

= Battle of Concepción =

The Battle of Concepción was fought on October 28 , 1835 , between Mexican troops under Colonel Domingo Ugartechea and Texian insurgents led by James Bowie and James Fannin . The 30 @-@ minute engagement , which historian J. R. Edmondson describes as " the first major engagement of the Texas Revolution " , occurred on the grounds of Mission Concepción , 2 miles (3 @. @ 2 km) south of what is now Downtown San Antonio in the U.S. state of Texas .

On October 13 , the newly created Texian Army under Stephen F. Austin had marched towards Bexar , where General Martín Perfecto de Cos commanded the remaining Mexican soldiers in Texas . On October 27 , Austin sent Bowie and Fannin , with 90 soldiers , to find a defensible spot near Bexar for the Texian Army to rest . After choosing a site near Mission Concepción , the scouting party camped for the night and sent a courier to notify Austin . After learning that the Texian Army was divided , Cos sent Ugartechea with 275 soldiers to attack the Texians camped at Concepción . The Texians took cover in a horseshoe @-@ shaped gully ; their good defensive position , longer firing range , and better ammunition helped them to repel several Mexican attacks , and the Mexican soldiers retreated just 30 minutes before the remainder of the Texian Army arrived . Historians estimate that between 14 and 76 Mexican soldiers were killed , while only one Texian soldier died .

= = Background = =

The newly organized Texian Army , determined to put a decisive end to Mexican control over Texas , began marching towards San Antonio de Bexar on October 13 , 1835 . Days earlier , General Martín Perfecto de Cos , brother @-@ in @-@ law of the Mexican president , had arrived in Bexar to take command of all the Mexican forces in Texas . By October 20 the Texians ? led by Stephen F. Austin , the first empresario to bring English @-@ speaking settlers to Texas ? had reached Salado Creek and initiated a siege of Béxar . To keep the Texians from examining Mexican defensive measures , Mexican troops attempted to restrict access to and from the city . Despite those efforts , several people were able to leave their homes and join the Texians . Among those was James Bowie , who was well known for his fighting prowess ; stories of his exploits in the Sandbar Fight and his search for the lost San Saba mine had been widely reported .

On October 22 , Austin named Bowie a colonel and gave him joint command of the 1st Battalion with Captain James W. Fannin . Before nightfall the 1st Battalion began a reconnaissance mission to evaluate the former missions around San Antonio as potential campsites . Locals familiar with the area , Juan Seguín and his Texians , would guide the men along the river . After investigating three of the missions , Bowie and Fannin selected Mission San Francisco de la Espada as the most promising campsite . The rest of the Texian Army joined them there early on October 27 . Eager to move closer to Bexar , Austin immediately sent Bowie and Fannin to find a good defensive spot for the army to rest that night .

= = Prelude = =

Bowie and Fannin were accompanied by ninety soldiers , divided into four companies led by Captains Andrew Briscoe , Robert Coleman , Michael Goheen , and Valentine Bennet . The group took a northerly route , following the San Antonio River past Missions San Juan and San José . Along the way they encountered a small party of Mexican scouts , who retreated to Bexar after a brief skirmish .

Approximately 2 miles (3 @. @ 2 km) from San Antonio de Bexar and 6 miles (9 @. @ 7 km) from the Texian camp at Espada , the Texian scouting party stopped at Mission Concepción . Five hundred yards (460 m) west of the mission , the San Antonio River curved in a small horseshoe shape , with the two sides of the river 's curve approximately 100 yards (91 m) apart . According to historian Alwyn Barr , " trees shaded both sides of the broad riverbottom which lay about six feet below the level of the rolling prairie [sic ?] nearby " . Rather than return immediately to Austin , as

their orders specified , Bowie and Fannin instead sent a courier to bring Austin directions to Concepción . The next day , an angry Austin issued a statement threatening officers who chose not to follow orders with court @-@ martial .

The Texian scouting party divided into two camps . Fannin supervised 49 men at the south part of the horseshoe bend , while Bowie and the remaining men camped at the northern part of the bend . Any Mexican force coming from the north would be caught in their cross @-@ fire . Pickets were stationed around the area and in the mission tower , which offered greater visibility . As they settled down for the evening , the Texians were surprised to see a Mexican cannonball , fired from one of the church towers in Bexar , hit just beyond their camp . Many of the Texian soldiers believed that a priest from the mission had informed the Mexican Army of their position .

= = Battle = =

Hoping to neutralize the Texian force at Concepción before the remainder of the Texian Army arrived , Cos ordered Colonel Domingo Ugartechea to lead an early @-@ morning assault on October 28 . At 6 : 00 a.m. , Ugartechea left Bexar with 275 Mexican soldiers and 2 cannons . Heavy fog delayed their approach , and the Mexican soldiers did not reach Concepción until 7 : 30 or 8 : 00 a.m. A Mexican cavalry scout fired at Texian picket Henry Karnes ; after returning fire , Karnes ran back to his company , frustrated because , as he put it , " Boys , the scoundrels have shot off my powder horn " . The Texians took refuge in the gully , firing from its edge before dropping the 6 feet (1 @. @ 8 m) down to the river level to reload . As the remaining Texian sentries hurried to join the main body of Texian soldiers , Pen Jarvis was struck by a Mexican bullet and fell down the river bank . The bullet hit a knife Jarvis had slipped through the front of his belt , and he suffered only bruises .

The Texian position was surrounded by trees , leaving the Mexican cavalry no room to maneuver . The 200 members of the cavalry remained on the west bank of the river , behind the Texians , to foil any escape attempts . Lieutenant Colonel José Maria Mendoza brought the Mexican infantry and artillery across the river to a position below that of the Texans . In response , Texans trimmed undergrowth near their camp to provide better visibility and dug steps into the embankment so that they could more easily climb up to fire . The two sides skirmished desultorily for two hours , until the fog began to lift . At that point , 50 ? 60 Mexican infantrymen crossed the prairie to surround the Texans . Seeing their approach , Bowie shouted to his Texian forces , " Keep under cover , boys , and reserve your fire ; we haven ' t a man to spare ! " At 300 yards (270 m) from the Texian position , the Mexican infantry halted and formed a line with the cannon in the middle . They began firing as they advanced toward the Texian positions , to little effect . For the most part , the Mexican volleys passed over the heads of the Texans . According to Texian Noah Smithwick , " grapeshot and canister thrashed through the pecan trees overhead , raining a shower of ripe nuts down on us , and I saw men picking them up and eating them with as little concern as if they were being shaken down by a norther . " In his official report to Austin , Bowie remarked that " The discharge from the enemy was one continued blaze of fire , whilst that from our lines , was more slowly delivered , but with good aim and deadly effect . " The Mexican infantry were assigned Brown Bess muskets , which had a maximum range of only 70 yards (64 m) , compared to the 200 @-@ yard (180 m) effective range of the Texian long rifles . The Texans were short of ammunition , however , and although Mexican ammunition was plentiful , it was poor quality . In several cases , Mexican musket balls bounced off Texian soldiers , causing little damage other than a bruise .

When Mexican officers ordered a charge on the south bend held by Fannin , Bowie sent Coleman ' s company to help . Most of the Texian reinforcements maneuvered to their new position from below the river bank , but several rose from cover and dashed across the prairie . One of them , Richard Andrews , was hit in the side with grapeshot and died several hours after the battle .

As the reinforcements reached the southern part of the horseshoe , the Mexican infantry fell back , leaving the cannon within 100 yards (91 m) of the Texans . Texans redirected their fire to the cannoneers . After three different sets of gunners were killed or wounded , the cannons were abandoned . The Mexican infantry attempted three attacks ; all were repulsed . As the Mexican

buglers called for a retreat , the infantry fell back beyond Texian rifle range . The Mexican cavalry was sent to retrieve wounded men and the cannon . As the cavalry approached , Bowie led a charge onto the prairie . The Texians quickly captured the cannon and turned it on the fleeing Mexican soldiers . Grapeshot killed one of the mule drivers , causing his caisson to go out of control and " careen [...] through the shattered Mexican ranks " . The battle had lasted only 30 minutes .

= = Aftermath = =

Austin had intended to reunite the two parts of his army early on October 28 , but the group camping at Mission Espada had delayed their departure to unsuccessfully pursue a company that had deserted . Lieutenant Colonel William Barret Travis and his company of cavalry rode ahead of the main body of the army . When they reached Concepción , the Mexican Army was still visible in the distance . The small band of Texian cavalry pursued but the Mexican soldiers reached Bexar safely .

Less than 30 minutes after the battle ended , the rest of the Texian Army arrived . Austin felt that the Mexican morale must be low after their defeat and wanted to proceed immediately to Bexar . Bowie and other officers refused , as they believed Bexar was too heavily fortified . The Texians searched the area for any Mexican equipment which had been abandoned during the retreat . They found several boxes of cartridges . Complaining that the Mexican powder was " little better than pounded charcoal " , the Texians emptied the cartridges but kept the bullets .

That evening , Austin allowed a local priest and men from Bexar to retrieve the bodies of the Mexican soldiers who had died in battle . Barr estimated that at least 14 Mexican soldiers were killed , with an additional 39 wounded , several of whom died later . Timothy Todish et al . , in their book *The Alamo Sourcebook* , estimated that 60 Mexican soldiers were killed , while historian Stephen Hardin claimed that 76 Mexican soldiers died . The only Texian to die in battle was Andrews , and Jarvis was the only Texian classified as wounded .

This battle , which historian J. R. Edmondson describes as " the first major engagement of the Texas Revolution " , was the last offensive against the Texians that Cos would order . Barr attributed the Texian victory to " able leadership , a strong position , and greater firepower " . The Mexican cavalry was unable to fight effectively in the wooded , riverbottom terrain , and the weapons of the Mexican infantry had a much lower range than that of the Texians . Although Barr continues that the battle " should have taught ... lessons on Mexican courage and the value of a good defensive position " , Hardin believes that " the relative ease of the victory at Concepción instilled in the Texians a reliance on their long rifles and a contempt for their enemies " . A soldier who later served under Fannin complained that Fannin 's " former experience in fighting Mexicans [at Concepción] had led him to neglect to take such precautionary measures as were requisite " , which may have contributed to his defeat at the Battle of Coleto in March 1836 .