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With Santa Anna in Texas

I should have known who he was when he walked into the room. Although we were in San Antonio, the "Noo Yawk" accent was unmistakable when the stranger asked to see the Chief Archivist. I was sitting in the reading room of the Library of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, a haven of historical research half-hidden from the tourists in a shaded corner of the Alamo grounds. There were plenty of sightseers around, however, because the day before—March 6, 1994—had been the anniversary of the final, deadly assault on the old mission in 1836 by the overwhelming forces of General Santa Anna.

There didn't have to be a fight here in 1836. Sam Houston had sent Jim Bowie to Béxar in January of that year with the hope that Bowie would persuade the volunteers at the Alamo to quit the place. Never designed as a fortress, incapable of protecting the town of San Antonio from occupation by the enemy, commanding no strategic pass through which Santa Anna would have to march, and far removed from the Anglo-American settlements in Texas, the Alamo appeared to Houston to be nothing more than a trap for anyone who would dare defend it.

But defend it Bowie determined to do. He wrote to Governor Henry Smith on February 2 that he was ready to "die in these ditches" rather than give up the rebel outpost. Smith agreed, but could provide little support. He ordered Lieutenant Colonel William Barret Travis to raise a company to reinforce the Alamo, but only thirty men responded to the call. Travis threatened to resign his commission rather than lead such a tiny force, but in the end he complied. When he and his troopers arrived at the Alamo, they found an ungainly structure enclosing a central *plaza* of almost three acres, defended by barely a hundred men. At least four times that number would be needed to operate the Alamo's big guns and to man its lengthy walls. Not even the famous Davy Crockett, who showed up on February 8 with a handful of Tennessee volunteers, could make up for the critical shortage of manpower.

When Colonel James C. Neill, the officer in charge of the garrison, was compelled to depart in mid-February to attend a family stricken with illness, clashes of personality threatened to split those who remained at the Alamo. Neill attempted to hand over command to Travis, but volunteers who favored Bowie demanded the right to choose their own commander. They prevailed, and, as their new leader celebrated his election with a "roaring drunk," Travis was again ready to walk away from this assignment. But a powerful hangover brought Bowie to his senses, and the two men finally agreed on a joint command.

There was no time to lose. Reports were already coming in from Juan Seguín's mounted Tejano scouts that the Mexican army had crossed the Río Grande. Travis discounted these sto-

ries as exaggerations, but on February 23 a large force under Santa Anna himself surprised the rebels by marching into San Antonio from the west. The Texans lounging in town barely had time to grab a few provisions and fall back into the Alamo. Bowie suggested a parley with the enemy, but Travis answered the Mexicans' demand for unconditional surrender with a cannon shot. Further disagreement between the Alamo's commanders vanished, however, when Bowie fell deathly ill on the second day of the siege.

For the next ten days, Travis watched the noose tighten around him. Juan Seguín, James Bonham, and other couriers who slipped through the Mexican lines to find reinforcements produced paltry results. The thirty-odd volunteers from Gonzales who appeared under the walls at three o'clock in the morning on the first of March were all (that we know for certain) who came to Travis's aid—though perhaps as many as sixty more (according to Mexican body-counts) arrived in time to become unknown martyrs. Colonel James W. Fannin's half-hearted effort to come to the rescue ended, as we have seen, in a fiasco of broken-down wagons and wandering oxen.

The remarkable thing is that Santa Anna decided to assault the Alamo at all. The few men in the fort could be easily bypassed and cut off from the rest of the Texan forces. Even if Travis wanted a battle, Santa Anna did not have to take the bait. But the Mexican commander in chief wanted vengeance and glory. A spectacular victory at the very scene of General Cos's December disgrace was the kind of news that Santa Anna wanted to send back to Mexico City, where military victories were the surest guarantee of his political survival.

The actual Battle of the Alamo was almost an anticlimax. After pounding the Texans with a constant bombardment for almost two weeks, Santa Anna ordered his guns to cease firing on the night of March 5. The mass assault on the walls, which came the next day before dawn, was twice turned back by deadly Texan firepower before the sheer force of Mexican numbers overcame all resistance. The battle was over in less than an hour. Every Texan defender of the Alamo died, but because their cause was ultimately victorious, the Texan fighters passed from life into legend.

Travis wrote his way into the Texan pantheon of heroes, penning phrases in his letters from the Alamo that reverberate even today:

> [O]ur flag still waves proudly from the walls. *I shall never surrender or retreat.* . . . I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due his own honor & that of his country. VICTORY OR DEATH.

Bowie and Bonham also achieved heroic status through the way they faced the end: Bowie exhorting the Alamo defenders even from his deathbed and Bonham galloping back into the doomed fortress on March 3 only to report that Fannin would not be bringing relief from Goliad.

David Crockett rounded out what became the Alamo's fabulous four. With the exception of President Andrew Jackson, Crockett was the most celebrated man in North America even before he rode into San Antonio: he was known as champion bear-hunter, homespun humorist, and outspoken (ex-)congressman from the backwoods. Virginian John Sowers Brooks (one of

Herman Ehrenberg's fellow-soldiers at Goliad), upon learning that Crockett was among those who repulsed an early Mexican probe of the Alamo's defenses, wrote his mother that "Probably Davy Crockett 'grinned them off'"—just as Crockett had once boasted that he could grin down an angry bear.

No defender survived who saw Davy Crockett die at the Alamo, and conflicting versions of his last moments were circulating within weeks of the battle. Few in my generation, who had watched Fess Parker swinging his rifle as the television screen faded to black in 1955, doubted that Crockett fell in desperate combat. But in the ensuing decades cynicism and historical revisionism had taken a toll on such certainties. That's why I was so interested in the gentleman from New York who had come to San Antonio on the anniversary of Crockett's death.

Bill Groneman, a New York City detective, was in the Alamo city to sign copies of his new book, *Defense of a Legend: Crockett and the de la Peña Diary*. This was the much-anticipated work that my editor had mentioned to me the previous summer, and the latest chapter in one of the most intense historical controversies of recent times. The diary of José Enrique de la Peña, a Mexican officer who marched into Texas with Santa Anna in 1836, was notorious for a single paragraph describing an "unpleasant episode" that had allegedly occurred only a few yards from where I was sitting in the library's quiet reading room. De la Peña claimed to be an eyewitness to the capture and execution of David Crockett in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of the Alamo.

Groneman's book, I soon learned, was an all-out assault on the de la Peña diary, not merely on its accuracy, but on its very

authenticity. After I had introduced myself to him, Bill showed me the cover of his new volume and bluntly announced its central thesis: the famous "diary" was a probable forgery.

It was difficult to concentrate on my own research after Groneman left the library. As soon as it closed its doors for the day at five o'clock, I hurried across the street toward the bookstore where Groneman was still signing copies of *Defense of a Legend*. I bought one on the spot.

Thumbing through my newly autographed copy, I was impressed. Not only did Groneman claim that the de la Peña manuscript contained telltale anachronisms indicating a forgery, but he had even provided a photograph of the suspected culprit! The suave old gentleman with the charming smile and the twinkling eyes was identified as John A. Laflin, "one of the greatest forgers in American history." From the 1940s until his death in 1970, Laflin (among other escapades) had repeatedly tried to pass himself off as the great-grandson of Jean Lafitte, the pirate who had plied the coastal waters of Texas and Louisiana, at times smuggling slaves in concert with Jim Bowie.

Even more impressive was Groneman's published photocopy of a "Certification" from the famed handwriting expert Charles Hamilton, who had devoted a whole chapter to Laflin in his 1980 book, *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*. Hamilton's signed statement was unequivocal: "I have carefully examined the document allegedly written by JOSE ENRIQUE DE LA PENA, entitled PERSONAL NARRATIVE WITH SANTA ANNA IN TEXAS, and find that it is a forgery by John Laflin, alias John Laffite."

Groneman's book was obviously a bombshell, a major event in a war of words over Crockett's death that had become much

John A. Laffite, a.k.a. John A. Laflin. (Copyright: Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center, Liberty, Texas.)

more vicious in the late twentieth century than it had ever been in the years immediately following the fall of the Alamo. Newspaper reports in the spring and summer of 1836 varied wildly as to the circumstances of Crockett's demise, ranging from glowing reports of his fighting like a tiger until the bitter end to de-

scriptions of his brutal execution along with a handful of other prisoners on the express orders of General Santa Anna.

For the next century, several competing (and largely undocumented) versions of Crockett's final moments coexisted, but many who celebrated the memory of this most prominent "martyr of the Alamo" seemed untroubled by the conflicting details. As late as 1934, a popular edition of *The Adventures of Davy Crockett* (published by Charles Scribner's Sons) featured as its frontispiece a portrayal of the captive Alamo defender painted by the Texan artist and decorated U.S. Marine John W. Thomason, Jr., a military hero in his own right. Hands tied behind his back, Thomason's Crockett is being led to stand before Santa Anna.

When Scribner's brought out a new edition of this book in 1955, however, the graphic depiction of captivity had vanished. What had changed? A cultural critic might argue that in the midst of the Cold War, the example of a Crockett who had allowed himself to be captured alive by the forces of tyranny conflicted with the dominant American doctrine that even nuclear war was preferable to conquest by the enemy: "better dead than Red."

A more immediate reason for dropping the disturbing image may have been fact that the book's re-issue came in the midst of the same "Davy Crockett craze" that sent me with my coonskin cap into my own backyard Alamo. The final fade-out notwithstanding, there was no doubt that Walt Disney's Davy went down swinging. John Wayne's portrayal of Crockett fighting to the death in the 1960 movie *The Alamo* reinforced this heroic image in the collective memory of mid-twentieth-century Americans.

Ironically, it was in precisely the years 1955 and 1960 that the two most important eyewitness accounts of Crockett's death,

"Crockett led before Santa Anna" by John W. Thomason, Jr. (Copyright: Dr. T.C. Cole, Jr. Photograph courtesy of The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.)

each ostensibly narrated by a Mexican soldier, came to light—far apart and under very different circumstances. Each account presented a Davy Crockett that more closely matched the captive figure drawn by John Thomason than the ones portrayed by Fess Parker or John Wayne.

The extensive de la Peña manuscripts were acquired from unknown sources by J. Sánchez Garza, a dealer in antiquities who edited and privately published them from his home in Mexico City in 1955 as *La Rebelión de Texas: Manuscrito Inédito de 1836 por un Oficial de Santa Anna*. A second narrative of Crockett's execution, now known as the "Dolson Letter," was accidentally discovered by a Rice University graduate student in the 1836 files of the (Detroit) *Democratic Free Press* and published in the *Journal of Southern History* in August 1960. (The Dolson Letter will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.)

The immediate impact of Sánchez Garza's publication of the de la Peña papers on either Texan historiography or the American historical consciousness was virtually nil. In *Thirteen Days to Glory*, a perennially popular history of the Alamo battle published in 1958, author Lon Tinkle called the Mexican diary one of "the most interesting contributions to Alamo investigation in recent years," but it's unlikely that Tinkle had even seen, much less read, the book. In his bibliographical section he failed to mention the title and incorrectly listed both the date of publication and the diarist's name (he called him "Gonzalez Pena"). Tinkle labeled the book's contents as "vitriolic," probably because of its criticism of Mexican generals and politicians, but he made no reference to de la Peña's version of Crockett's death.

Three years later, Walter Lord prominently featured de la Peña's testimony in a section titled "Did David Crockett Surrender?" in his far superior book on the Alamo, *A Time to Stand*. Yet there was barely a ripple of public notice. Lord himself perhaps lessened the impact of his revelation when he stressed that despite the contemporary evidence of the execution—he listed also the Dolson Letter, the newspaper accounts, and some secondhand testimony from Mexican prisoners of war—most early Texas accounts (though none by eyewitnesses) flatly declared that Crockett fell in battle. Lord certainly hedged his conclusion, noting that, while "it's just possible" that Crockett surrendered, "there's a good chance that [he] lived up to his legend."

De la Peña's narrative was cited in a few obscure works written by Spanish-speaking authors in the 1960s, but nothing for the remainder of that decade altered the sense that both this Mexican officer and the story that he told were still figuratively covered by the dust of forgetfulness (*el polvo del olvido*) from which the antiquarian Sánchez Garza had tried to rescue the man and his memoir.

The dust (*polvo*) turned out to be gunpowder (*pólvora*). A delayed (and quite unexpected) explosion occurred in 1975 when the Texas A&M University Press unveiled *With Santa Anna in Texas: A Personal Narrative of the Revolution, by José Enrique de la Peña*. The perpetrators had not intended to be bomb-throwers. Carmen Perry, a former director of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library at the Alamo, had been engaged to translate the de la Peña manuscripts by John R. Peace, a prominent Texan attorney and politician instrumental in the creation

of the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). Peace, Perry, and UTSA librarian Michael Kelly had earlier traveled together to Mexico City to arrange the purchase of the bundle of old papers from the widow of J. Sánchez Garza. Although Carmen Perry eventually received academic accolades for her work, the immediate rewards for her labors were tabloid headlines, hate mail, and midnight phone calls from people who could not tolerate the thought of a helpless and submissive Crockett.

A similar fate awaited Dan Kilgore, an accountant and avocational historian from Corpus Christi. His 1977 presidential address to the Texas State Historical Association—published the next year as *How Did Davy Die?*—meticulously examined the questions raised by Perry's publication and came down solidly on the side of de la Peña rather than Disney. For his troubles, Kilgore was branded by irate respondents as a "mealy-mouthed intellectual" and a "smut peddler" who should have his mouth washed out with soap. Retaining the Cold War rhetoric of the 1950s, a writer from Ft. Myers, Florida, told Kilgore (a conservative Republican) that his book was "one of the Communits [*sic*] plans to degrade our hero's" [*sic*], and added, echoing the famous ballad of the Disneyland Crockett, "He's still King of the wild frontier." What Kilgore had envisioned as an academic exercise in the interpretation of documentary evidence became instead a case study in the power of myth.

Although the ranting and raving "crazies" received most of the attention of those who have revisited the Crockett controversy of the 1970s, Bill Groneman perceptively noted in *Defense of a Legend* that the responses of these "kooks" had been stimulated by the tremendous press coverage given Crockett's alleged

surrender at that time. This media frenzy, along with the increasing (and uncritical) scholarly acceptance of the de la Peña version of the events, were, Groneman believed, signs of the times. In the political and social atmosphere of the mid-1970s, he argued, a generation of Americans disillusioned by Vietnam and Watergate found it far harder than ever before to celebrate "the image of Crockett clubbing away at hoards [*sic*] of swarthy men," and far easier than ever before to accept a cynically revisionist image of Crockett as a "sly politician" who tried to talk his way out of trouble when caught by the Mexicans in the Alamo.

Groneman also pointed to the inhibitions that may have prevented some of those doubters, like himself, from speaking out in dissent: a desire to avoid being lumped with the "kooks who harassed Perry and Kilgore" and qualms about being seen as irrational defenders of "childhood heroes." Groneman also claimed that there was a fear of being branded as a "racist . . . if you did not believe the de la Peña account." Moreover, said this dedicated amateur historian, many of those who swallowed their doubts did so because it was simply unthinkable that the "serious historians" who endorsed the de la Peña version did not know "what they were talking about."

By 1994 Groneman was ready to cast aside these inhibitions and challenge the reliability of the de la Peña diary. For me, his determination seemed admirable, especially in light of my recent experience with the bogus "Sam Houston speech." I put *Defense of a Legend* on the top of my summer reading list—a temptation that soon became a duty when George Ward, my editor at the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, asked if I would review the

book. I leaped to the task, expecting to write a quick and positive analysis of the work of a fellow historical detective who had gone back to the original sources to set the record straight. But that's not exactly what I found.

Bill had indeed uncovered problems with the diary. He easily put his finger on the most obvious discrepancy: the same professional historians who had uncritically endorsed the de la Peña diary as the "best" and "most reliable" source for the death of Crockett had also stated unequivocally that it had been published in 1836—and that was simply impossible! It could not have happened because buried deep in de la Peña's narrative is a reference to the published diary of another Mexican officer, General José Urrea—and Urrea's *Diario* was not published until 1838. Obviously, any narrative containing this reference could not have existed, much less have been published, in 1836.

The presence of this apparent anachronism was clearly Groneman's strongest argument against the authenticity of the de la Peña diary. His other points were weaker. It was true, as he said, that there was no clear provenance for these manuscripts—they appeared as if by magic in the hands of J. Sánchez Garza, who offered no explanation for their origin. But many valuable historical documents have turned up in unlikely places, and with no paper trail leading back to their creators. Moreover, Groneman's charges that John Laflin had forged the manuscripts, perhaps in concert with Sánchez Garza, appeared upon close examination to be convenient conjectures rather than convincing proofs. Finally, the examples given by Groneman of "similar language" in the de la Peña manuscripts and various documents from a later time (including some allegedly forged by Laflin),

were inconclusive. There were some vaguely similar *ideas*, but the words didn't match.

Even Groneman's strongest point was not enough to close what I had expected to be an open-and-shut case of forgery. Groneman's argument that the alleged forger had carelessly committed an anachronism could be expressed as a logical syllogism, with two related factual premises and a necessary conclusion.

Premise One: this is a document "purported to have been written and published in 1836." *Premise Two*: the document contains material (the reference to Urrea's publication) that could have been written no earlier than 1838. *Conclusion*: the diary must be a fraud. The problem was that Groneman had quoted no original source in establishing his first premise. Did the diary itself claim to have been produced in 1836? I couldn't tell from reading Groneman's book, and I could not imagine why he would not have included that information if it existed. Curious, I picked up a copy of *With Santa Anna in Texas*, Carmen Perry's translation.

Her "Translator's Preface" did not resolve the mystery, but instead deepened it. "The narrative translated here," Perry wrote, "is de la Peña's own presentation of his diary. Though it incorporates observations on the conduct and particulars of the campaign which he made later on, he took great care to distinguish these from the diary itself, which he presents just as it was written in the field." Perry noted that the manuscripts brought back from Mexico included not only the narrative text that she had translated in full, but also "all the field notes and the original holograph diary." Thus she had been able to compare the diary as originally written with de la Peña's later "presentation" of

it. But how much later had de la Peña written his additional observations?

Perry gave no direct answer, but hinted that they were completed only a few months after the Texas campaign had come to an end. She noted that the 1955 Mexico City edition produced by J. Sánchez Garza contained "a title page which purports to be from an edition of the de la Peña diary printed in September, 1836, in Matamoros, Tam[auli]p[a]s, Mexico." She added, however, that "no copy of this edition could be located either in Mexico or the United States." Perry offered an explanation: "If indeed this edition ever appeared, it is possible that most or all copies of it were destroyed because of the highly critical nature of its contents."

Historian Llerena Friend, who wrote an introduction to Perry's 1975 translation, was aware of the anomalous reference to Urrea's book lurking in the translated text and hazarded a guess that, since Urrea's book had actually quoted anonymous passages from de la Peña's diary, perhaps at some point there had been an exchange of manuscripts between the two men. However, this would not explain how de la Peña, writing in 1836, could discuss the publication of Urrea's *Diario* in 1838. The pesky anachronism would neither fully reveal itself nor go away.

At this point, I had little choice but to press on to examine the translated narrative itself. What was in "the original diary," and what had been added later? How much later? Was there, or could there have been, an 1836 edition of de la Peña's diary that had been eradicated from existence? Perhaps de la Peña himself could provide some answers.

Reseña y Diario

de

LA CAMPAÑA DE TEXAS

Por

JOSE ENRIQUE DE LA PEÑA

Matamoros, Tamps.

Septiembre 15 de 1836

"Title Page" of de la Peña's Memoir (published 1955). (Courtesy of The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.)

The Mexican officer's most direct statements seemed to confirm Groneman's analysis. A four-page prologue consisted of a letter de la Peña wrote to a colleague on September 15, 1836. In it, he outlined "the principal causes which compelled me to publish the diary I kept during the time I served in this unfortunate campaign, and at the same time to make a brief review of what is written there. . . . I could have published my notes a few days after I returned from the campaign, but I was convinced that in order to be impartial, I had to take some time to verify those acts to which I was not an eyewitness and to obtain more accurate information about others, important objectives which I achieved by collecting the daybooks from the various sections that constituted the army." Apparently de la Peña took two or three months in the summer of 1836—his published narrative ends on June 11—to collect these materials and complete his expanded "presentation" of the diary.

This assumption seems to be confirmed by an unequivocal statement on the very last page of the Perry translation. After ending his narrative with the words, "Mexicans, there are the facts. Judge for yourselves, and let your terrible verdict fall upon those who may deserve it," de la Peña wrote, "I have concluded this narrative during the most pressing moments, a few hours before resuming the march, as I have already been informed about San Luis." Both this statement and the prologue appear to be signed and dated by de la Peña in Matamoros on September 15, 1836.

It is a puzzle. If the narrative is genuine, how the devil did that reference to General Urrea's 1838 publication get into the text? And if it is a fraud, how could the perpetrator of such an

elaborate hoax, after taking great care to emphasize the document's origin in 1836, have been so stupid as to put the blatant 1838 reference into his carefully constructed forgery? There were almost two hundred pages of diary entries and commentary between the first and last pages of *With Santa Anna in Texas*—would they reveal an answer to either of these questions? As is often the case in historical work, the answers that the narrative provided were subtle, indirect, and contextual rather than direct and to the point. I began to study, page by page, the story de la Peña told.

The deeper I plunged into his account, the more I felt I was reading the work of a genuine personality rather than a forger's attempt to construct a work that could slip neatly into the gaps in the existing literature. From the point of view of this Mexican captain (who received a field commission as a lieutenant colonel at the start of the Texas campaign), there were far more important issues involved in this war than the death of David Crockett. De la Peña was an angry young man, much more angry with the Mexican political and military establishment than with the Texan rebels who had dismembered his country. Forgetting Davy Crockett for the moment, I was soon drawn into "de la Peña's war."

De la Peña did not oppose the campaign against the rebels in Texas—it was necessary, he believed, in order to prevent not only dismemberment but also dishonor for the Mexican nation. There was great anguish felt within the army when General Cos was defeated at San Antonio in December 1835 and forced to withdraw across the Río Grande. It was this humiliation, de la Peña suggested, that led to the disaster at the Alamo—and because of

the needless loss of life among Santa Anna's troops, he considered the Alamo a disaster for the Mexican army even more than for the Texans!

Marching overland from central Mexico to San Antonio de Béxar in the dead of winter, wrote de la Peña, was quite unnecessary militarily. He believed that Santa Anna's anger and shame over Cos's capitulation had turned the recapture of Béxar into an urgent priority for psychological rather than strategic reasons. Santa Anna had dispatched General Urrea with roughly a third of the total Mexican invasion force of over six thousand men with orders to move north from Matamoros against the rebels serving under Johnson, Grant, and Fannin. The commander in chief kept the big prize for himself, however. To retake San Antonio, the historic capital of Texas, was an essential step in erasing the stain left by Cos's defeat. And it was clear that Santa Anna's solvent for the stain would be blood.

As Santa Anna marched north into Coahuila in 1835, his Minister of War, José María Tornel, issued a decree on December 30 declaring that armed expeditions were being sent into Mexico from the United States to aid the Texan rebels, and warning that in response the Mexican nation was authorizing commanders in the field to punish as pirates any foreigners who carried or shipped arms into the country for purposes of aiding the rebellion. Santa Anna would use the "Tornel Decree" to justify the summary execution of anyone captured bearing arms against the central Mexican government.

Moreover, just before the assault on the Alamo, when the issue of the treatment of potential prisoners came up at a conference of officers, de la Peña overheard Santa Anna invoke the ex-

ample of the Spanish General Joaquín de Arredondo, who brutally crushed a rebellion against Spain in San Antonio in 1813: "he had hanged eight hundred or more . . . and this conduct was taken as a model." As a young officer serving under Arredondo at the time, Santa Anna had been impressed by the political effectiveness of his chief's draconian methods. Unlike Santa Anna, de la Peña believed that such measures against the enemy would be both unnecessary and counterproductive in the campaign of 1836, but it was the shedding of Mexican blood even more than that of defeated Americans and Texans that caused de la Peña to despise Santa Anna's generalship.

When the final assault took place in the early morning of March 6, de la Peña lost many friends among the scores of soldiers mowed down as they stormed the Alamo walls—a costly tactic that would have been unnecessary if Santa Anna had waited for the arrival a few days later of his heavy artillery. Santa Anna's forced march across Coahuila in January and February had indeed surprised the Texans, but the rapid progress by the Mexican foot soldiers had outpaced the army's slower-moving large cannons (capable of hurling twelve-pound iron balls), which were needed to knock down the walls of the Alamo.

De la Peña accused Santa Anna of pushing forward the attack before his big guns arrived in the fear that Travis might finally surrender and rob the Mexican general of a dramatic victory. Santa Anna, he asserted, "wanted to cause a sensation and would have regretted taking the Alamo without clamor and without bloodshed." The Mexican rank and file, said de la Peña, saw the battle of the Alamo as a "defeat" because of the many men who died for the vanity of a commander who cared nothing for their lives.

The Mexican soldiers who wearily formed into decimated ranks in the immediate aftermath of the battle responded "icily" to Santa Anna's victory speech, reported de la Peña, and he claimed that this "coolness" on the part of the troops was partially the result of an "unpleasant incident" that had occurred after the end of the fighting and shortly before Santa Anna's address. De la Peña was referring to what he called the "base murder" of seven surviving defenders.

The young Mexican officer was watching as the prisoners were brought before Santa Anna by General Manuel Castrillón, who had taken the men under his protection as the battle came to an end. De la Peña noticed that "among them was one of great stature, well proportioned, with regular features, in whose face there was the imprint of adversity, but in whom one also noticed a degree of resignation and nobility that did him honor." He identified the man as David Crockett, "well known in North America for his unusual adventures."

Santa Anna responded to Castrillón's intervention on the prisoners' behalf "with a gesture of indignation" and ordered that the captives be shot on the spot. When the Mexican troops standing closest to the prisoners hesitated to carry out the rash command, officers from Santa Anna's own retinue stepped forward, wrote de la Peña, "and with swords in hand, fell upon these unfortunate, defenseless men just as a tiger leaps upon his prey." As the men were "tortured before they were killed," de la Peña "turned away horrified in order not to witness such a barbarous scene." Long after the war was over, he was haunted by the memory: "My ear can still hear the penetrating, doleful sound of the victims."

For the rest of the war, and in the remainder of his narrative, de la Peña found nothing to praise in the conduct of Santa Anna. He accused the general of providing for almost no medical corps, leading to the horrible and senseless deaths of many of the soldiers wounded in the taking of the Alamo. Santa Anna's careless delay in dispatching his troops after the battle to engage Sam Houston's army, thought de la Peña, proved how needless the premature assault on the Alamo had been. The soldiers who were at last sent eastward received inadequate rations, which he angrily attributed to both incompetence and corruption in the high command. Moreover, de la Peña believed that Santa Anna roused himself to leave the comforts of Béxar in pursuit of the remaining rebels only after word reached him of General Urrea's stunning victories in his drive up the Texas coastal plain.

As we have seen, José Urrea had on March 20 forced the surrender of Colonel James W. Fannin and several hundred of his men as they attempted to retreat from Goliad. Urrea sent the captive Texans back to the Goliad presidio, along with orders that they be well treated, but it was Santa Anna, in the meantime, who sent orders to Goliad in triplicate (and an aide to see that they were carried out) to the effect that the prisoners held there were to be immediately shot. Over General Urrea's objections, the orders were carried out.

It's not a simple matter to kill over four hundred desperate men. While the Texan wounded were left inside the presidio to meet their fate with Fannin, the rest were told that they were going to be repatriated. According to de la Peña, "they were requested to take their knapsacks to make them believe this unworthy falsehood, which they so trusted that they started singing

as they began their march." As both Herman Ehrenberg and de la Peña recounted in their memoirs, the prisoners were divided into three companies, marched away from the presidio in different directions, and then suddenly shot at close range. In the ensuing chaos of smoke and screams, almost thirty of the captives, including Ehrenberg, managed to escape.

De la Peña, who interviewed a number of eyewitnesses to the executions when he passed through Goliad during the Mexican army's retreat from Texas, thought that such "cold-blooded murder" demoralized the Mexican troops and damaged their nation's cause. In his narrative of the rebellion he repeatedly contrasted the genuine successes and conciliatory actions of Urrea with the cruelty and costly vanity of Santa Anna.

The dearly-won "victory" at the Alamo would be Santa Anna's last of this war. After finally leaving San Antonio on March 31, he overtook and passed de la Peña's unit, pushing rapidly eastward in pursuit of both Sam Houston's retreating army and the politicians who had declared the independence of Texas on March 2. Houston, for his part, abandoned his line of defense on the Colorado River after receiving word of Fannin's defeat. Upon reaching the Brazos River, he eluded Santa Anna by retreating once again, barely persuading his troops, who were spoiling for a fight, to evacuate the Anglo-Texan "capital" of San Felipe de Austin. He took them north up the muddy banks of the Brazos to seek food, shelter, medicine, and a chance to regroup at the immense plantation of Jared Groce. For the next two weeks, Houston drilled, fed, and rested his remaining force of several hundred men—the Texans' last hope.

Santa Anna was prevented from crossing the Brazos at San Felipe by a few stubborn Texan riflemen on the opposite bank, left behind by Houston at their own insistence. The Mexican general chose to turn south, moving downstream until he found a safe crossing at Thompson's Ferry. He no longer considered Houston's army a threat, and his spies informed him that the rebel Texan government was just a few miles away at the little town of Harrisburg. The thought of snuffing out the rebellion by capturing its political leaders, including the apostate Mexican statesman Lorenzo de Zavala (who was now the Texan vice president), was irresistible to Santa Anna. With an advance guard of fewer than a thousand men, the commander left the bulk of his army behind on the Brazos in order to make the bold strike.

His forces missed the Texan officials by a few hours at Harrisburg and by only a few minutes as they chased them to the edge of Galveston Bay. The rowboat carrying the Texan officials to the relative safety of a ship bound for Galveston Island was still in rifle range when the Mexican cavalry galloped up to the dock at Morgan's Point, but a gallant Colonel Juan Almonte ordered his men to hold their fire since there were women in the fleeing party.

Having heard that Houston was finally on the move again, Santa Anna turned north on April 19 toward Lynch's Ferry on the San Jacinto River, where he hoped to block Houston's path to the east. Houston, having learned from a captured Mexican courier that Santa Anna had cut himself loose from the main force of the Mexican army, was rushing toward the same spot. The critical moment had come.

That a critical moment could arrive this late in the war, when few Texans had even survived—much less won—any engagement with the enemy since December, would have shocked most officers in the Mexican army. Their undefeated forces were securing the lower Brazos, one of the richest agricultural areas of Texas. General Urrea had already captured the river towns of Brazoria and Columbia and was headed toward the ocean port of Velasco. General Vicente Filisola, whom Santa Anna had left in command of the bulk of his forces, was at Thompson's Ferry.

It was in the mid-afternoon of April 22 when José Enrique de la Peña, who was with the army on the Brazos under General Filisola, noticed that troops who had been crossing to the east bank of the river all day were suddenly reversing direction and being ferried back to the west side. By five o'clock rumors were flying that Santa Anna had been surprised and defeated; by the next day the few Mexican soldiers who had escaped the disaster confirmed their massive defeat on the banks of the San Jacinto. Filisola sent urgent orders to General Urrea to join him and the other Mexican generals in an emergency council of war. They did not yet know whether Santa Anna was dead or alive.

Houston had beaten Santa Anna to Lynch's Ferry by no more than four or five hours. With most of his infantry remaining hidden in the trees along Buffalo Bayou, Houston allowed only limited cavalry skirmishing on April 20, the first day of contact. Santa Anna also delayed serious offensive action, as he expected reinforcements to reach him shortly from the Brazos. When General Cos and four hundred men arrived without interference on the morning of April 21 after marching through the night, Santa Anna thought that he had the now-outnumbered Texans exactly where

he wanted them. After Houston showed no sign of an attack by mid-afternoon, the Mexican commander, who had also been up all night, decided that it was time that he and his reinforcements get some sleep. Time, Santa Anna believed, was on his side.

The naps were interrupted when Houston's desperate and bloody-minded Texans swept across the unsuspecting Mexican camp shortly after four o'clock. By nightfall, Santa Anna was a fugitive hiding in the high grass, over six hundred of his men were dead, and over seven hundred had been captured. The next day he was discovered and taken before the wounded General Houston, whose ankle had been shattered by a bullet during the Texan charge. The Mexican commander in chief soon agreed to order his remaining armies out of Texas. Santa Anna's overconfidence and carelessness had seemingly ended the war and handed the Texans their unlikely independence.

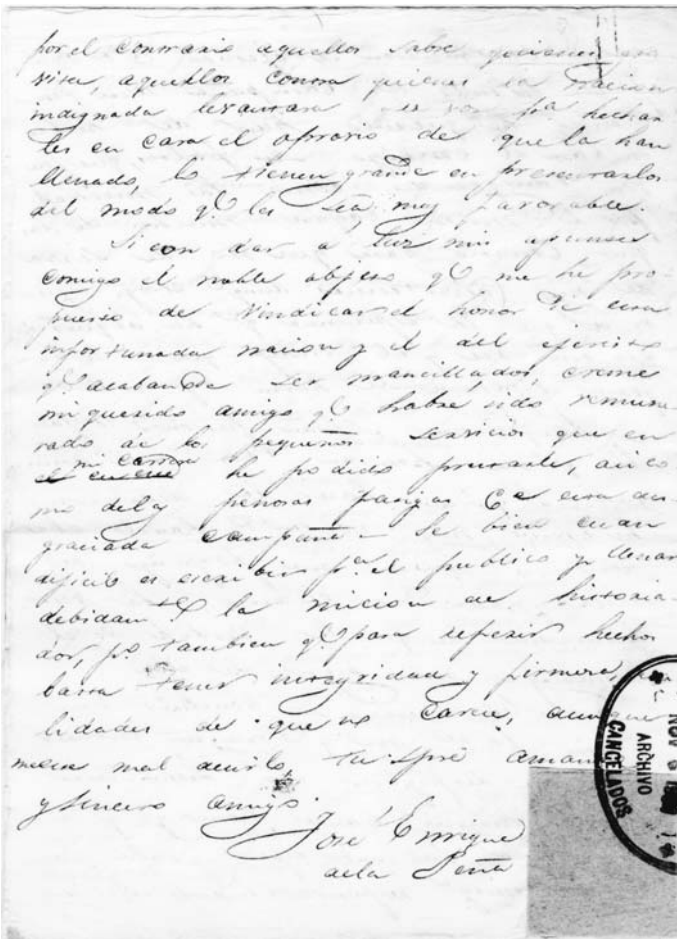
But on April 23, José Enrique de la Peña did not see it this way. He was sure that if General Filisola moved quickly against Houston, the outcome could be reversed. De la Peña was enraged when Filisola instead immediately pulled back from his position on the Brazos, and he was disappointed beyond words when his hero, General Urrea, submitted to Filisola's authority and did not insist on a continued offensive. Filisola, even before he learned of Santa Anna's fate, ordered a fallback to the Colorado River, where he could safely await further orders from his government.

The last quarter of de la Peña's narrative is the bitter story of a Mexican retreat that became a nightmare when torrential rains turned the rich Texan soil to glue. By the time the Mexicans emerged from what they called the *Mar de Lodo* (the "Sea of Mud") their Texas campaign was doomed. Much of their equip-

ment and ordnance had been left mired in the muck. With insufficient supplies and officers who were already blaming one another for the defeat, Santa Anna's once-proud army was slouching toward Matamoros at the point when de la Peña's published diary comes to an abrupt end on June 11, 1836.

This was quite a narrative! Could a forger—*would* a forger—have created a document of such length and detail, covering not only Mexican military operations but also the rivalries and jealousies within the Mexican high command? I had my doubts. It was certainly not likely if the motive of the hoax were only to trash the reputation of Davy Crockett. Beyond my gut feeling that this manuscript was the work of an actual Mexican officer, were there any clues in Perry's English translation that might solve the mystery of the Urrea anachronism and help to establish the authenticity (or the fraudulence) of the de la Peña diary?

One such clue came from an unlikely source: the photocopies of selected pages of the de la Peña manuscripts that were included in the Texas A&M University Press edition of the diary. The final signature page of the September 15, 1836, "prologue letter" had been reproduced, and I could not help noticing a discrepancy between the original Spanish and Perry's rendering of a key sentence. The first sentence of the last paragraph of the letter begins as follows: "*Si con dar a luz mis apuntes consigo el noble objeto que me he propuesto de vindicar el honor de esta infortunada Nación y el del ejército, que acaban de ser mancillados, . . .* " Perry translated this phrase as: "If in bringing forth my notes I accomplish the noble objectives I have pursued in vindicating the honor of this unfortunate nation and its army, which recently has been tarnished, . . . "



Final page of de la Peña's letter of September 15, 1836. (Courtesy of The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.)

Perry has changed de la Peña's "*noble objeto*" (which may be translated as "noble aim" or "noble goal") from singular to plural, and she has mistranslated the verb form "*me he propuesto*," which is the past participle of "*proponerse*," meaning "to plan" or "to resolve." Thus de la Peña is actually writing on September 15, 1836, not about the publication of his diary in terms of "the noble objectives I have pursued," but rather in terms of "the noble goal which I have planned," or more literally, "the noble goal which I have set for myself." De la Peña seemed to be saying that he had not yet accomplished his "noble goal."

Were there other such lapses, I wondered, that might alter our understanding of when and under what circumstances de la Peña had completed his work? I was beginning to think that I needed to see the Mexico City edition of the diary, and not just because of this error. All through Perry's English translation there were footnote references to documents and biographical material that had been published in 1955 by J. Sánchez Garza, but not included in the 1975 edition from Texas A&M. The Spanish-language version apparently included dozens of *anexos*, or appendices, which looked especially interesting. I had to see them!

Sánchez Garza's edition was a relatively rare book, unavailable in North Carolina—and most Texas libraries would not release their copies through interlibrary loan. However, my alma mater, Rice University, came through for me, and, in mid-May of 1994, I sat down to read the editor's *Preámbulo* to *La Rebelión de Texas*. Before I had finished the first page, a sentence written by Sánchez Garza bounced me out of my chair. This is what he said (in my English translation):

> The manuscript, according to the wishes of the author, is entitled: *Review and Diary* [Reseña y Diario] *of the Texas Campaign*; it was not published immediately [*no se publicó luego*] due to poverty and because Filisola and later Santa Anna used all of their tricks in order to impede it; but, nearly a hundred and twenty years later, we, lovers of the truth, however it may hurt, and with great affection for history, are retrieving it from the dust of forgetfulness so that the goal for which it was written might be fulfilled.

The man who found the diary and brought it to light was saying that it had not been published at all in the nineteenth century! How could it be, then, that the supposed experts on David Crockett and José Enrique de la Peña were saying that the diary had been published in 1836? Carmen Perry had strongly suggested as much in 1975. Texan bibliographer John H. Jenkins said in 1983 that "a version of the narrative must have appeared in September, 1836, probably in a Matamoros newspaper, but no copy of any contemporary printing can now be located." Crockett biographer Paul Andrew Hutton said repeatedly in the mid-1980s that de la Peña's diary was first published in Mexico in 1836.

The apparent common source for all of these claims was no document from the Mexican past, but a statement made by Walter Lord in the sources section of his influential 1961 Alamo narrative, *A Time to Stand*. Under de la Peña's name was the following notation: "Account originally published in Matamoros, September 1836, but suppressed by authorities." Lord said that Sánchez Garza had "republished" the diary in 1955! How did he know this? There was a suspicious grammatical similarity between his statement and Sánchez Garza's, even though the mean-

ing was opposite. I knew that Lord did not read Spanish, because his acknowledgments section began with a posthumous tribute to Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, who, despite failing health, had worked through a hot Austin summer in the late 1950s translating "faded manuscript[s]" and "obscure Mexican books" for Lord.

Well, why not go to the source? A quick call to Manhattan information asking if they might have a listing for Walter Lord miraculously put me in touch with the Pulitzer Prize–winning author, who was eager to help me solve the mystery. A few days later, I was holding a copy of the notes Lord had made while Carlos Castañeda dictated to him the Alamo sections of Sánchez Garza's volume. At the end was this notation: "It was published in Matamoras [*sic*] on September 15, 1836, but was immediately suppressed and not republished until 120 years later."

After a long, hot day of translating, Dr. Castañeda had evidently misread a sentence in the *Preámbulo*, an error that was almost certainly prompted by the misleading "title page" dated September 15, 1836, that Sánchez Garza included in his book. I believe that Bill Groneman was exactly on target when he said that "this page seems to have been included in Sánchez Garza's book merely as a means of opening up the narrative portion of the 'diary' and separating it from the introduction." The page does not directly "purport," despite Carmen Perry's contention, to be from an 1836 printing of the diary. You may see for yourself by turning back to p. 77.

Throughout his long preamble, Sánchez Garza states again and again that de la Peña spent more than a year revising his

manuscript, but was unable to publish it during his lifetime. Moreover, the *anexos* to *La Rebelión de Texas* contain several letters written by de la Peña to Mexican newspapers in 1837, making it plain that a year after the end of the rebellion he was still making plans to (someday) publish his diary.

Alas, Walter Lord's faulty bibliographical citation had sent a whole generation of historians, including Bill Groneman, off on the wrong track. De la Peña's diary itself never "purported" to be published in that year. Thus de la Peña's reference to General Urrea's *Diario* of 1838 is not an anachronism. De la Peña could have begun his diary in 1836 and still been at work on his "commentaries" in 1838.

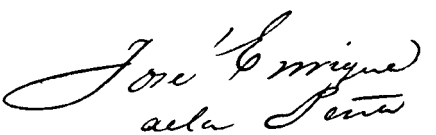
But wait. What about that last page of the narrative, on which de la Peña signed and dated a statement to the effect that "I have concluded this narrative during the most pressing moments, a few hours before resuming the march" on September 15, 1836? Did the Sánchez Garza edition, like that of Perry, contain this unequivocal assertion? Yes, but with a subtle difference. Instead of a printed name, as in Perry's volume, there was on the last page of *La Rebelión de Texas* a facsimile of the signature of José Enrique de la Peña. It was a signature that looked very familiar. Too familiar. It was *exactly* the same signature, down to the spacing of the smallest squiggle, as the one on the photocopy of the last page of the "prologue letter"—the one included in Perry's edition. Compare the signature on p. 94 with that reproduced on p. 89.

It was impossible that precisely the same signature could have appeared on both documents. Had Sánchez Garza simply pho-

Estos son los hechos, mexicanos, juzgad vosotros por ellos y que vuestro fallo terrible anonade a los que lo hayan merecido. Los que he presenciado los he relatado fielmente y de los que no he sido testigo ocular los he rectificado con los hombres más circunspectos y veraces. Si mi modo de sentir no agrada, la franqueza con que lo hago acreditará, al menos, que soy honrado, pues digo lo que siento y lo que juzgo sin embozo y sin que me arredre el odio de los fuertes.

He concluído en los momentos más apurados y horas antes de marchar, sabiendo ya lo de San Luis.[111]

Matamoros, Tamps., a 15 de septiembre de 1836.



Final page, La Rebelión de Texas, *edited by Jesús Sánchez Garza.* (Courtesy of The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.)

tocopied the wrong signature? I needed to know what was on the last page of the manuscript of the narrative—was there a signature there? Could I get a copy of it? These were the questions that I threw at Dora Guerra, who was at the time the curator of Special Collections at the John Peace Library at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and thus guardian of the de la Peña manuscripts.

"Well," Dora answered, "it depends on what you mean by the last page!" It became clear from our telephone conversation that the "de la Peña diary" was neither a single document nor a simple one. I was beginning to realize that I needed to go to San Antonio and look at this stuff for myself.

Around the time that I had decided to request *La Rebelión de Texas* on interlibrary loan, I knew that I was putting in more time and effort than was justified by a prospective two-page book review. But I had a hunch, similar to the one that led me down the Houston/Ehrenberg trail, that something very interesting was waiting to be uncovered. By the time I finished my conversation with Dora Guerra, I knew I was working on something significantly more ambitious than a two-page review. Fortunately, I had already planned a research trip to Austin for the end of the summer. San Antonio was now on my itinerary as well.

Before I left for Texas, however, there were a couple of minor anomalies I had to check. The first was the question of J. Sánchez Garza's given name. I had noticed that Bill Groneman referred to him as Jesús, but that the people who should know—translator Carmen Perry and bibliographer John Jenkins—had called him José. The Mexican editor used only his first initial in *La Rebelión de Texas.* I hadn't intended to spend much time tracking down the point, but when a family trip was unexpectedly cancelled, I found myself in the North Carolina State University library on a Saturday afternoon.

The detective was right and the experts were wrong. *The National Union Catalog [of] Pre-1956 Imprints*, Volume CDXLVIII, listed the name as Jesús. Score one for Groneman. But there was another, and quite unexpected, listing in this particular volume of the catalog, where I had looked under "P" for Peña. At the top of the next column was an entry for a sixteen-page pamphlet written by José Enrique de la Peña, published in Mexico City in 1839. The title, *Una Víctima del Despotismo*, was one that I was

sure I had not seen anywhere before in my pursuit of the de la Peña mystery.

The *National Union Catalog* puts little codes in its entries to let the researcher know which libraries hold the book in question. Sometimes there are whole lines of codes for a book held by multiple major libraries, but in this case there was just one: "CtY." I knew this meant "Connecticut, Yale." A quick check online told me that the pamphlet was held by the Archives and Manuscripts Department of Yale's Sterling Memorial Library—a department that is closed on Saturday!

The rest of the weekend was a mixture of hell and limbo. Early Monday morning, I contacted Archives and Manuscripts at Yale and asked how soon I could have a copy of the publication. The understanding staff agreed to send it to me immediately upon receiving my check. After two overnight deliveries—my check and their photocopy—*Una Víctima del Despotismo* lay in my hands.

The pamphlet was written by de la Peña from cell number eleven of the Inquisition Prison in Mexico City, in the form of a letter to the Mexican President Anastasio Bustamante and published with the help of friends who bore the costs. The Mexican newspapers, de la Peña complained, would no longer print his letters. The little publication is a plea for mercy from an ill and dejected soldier who believes that he is being held behind bars unjustly.

De la Peña admitted that he had participated in a Federalist rebellion (led by his hero, General José Urrea) against the Centralist government in 1838. But with such uprisings a constant

feature of Mexican politics, de la Peña argued that he deserved to be free. His plaintive letter bears the date of November 6, 1839. Yale's copy of this pamphlet is the only one known to exist in any library in Mexico or the United States. When I stumbled upon it in the *National Union Catalog*, it had never been cited by any historian of Texas or the Alamo.

In the middle of the pamphlet, on pages 8 and 9, I found the following statement. (The translation and emphasis are my own.)

> I know well that it is a hard thing in our country to tell the truth to men who have influence and power to do evil, but in writing about the Texas campaign, my principal object was to vindicate the honor, tarnished in it, of the nation and the army, because ignominy ought to weigh solely upon those who merit it. . . . *In good time I will expose the causes which have prevented me from publishing my diary and the observations which I have almost completed,* but I will do it in spite of my conviction that new sorrows are going to rain down upon me, [I will do it] because the noble goal which I have set for myself will give me the courage necessary to face all difficulties, and no consideration, however strong and personal it may be to me, will cause me to retreat.

So there it is. The anachronism disappears. As late as November 1839, de la Peña is still at work on the *Reseña y Diario,* which he still intends to publish.

There is yet another clue to the authenticity of the de la Peña diary hidden in this long quotation from *Una Víctima del Despotismo.* When de la Peña refers to "the noble goal which I have set for myself," he is using exactly the same language as appears in the manuscript prologue—the letter written by him on Sep-

tember 15, 1836. One need not be fluent in Spanish to find the matching phrases in the following passages, the first from the allegedly forged de la Peña papers, the second from the rare 1839 pamphlet:

> *Si con dar a luz mis apuntes consigo el noble objeto que me he propuesto de vindicar el honor de esta infortunada Nación y el del ejército, que acaban de ser mancillados, . . .*
>
> *. . . al escribir la campaña de Tejas, mi principal objeto fué vindicar el honor de la nacion y el del ejército mancillados en ella, . . . el noble objeto que me he propuesto me dará el valor necesario para arrostrar con todos los inconvenientes . . .*

Those who have argued that the de la Peña manuscripts are fraudulent have tried, unsuccessfully, to show that language used in these writings is similar to that of other, later works that have been utilized by a forger. To date, the only verbatim match of language from these papers is with the words of this little document written by de la Peña himself in a cell in a Mexico City prison. No forger could have written the "prologue letter" without having first seen *Una Víctima del Despotismo.* And then the forger would have to have kept very, very quiet about this pamphlet's existence. Of course, Sánchez Garza could have turned up a copy of *Una Víctima* in his antiques shop, and he could have found a Laflin (or a Laffite!) to do his dirty work with pen and ink. Remember that Charles Hamilton, author of *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, certified that Laflin was indeed the man who had forged the diary.

That was the other thing bothering me as I packed for my Texas trip. I was about to write an article-length refutation (instead of a two-page review) of Bill Groneman's forgery hypoth-

esis, and thus go head-to-head against Hamilton—the man who in the 1980s had gained renown by exposing as a fraud a set of highly publicized "Hitler Diaries." Could he also blow away my claims of de la Peña's authenticity? I needed to know what he could tell me. Fortunately, on the photocopy of the certificate that Bill Groneman provided in *Defense of a Legend* was a tiny New York City telephone number for "Charles Hamilton, Handwriting Expert." So I (nervously) called him up. After all, I'd had pretty good luck with Walter Lord!

Charles Hamilton was no Walter Lord. He was blowing smoke. He had never been to San Antonio, never seen the actual manuscripts. His Olympian opinion had come from examining the same photocopies in Carmen Perry's published translation that I had been looking at. And when I asked him specifically what had convinced him that John Laflin was the creator of the multiple handwritings visible on these pages, Hamilton gave me nothing but boilerplate. It was, he said, only "the eye of the expert" that could see the connection between Laflin and the handwriting on the documents in San Antonio—I would just have to trust him. I didn't, and even though he brought out a revised edition of *Great Forgers* in 1996 that includes a discussion of the de la Peña papers, I remain unconvinced. (Charles Hamilton died in 1997.)

On a scorching San Antonio summer day in 1994, Dora Guerra welcomed me to the Special Collections Department of the UTSA Library, a quiet and cool place to work, complete with both Dora's considerable expertise and multiple reference works to answer my every question. My first question, of course, was about that "last page" of de la Peña's narrative. After several days

of work with the manuscripts, I found that there were indeed two versions of the diary present. The first was not the actual original, but a 109-page "clean copy" of the original, written out by de la Peña in Matamoros in the summer of 1836. The second was a narrative of more than four hundred pages, based on and incorporating the diary. It was this longer version that was published by both Jesús Sánchez Garza and Carmen Perry.

The manuscript version of this narrative abruptly breaks off with a diary entry for June 11, 1836. There is no date or signature on this final page. However, Sánchez Garza did not make up his published conclusion from whole cloth. Amid the de la Peña papers is a little booklet in which the resident of cell number eleven kept memos to himself along with bits of writing that he intended to add to the narrative during the editing process. The last item in the booklet is de la Peña's "*Modelo de la conclucion.*" It is also unsigned and undated. But with the omission of a single embarrassing sentence (you may guess which one) and one inconvenient qualifier, both Sánchez Garza and Perry printed the feisty de la Peña's "model conclusion" on the last page of each of their narratives, both of them also adding for good measure the September 15 date and the de la Peña signature. Here is my translation of de la Peña's conclusion:

> These are the facts, Mexicans. Judge for yourselves, and may your terrible verdict annihilate those who deserve it. The events at which I have been present I have related faithfully, and those to which I have not been an eyewitness, I have confirmed with men most circumspect and truthful. If my mode of feeling is not agreeable, the frankness with which I have worked will testify at least that I am honest, in that I say what I feel and I judge without dissembling

> and without fearing the hatred of the strong. Tornel [the Minister of War] is a prick [*un carajo*], Santa Anna a very large prick [*un carajote*], and Filisola an Italian.
>
> I have half finished [*He medio concluido*] in the most difficult moments, and hours before marching, knowing already about San Luis [Potosí]."

After silently passing over de la Peña's profanity, both Sánchez Garza and Perry also ignored the critical qualifier "half" [*medio*] in de la Peña's phrase, "*He medio concluido.*" (Perry added the words "this narrative.") With de la Peña's task only half finished, there is still no anachronism, whether or not de la Peña wrote this sentence on September 15, 1836.

My work with these manuscripts, in 1994 and over the decade that followed, has convinced me that they are authentic, that this is indeed the narrative created by José Enrique de la Peña as he sought to explain to Mexico how Texas was lost. But just as in the case of Herman Ehrenberg's unquestionably authentic narrative of the Texas Revolution, we must go on to question de la Peña's *reliability*. Can we believe his story about how Davy Crockett died? That is the subject of the next chapter.

[Note: In 1998 the Peace family, which had maintained ownership of the manuscript of the de la Peña *Reseña y Diario* while it was on loan to UTSA, put the document up for sale at a public auction. It brought almost $400,000, enough to put it in the 2000 edition of *Guinness World Records* for "The Most Valuable Diary." The purchasers subsequently donated these papers to the Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, where they are available to researchers today.

After the arrival of the de la Peña manuscript in Austin, it was subjected to extensive forensic tests as well as handwriting analysis by Professor David B. Gracy II of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin. His findings were published in the October 2001 issue of the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, along with his conclusion "that the manuscript account of the Texas campaign purported to be the product of José Enrique de la Peña written in the years following the campaign is, indeed, what it is purported to be."]