



SAN ANTONIO
EXPRESS-NEWS

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TRICENTENNIAL
CALENDAR

TODAY

Corazon Cinema on Main Plaza: Main Plaza, 115 N. Main Ave., mainplaza.org. Movie series on Main Plaza beginning at dusk every Thursday in June, July and August. This week's edition will feature "Wonder." Free. 8:30-10:30 p.m.

UPCOMING

The Story of Laredito: Visual Art Exhibition: Centro Cultural Aztlan, 1800 Fredericksburg Road, Ste. 103, centroaztlan.org. Artists will interpret the culture, landscape and daily life of the first barrio in San Antonio through the eyes of its residents. 6-9 p.m. July 13.

50th Anniversary of Friendship Festival: Inner City Development, 1300 Chihuahua St. innercitydevelopment.org. This community-focused festival will feature music acts, a street dance, games and food. Free admission. 6-11:30 p.m. July 14.

Conjunto Fandango: VFW Post 76, 10 10th St. ulofolkculturecenter.com. An evening of conjunto music and dance. \$10-\$20. July 20.

Music for the Soul: The Josephine Theatre, 339 W. Josephine St., 210-284-7869, https://josephinetheatre.org. This dynamic, award-winning production explains the evolution of music while paying tribute to music's greatest performers. \$10-\$20. Opens July 20 and runs select dates through Aug. 26.

MILITARY

ARMY CAME HERE JUST BEFORE STATEHOOD

Dragoon Regiment arrived in late October 1845

FROM EXPRESS-NEWS ARCHIVES

The military presence in San Antonio began with two companies of the U.S. Army Dragoon Regiment coming to town eight months before Texas joined the union in 1846.

There was little hint of what was to come when the dragoons arrived Oct. 28, 1845, but a war with Mexico was brewing. A small installation called the Post at San Antonio, headed by Gen. John Wool, served as an assembly and training point for a war that would prove to be controversial and transformative.

From the dawn of that conflict, when the first shots were fired on April 25, 1846, to now, the nation's war was fueled an ever larger military presence in San Antonio.

The military also left a colorful history here in the second half of the 19th century that includes larger-than-life figures such as Robert E. Lee, who was on Wool's staff at a site close to San Antonio College, African-American frontier Indian fighters and Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders.

But the Army was tiny at first, its future unknown. San Antonio had just one three-story building, the Plaza House, in 1846, and the Republic of



UTSA Special Collectors

A group photo of members of the 7th Texas Infantry stationed at Fort Sam Houston, all wearing sergeant's stripes.

Texas itself had a little more than 140,000 people, nearly a third of them slaves.

Years would pass before a post here was named for Sam Houston, the republic's first president.

The dragoons followed in the footsteps of Spanish, Mexican and Texian soldiers going back to 1718, establishing operations on a site they called Camp Almus, no far from the Alamo.

They were welcomed by settlers who had struggled to hold on to their land in the face of Indian attacks and invasions by Mexican troops, who twice captured San Antonio after Texas won its independence in 1836, according to a history



Fort Sam Houston Museum

An Army artillery crew prepares caissons and limbers for an exercise on what was then Fort Sam Houston and is now the museum site, around 1912.

compiled by the Fort Sam Houston Museum.

Texans long had favored joining the union, voting 3,277 to 91 in favor of it when they elected Houston president in 1836. Mexico vigorously opposed both the republic and statehood.

Nothing had changed a

decade later.

"With the Republic of Texas strapped for cash and thinly populated with hostile neighbors to the west and south, Texans were glad for the reinforcement provided by the presence of U.S. troops," said John Manguso, who led Fort Sam's

museum until his retirement.

A letter from the War Department to Gen. Zachary Taylor summed up his mission, but also served as an omen.

"So soon as the Texas Congress shall give its consent to annexation ... Texas will then be regarded by the executive government here so far a part of the United States as to be entitled from that moment to defense and protection against foreign invasion and Indian incursions," it said.

Taylor won a pair of battles in the spring of 1846 after Mexican forces ambushed a U.S. patrol, triggering the war. By then, 1,900 U.S. troops were in town and bivouacked on Camp Crockett near San Antonio College's main entrance.

Between 1870 and 1875, the city donated 92 acres about 2 miles from the Alamo to the Army. That site became known as Government Hill and was home to the Quadrangle, which began construction in 1876.

Many people think that is the year of Fort Sam's founding, but Manguso said it actually goes back to statehood.

"In 1890, the Post at San Antonio was designated at Fort Sam Houston," he explained. "So 1845 is considered the date when the post was established."

A longer version of this report by Sig Christenson ran Jan. 23, 2015. Read it at ExpressNews.com.