could be done in thirty seconds.



Halligan Bar

"Kelly Tool" Forcible entry tool used in combination with a flat head axe. Most formidable entry tool in the fire service.

Why do I include a Halligan Bar? In a mystery I finished a couple weeks ago it was the murder weapon.

Right is the inside of an ambulance.

Cousin Jane and husband Dave live about twelve miles north of San Antonio and we were able to get together today for lunch at the County Line, a BBQ joint on the River Walk.





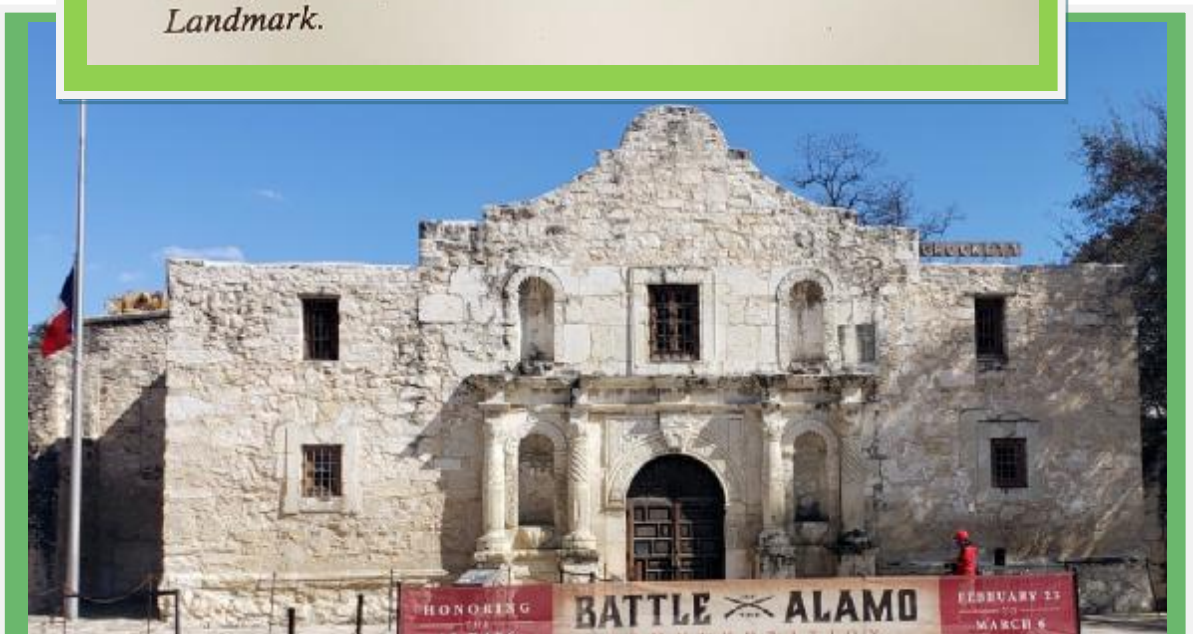
This is a restaurant that is only in Texas and not a chain you can find anywhere. Pork ribs were good (not as good as mine), and the reunion was even better. I think we hung out for a couple hours and agreed to get together again when I head north. (maybe even do my laundry at her and Dave's house)

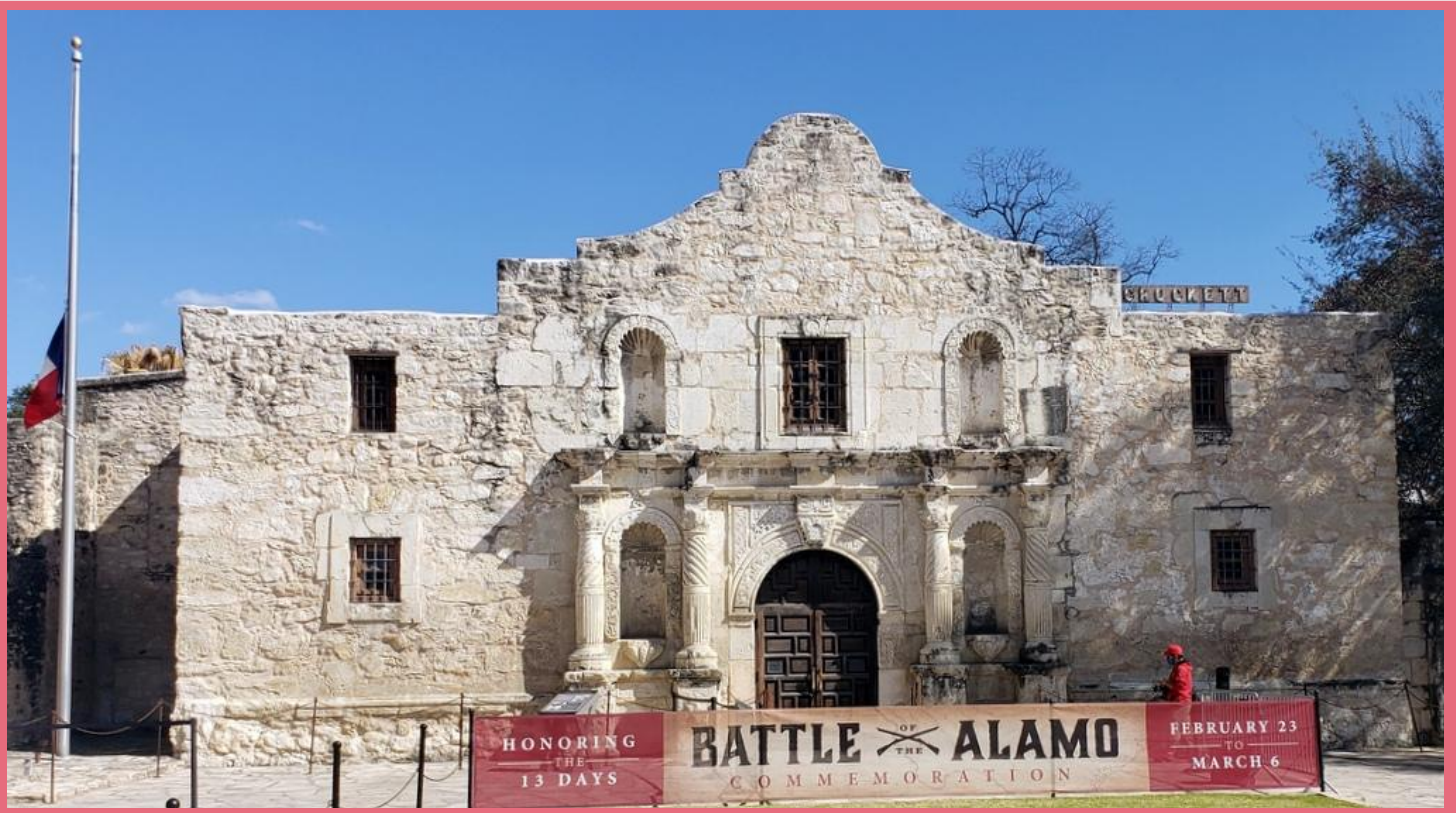


According to everything I read the Briscoe Museum was closed Sundays and Mondays. Even the sign on the sidewalk says that. But, the sign on the door says they are closed Tuesday and Wednesday. Go figure. At least I know they are open, I just have to wait a few days. Now what? I'm only a couple blocks from the Alamo so I guess it's time to revisit the Alamo.

The Alamo

Mission San Antonio de Valero — famed as The Alamo — founded 1718 by Spanish Missionaries. Secularized 1793. Garrison for Spanish Cavalry and Flying Company of San Carlos de Parras y Alamo. Between February 23 and March 6, 1836, gallant Texans, greatly outnumbered by General Santa Anna's Army defended the sprawling compound to the death. The Battle of the Alamo stands as a symbol of freedom throughout the world. The Alamo Chapel and convent, later the Long Barracks, remain and are owned by the State of Texas and are under the custody of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. National, State and City Landmark.





Yes I know it's there twice. I had nothing to fit in the space above, yet it was too small a picture for so big a place. I did not realize until I took this picture, but can you notice the date on the banner? Today is 185 years since the siege began. Below is a letter Travis wrote from the Alamo.

LETTER FROM THE ALAMO.

COMMANDANCY OF THE ALAMO-
LIZAL, FEBY. 24 TH 1836-
TO THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS & ALL AMERICANS IN THE WORLD--

FELLOW CITIZENS & COMPATRIOTS
I AM BESIEGED, BY A THOUSAND OR MORE OF THE MEXICANS
AND SANTA ANNA- I HAVE SUSTAINED A CONTINUAL BOMBARDMENT
& CANNONADE FOR 24 HOURS & HAVE NOT LOST A MAN- THE ENEMY
HAS DEMANDED A SURRENDER AT DISCRETION, OTHERWISE, THE
GARRISON ARE TO BE PUT TO THE SWORD, IF THE FORT IS TAKEN-
I HAVE ANSWERED THE DEMAND WITH A CANNON SHOT, & OUR FLAG
STILL WAVES PROUDLY FROM THE WALLS- I SHALL NEVER SURRENDER
OR REYELLY THEN, I CALL ON YOU IN THE NAME OF LIBERTY, OF

I know it's hard to read but give it a shot.

PATRIOTISM & EVERYTHING DEAR TO THE AMERICAN CHARACTER TO COME TO OUR AID, WITH ALL DISPATCH - THE ENEMY IS RECEIVING REINFORCEMENTS DAILY AND WILL NO DOUBT INCREASE TO THREE OR FOUR THOUSAND IN FOUR OR FIVE DAYS.

IF THIS CALL IS NEGLECTED, I AM DETERMINED TO SUSTAIN MYSELF AS LONG AS POSSIBLE & DIE LIKE A SOLDIER WHO NEVER FORGETS WHAT IS DUE TO HIS OWN HONOR & THAT OF HIS COUNTRY - VICTORY OR DEATH

WILLIAM BARRETT TRAVIS
LT. COL. COMD.

U.S. THE TOWN IS ON OUR SIDE. WHEN THE ENEMY ENTERED IN SIGHT WE HAD 100 TUBS OF CORN. WE HAD SINCE FOUND 11 DESERTED HOUSES 80 OF 90 TUBS & GOT INTO THE WELLS 20 OF 30 LEAD OF BEEVES.

TRAVIS

This is a portion of a different plaque explaining why it's called The Alamo.

DURING MEXICO'S WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE FROM SPAIN, A COMPANY OF SPANISH SOLDIERS FROM ALAMO DEL PARRAS, COAHUILA, MEXICO, OCCUPIED THE ABANDONED MISSION, USING ITS BUILDINGS AS BARRACKS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. FROM THIS ASSOCIATION PROBABLY ORIGINATED THE NAME, "ALAMO".

ACCORDING TO SOME HISTORIANS, THE NAME "ALAMO" WAS DERIVED FROM A GROVE OF COTTONWOOD TREES GROWING ON THE BANKS OF THE ACEQUIA, "ALAMO" BEING THE SPANISH WORD FOR COTTONWOOD.

This is another plaque

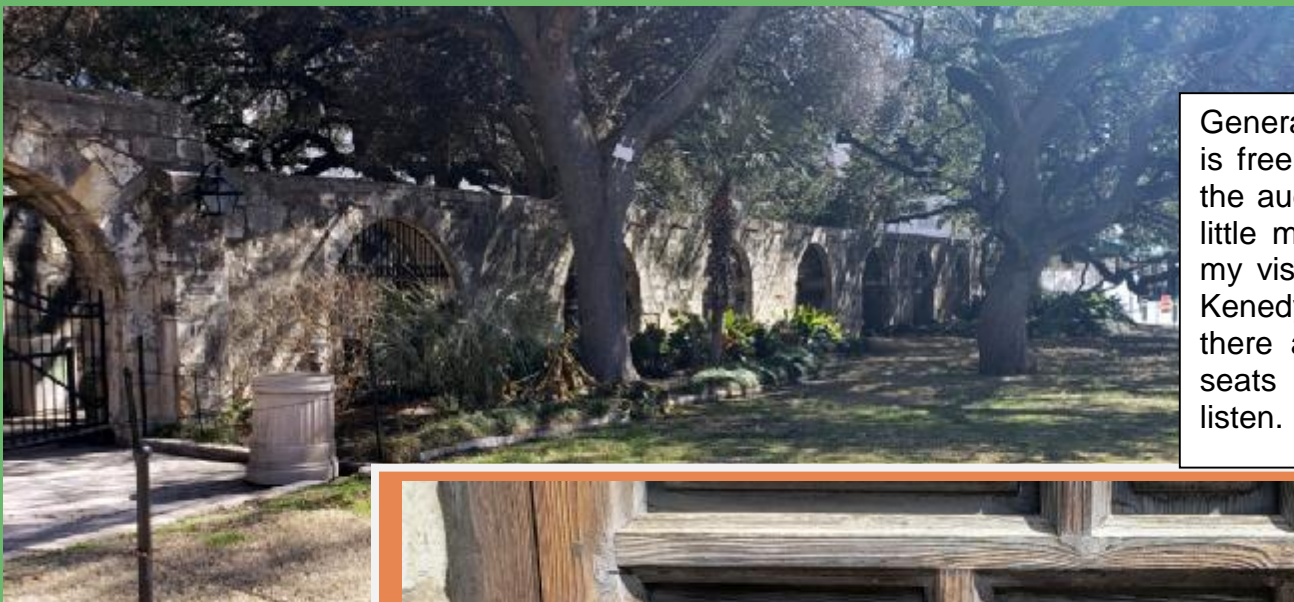
THE DEFENSE OF THE ALAMO

"THERMOPYLAE HAD ITS MESSENGER OF DEFEAT;
THE ALAMO HAD NONE."

THE ALAMO IN 1836 CONSISTED OF THIS CHURCH, THE CONVENT AND A LARGE RECTANGULAR AREA OR PLAZA, AN ENCLOSURE OF ABOUT SIX ACRES SURROUNDED BY WALLS WITH BARRACKS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE PLAZA.

ON FEBRUARY 23, 1836, COLONEL WILLIAM BARRET TRAVIS ENTERED THE ALAMO WITH AN APPROXIMATE FORCE OF TWO HUNDRED MEN. THE SIEGE COMMANDED BY GENERAL SANTA ANNA AND AN ARMY OF SEVERAL THOUSAND MEXICAN SOLDIERS LASTED NEARLY TWO WEEKS. AT DAWN ON SUNDAY, MARCH 6, THE FINAL ASSAULT WAS MADE, AND IN LESS THAN AN HOUR THE DEFENDERS SLAIN, LATER THE BODIES WERE BURNED BY ORDER OF GENERAL SANTA ANNA. THIS VICTORY IN DEFEAT WAS THE MEANS OF UNITING THE COLONISTS IN A DETERMINED EFFORT TO RESIST FURTHER OPPRESSION AND BY ARMED FORCE SECURE PERMANENT INDEPENDENCE

"IT WAS HERE THAT A GALLANT FEW, THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE, THREW THEMSELVES BETWEEN THE ENEMY AND THE SETTLEMENTS, DETERMINED NEVER TO SURRENDER NOR RETREAT, THEY REDEEMED THEIR PLEDGE TO TEXAS WITH THE FORFEIT OF THEIR LIVES - THEY FELL THE CHOSEN SACRIFICE TO TEXAS FREEDOM." - NEWELL



General admission is free, but I chose the audio tour for a little more depth to my visit. Unlike the Kenedy Museum, there are very few seats to sit and listen.

'Be silent friend
Here Heroes died
To blaze a trail
For other men'

There are no photos allowed to be taken inside the building. Not that there's much more than you saw yesterday at the missions.



ACEQUIA OR IRRIGATION DITCH,
PART OF THE ORIGINAL ACEQUIA
BUILT TO SUPPLY FARMS AND THE
MISSION SAN ANTONIO DEL VALERO.



Dark Days

The Alamo's fall shocked the colonists. The fledgling Texas Army, which was encamped at Gonzales under the command of Sam Houston, began a withdrawal eastward. Panicked civilian families followed them, abandoning cabins and livestock in what came to be called the

Having the audio tour allowed me into another building that covered the history of Texas up to independence. Since we have already covered 98% of what was displayed in here, I only include the very last bit of information

Runaway Scrape. At Goliad, the Centralists' second column trapped 400 Texas volunteers under James W. Fannin on the open prairie near Coletto Creek. Fannin surrendered, and he and most of his men were executed by the Centralists on Palm Sunday, March 27, 1836.

Victory at San Jacinto

With his Centralist troops in control of San Antonio de Béxar and Goliad, Santa Anna set out with a part of his army and raced across Texas to Harrisburg, hoping to capture the officials of the newly-declared Republic of Texas. They eluded him, but Santa Anna continued on to the banks of the San Jacinto River, where he encamped on April 21, 1836 with 1350 men. Sam Houston's 1000-man army surprised him there that afternoon. In the rout that followed, 630 Centralist soldiers were killed and another 730 were captured. Santa

Anna himself was found in hiding and taken prisoner the next day. He eventually signed an armistice, the Treaty of Velasco, and ordered all of the remaining 4,000 Centralist troops to leave Texas. Although it would not be recognized by Mexico until 1848, Texas won her independence that day at San Jacinto.

Not actually knowing what is true and what is not, during the Ghost tour last night our tour guide, Sean, related this version while we stood in front of the Emily Morgan Hotel. Emily West was a young, light skinned, black girl serving as an indentured servant to Colonel Morgan, custom at the time being for servants to take the Master's name, she was known as Emily Morgan. After Santa Anna took the Alamo he became totally enamored with Emily Morgan. When the Texans attacked the Mexicans at San Jacinto, orders for defense were not given because Santa Anna's attention was otherwise occupied. I'm sure you get the meaning here.

The Alamo in 1836



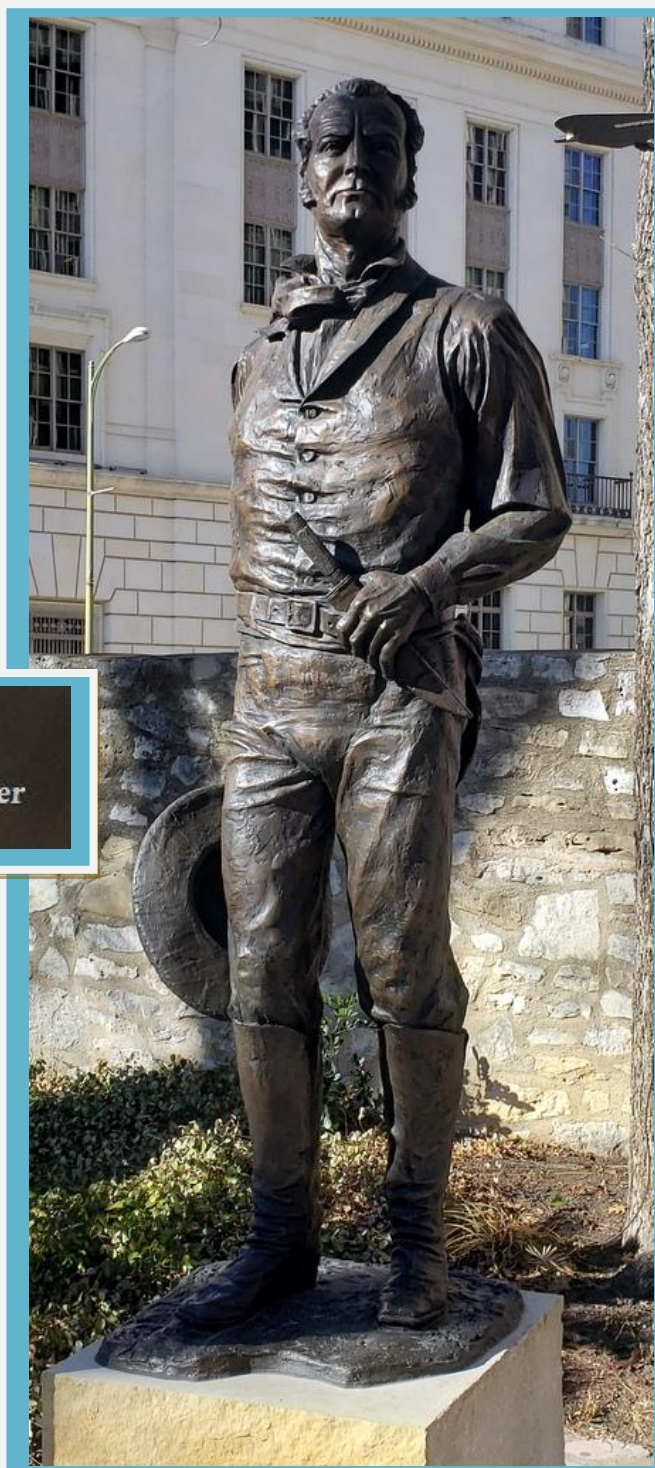
William Barret Travis (1809-1836)

Lawyer, Soldier and Alamo Defender



James Bowie (1796-1836)

Frontiersman, Entrepreneur, Soldier and Alamo Defender



At this time I walked back to the RV in the Tower parking lot and wrote most of this newsletter. At 7:30 I headed back to the Menger Hotel and my scheduled Ghost walk tour.



It was a small tour, only five of us and Sean, the tour guide. Then another tour guide and her sister joined us, just for fun.

Right is the Alamo, lit up for night time viewing.



We started out at the Menger Hotel where 36 different ghosts have been reported, including Teddy Roosevelt, Richard King (King Ranch), owner William Menger and a chambermaid shot three times by her husband. I am not going to try and relate all of the sights we visited or stories of ghostly encounters. Sean was a terrific host, of course he was from Wisconsin and had even lived in Hartland. A mother and grown daughter were from Hudson, Wisconsin.



This is the old Alamo Bank Building. Behind the brass doors was the money vault. The stained glass window is the Alamo.

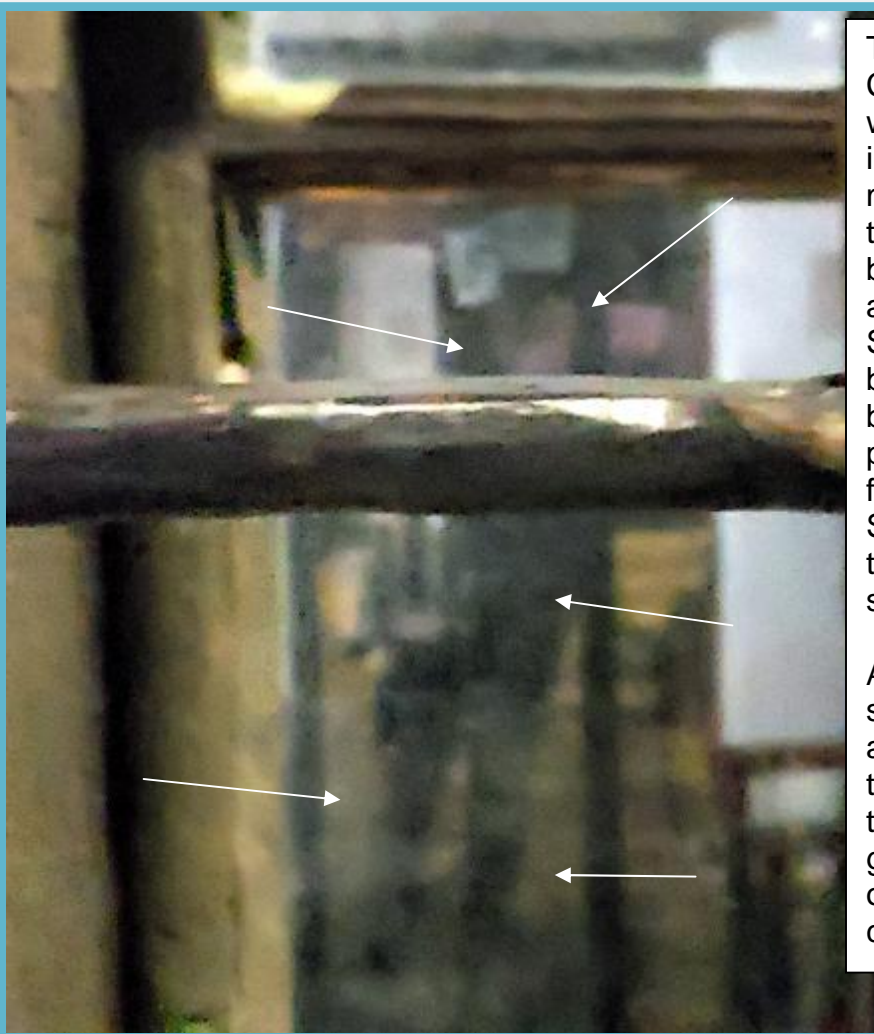
My thoughts on ghosts - Mostly a skeptic but fascinated by the possibilities. With that in mind Sean and May (the other tour guide) related stories of their own experiences with ghosts. May and her sister were staying in the Emily Morgan last week during the power outages and heard noises; Sean was staying at the Menger when his wife woke him because of voices in the next room. Sean found the TV on. He had photos that had been sent to him by people who had taken the tour, taken photos, and then found they had an unexplainable image on the screen. With that in mind, remember on Sunday I tried to visit the Casa Ortiz, but needed a reservation? It turns out that Casa Ortiz is the most haunted building in San Antonio. Those ghost hunter shows have filmed here. The room we are about to look into has been the scene of a murder, a brutal murder, and many ghosts have been seen here.

Sean was standing with his back to the window, but several feet away. I was to the side of the window, but leaned over and took this photo. Do you see anything? Neither did I at first.





This is the same room a few minutes later when Sean was done telling the tale and we each took a turn taking a photo.



This is a blow-up of the first shot I took. Can you see the figure? Right, I know what you're thinking, that's my reflection in the glass. However, I am not leaning my entire body in front of the window. If this was a reflection of me it would just be my head and shoulders sticking around the side of the window frame. Second guess is the reflection of Sean's back. Could be, but you can tell by the bars on the window that the camera is pretty level (for a change), and the figure is leaning considerably. Also Sean was wearing a long frock coat with tails, well below his knees, but I don't see that.

Alright, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying I saw a ghost, I'm just saying it's a little weird. I did not see anything at the time, I was editing the photos thinking, "sure, like I'm going to find a ghost." Then I saw this one. Everyone out there can come to your own conclusion.

Our 90 minute ghost tour turned into 135 minutes because of our small group. It was very good, better than the one in Charleston, SC.

I walked about eight or nine miles today so by the time I arrived back at WalMart I just hit the sack. That's why this newsletter is not arriving until this morning. It took a little longer once I found the ghost photo and had to include it.

Not sure about tomorrow. Jane and Sean gave me plenty of ideas. I did schedule a factory tour for Thursday afternoon. Maybe I will check out Casa Ortiz now that I have a good reason to visit.

I need DEF in the RV and water also, so I think that will be my first stop today. Sean & May both recommended Mission Concepcion as being a much better preserved specimen of a mission.

Time to get things done.

Until next time.....