

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1992

Review of Texans In Revolt: The Battle for San Antonio, 1835

Charles Kenner

Arkansas State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Kenner, Charles, "Review of Texans In Revolt: The Battle for San Antonio, 1835" (1992). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 690.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/690>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Texans In Revolt: The Battle for San Antonio, 1835. By Alwyn Barr. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. Illustrations, photographs, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. x + 94 pp. \$18.95 cloth.

Unless they take special note of the date in the title, many readers will assume this is yet another rehash of the siege of the Alamo. Instead, it is the first monograph—if scarcely seventy pages of text can be called that—devoted to the opening campaign of the Texas Revolution. In the autumn of 1835 several hundred Texas volunteers gathered before San Antonio, elected officers, and began a haphazard series of events that ended with a Mexican capitulation in early December.

Rigidly restricting the scope of his book, Barr confines himself to recounting the events between the opening skirmish at Gonzales on 2 October and the final assault in early December. Short though the campaign was, it involved at one time or another every major figure, Davy Crockett excepted, in the Texans' struggle for freedom. Most prominent was Stephen F. Austin. Commander of the Texas troops before San

Antonio from 11 October to 24 November, he tried repeatedly to launch a frontal assault on the Mexican positions, only to be thwarted by more cautious underlings. Sam Houston, on the other hand, denied the command, continually counseled against attack and was at least partly responsible for Austin's inability to carry out his plans. One wonders if an attack shortly after the Texans' victory at Concepcion on 28 October might not have been as victorious as the one finally stumbled into on 5 December.

Symbolic of the lack of discipline and organization, the campaign for San Antonio was waged by a constantly fluctuating body of troops. Officers and enlisted men alike showed up, took part, and took departure—seemingly at will. Relatively few involved in the opening actions were still on the scene for the final assault. By December the first recruits from the States such as the New Orleans Greys had become a significant part of the investing forces. The future martyrs of the Alamo and Goliad—Jim Bowie, James Fannin, and William B. Travis—played key roles in preliminary engagements; true to form, none was still present when the final attack was made.

Although his research is based predominantly on Texan sources, Barr maintains a commendable degree of objectivity. He is careful to give credit to the bravery and tenacity of Mexican units, especially the Morelos Battalion of infantry, the most professional and best drilled unit in the Mexican forces. Likewise, Texan successes are attributed as much or more to greater firepower than to any ethnocentric musings about superior Anglo fighting qualities.

Overall, *Texans in Revolt* is a thoroughly professional work that will become a standard addition to collections on the Texas Revolution. The battle may not have been, as one writer maintained, "the turning point in the struggle for Texas independence," but it is more than significant enough to merit its own monograph.

CHARLES KENNER
Department of History
Arkansas State University