

= James Bowie =

James " Jim " Bowie (pronounced / ˈbuːi / BOO @-@ ee) (c . 1796 ? March 6 , 1836) was a 19th @-@ century American pioneer , who played a prominent role in the Texas Revolution , culminating in his death at the Battle of the Alamo . Stories of him as a fighter and frontiersman , both real and fictitious , have made him a legendary figure in Texas history and a folk hero of American culture .

Born in Kentucky , Bowie spent most of his life in Louisiana , where he was raised and where he later worked as a land speculator . His rise to fame began in 1827 on reports of the Sandbar Fight . What began as a duel between two other men deteriorated into a *melée* in which Bowie , having been shot and stabbed , killed the sheriff of Rapides Parish with a large knife . This , and other stories of Bowie 's prowess with a knife , led to the widespread popularity of the Bowie knife .

Bowie 's reputation was cemented by his role in the Texas Revolution . After moving to Texas in 1830 , Bowie became a Mexican citizen and married Ursula Veramendi , the daughter of the Mexican vice governor of the province . His fame in Texas grew following his failed expedition to find the lost San Saba mine , during which his small party repelled an attack by a large Indian raiding party . At the outbreak of the Texas Revolution , Bowie joined the Texas militia , leading forces at the Battle of Concepción and the Grass Fight . In January 1836 , he arrived at the Alamo , where he commanded the volunteer forces until an illness left him bedridden . Bowie died with the other Alamo defenders on March 6 . Despite conflicting accounts of the manner of his death , the " most popular , and probably the most accurate " accounts maintain that he died in his bed after emptying his pistols into several Mexican soldiers .

= = Early years = =

According to his older brother John , James Bowie was born in Logan County , Kentucky , on March 10 , 1796 (Historical marker : 36 ° 46 ' 25 " N 86 ° 42 ' 10 " W) . Historian Raymond Thorp gave his birth date as April 10 , but Thorp did not provide any documentation for that date . Bowie 's surname was pronounced to rhyme with the French " Louis " (/ ˈbuːi / BOO @-@ ee) . (Although some works refer to the alternate pronunciation / ˈboʊ.i / BO @-@ ee .)

Bowie was the ninth of ten children born to Elve Ap @-@ Catesby Jones and John Bowie . His father had been wounded while fighting in the American Revolution , and in 1782 married the young woman who had nursed him back to health . The Bowies moved frequently , first settling in Georgia , before moving to Kentucky . At the time of Bowie 's birth , his father owned eight slaves , eleven head of cattle , seven horses , and one stud horse . The following year the family acquired 200 acres (80 ha) along the Red River . They sold that property in 1800 and relocated to Missouri , before moving to Spanish Louisiana in 1802 , where they settled on Bushley Bayou in Rapides Parish .

The family moved again in 1809 , settling on Bayou Teche in Louisiana before finding a permanent home in Opelousas in 1812 . The Bowie children were raised on the frontier and even as small children were expected to help clear the land and plant crops . All the children learned to read and write in English , but James and his elder brother Rezin could also read , write , and speak Spanish and French fluently . The children learned to survive on the frontier and how to fish and run a farm and plantation . James Bowie became proficient with pistol , rifle , and knife , and had a reputation for fearlessness . When he was a boy , one of his Indian friends even taught him to rope alligators .

In response to Andrew Jackson 's plea for volunteers to fight the British in the War of 1812 , James and Rezin enlisted in the Louisiana militia in late 1814 . The Bowie brothers arrived in New Orleans too late to participate in the fighting . After mustering out of the militia , Bowie settled in Rapides Parish , where he supported himself by sawing planks and lumber and floating them down the bayou for sale . In June 1819 , he joined the Long expedition , an effort to liberate Texas from Spanish rule . The group encountered little resistance and , after capturing Nacogdoches , declared Texas an independent republic . The extent of Bowie 's participation is unclear , but he returned to Louisiana before the invasion was repelled by Spanish troops .

= = Land speculator = =

Shortly before the senior Bowie died in 1818 or 1819 , he gave ten slaves as well as horses and cattle to both James and Rezin . For the next seven years , the brothers worked together to develop several large estates in Lafourche Parish and Opelousas . Louisiana 's population was growing rapidly , and the brothers hoped to take advantage of its rising land prices through speculation . Without the capital required to buy large tracts , they entered into a partnership with pirate Jean Lafitte in 1818 to raise money . By then , the United States had outlawed the importation of slaves , and most southern states allowed anyone who informed on a slave trader to receive half of what the imported slaves would earn at auction as a reward . Bowie made three trips to Lafitte 's compound on Galveston Island . On each occasion , he bought smuggled slaves and took them directly to a customhouse to inform on his own actions . When the customs officers offered the slaves for auction , Bowie purchased them and received back half the price he had paid , as allowed by the state laws . He then could legally transport the slaves and resell them at a greater market value in New Orleans or areas farther up the Mississippi River . Using this scheme , the brothers collected \$ 65 @, @ 000 to be used for their land speculation .

In 1825 , the two brothers joined with their younger brother Stephen to buy Acadia , a plantation near Alexandria . Within two years , they had established the first steam mill in Louisiana to be used for grinding sugar cane . The plantation became known as a model estate , but on February 12 , 1831 , they sold it and 65 slaves for \$ 90 @, @ 000 . With their profits , James and Rezin bought a plantation in Arkansas .

Bowie and his brother John were involved in a major court case in the late 1820s over land speculation . When the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory in 1803 , it promised to honor all former land grant claims , and for the next 20 years efforts were made to establish who owned what land . In May 1824 , Congress authorized the superior courts of each territory to hear suits from those who claimed they had been overlooked . The Arkansas Superior Court received 126 claims in late 1827 from residents who claimed to have purchased land in former Spanish grants from the Bowie brothers . Although the Superior Court originally confirmed most of those claims , the decisions were reversed in February 1831 after further research showed that the land had never belonged to the Bowies and that the original land grant documentation had been forged . The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the reversal in 1833 . When the disgruntled purchasers considered suing the Bowies , they discovered that the documents in the case had been removed from the court ; left without evidence , they declined to pursue a case .

= = Bowie knife = =

Bowie became internationally famous as a result of a feud with Norris Wright , the sheriff of Rapides Parish . Bowie had supported Wright 's opponent in the race for sheriff , and Wright , a bank director , had been instrumental in turning down a Bowie loan application . After a confrontation in Alexandria one afternoon , Wright fired a shot at Bowie , after which Bowie resolved to carry his hunting knife at all times . The knife he carried had a blade that was 9 @. @ 25 inches (23 @. @ 5 cm) long and 1 @. @ 5 inches (3 @. @ 8 cm) wide .

The following year , on September 19 , 1827 , Bowie and Wright attended a duel on a sandbar outside of Natchez , Mississippi . Bowie supported duellist Samuel Levi Wells III , while Wright supported Wells 's opponent , Dr. Thomas Harris Maddox . The duellists each fired two shots and , as neither man had been injured , resolved their duel with a handshake . Other members of the groups , who had various reasons for disliking each other , began fighting . Bowie was shot in the hip ; after regaining his feet he drew a knife , described as a butcher knife , and charged his attacker , who hit Bowie over the head with his empty pistol , breaking the pistol and knocking Bowie to the ground . Wright shot at and missed the prone Bowie , who returned fire and possibly hit Wright . Wright then drew his sword cane and impaled Bowie . When Wright attempted to retrieve his blade by placing his foot on Bowie 's chest and tugging , Bowie pulled him down and disemboweled Wright

with his large knife . Wright died instantly , and Bowie , with Wright 's sword still protruding from his chest , was shot again and stabbed by another member of the group . The doctors who had been present for the duel removed the bullets and patched Bowie 's other wounds .

Newspapers picked up the story , which became known as the Sandbar Fight , and described in detail Bowie 's fighting prowess and his unusual knife . Witness accounts agreed that Bowie did not attack first , and the others had focused their attack on Bowie because " they considered him the most dangerous man among their opposition . " The incident cemented Bowie 's reputation across the South as a superb knife fighter .

There is disagreement among scholars as to whether the knife used in this fight was the same as what is now known as a Bowie knife , also called an Arkansas Toothpick . Multiple accounts exist of who designed and built the first Bowie knife . Some claim that Bowie designed it , while others attribute the design to noted knife makers of the time . In a letter to The Planter 's Advocate , Rezin Bowie claimed to have invented the knife , however , and many Bowie family members as well as " most authorities on the Bowie knife tend to believe it was invented by " Rezin . Rezin Bowie 's grandchildren , however , claimed that Rezin merely supervised his blacksmith , who was the creator of the knife .

After the Sandbar Fight and subsequent battles in which Bowie used his knife to defend himself , the Bowie knife became very popular . Many craftsmen and manufacturers made their own versions , and major cities of the Old Southwest had " Bowie knife schools " that taught " the art of cut , thrust , and parry . " His fame , and that of his knife , spread to England , and by the early 1830s many British manufacturers were producing Bowie knives for shipment to the United States . The design of the knife continued to evolve , but today a Bowie knife generally is considered to have a blade 8 @. @ 25 inches (21 @. @ 0 cm) long and 1 @. @ 25 inches (3 @. @ 2 cm) wide , with a curved point , a " sharp false edge cut from both sides " , and a cross @- @ guard to protect the user 's hands .

= = Establishment in Texas = =

In 1828 , after recovering from wounds suffered in the Sandbar Fight , Bowie decided to move to Coahuila y Texas , at that time a state in the Mexican federation . The 1824 Constitution of Mexico banned religions other than Roman Catholicism and gave preference to Mexican citizens in receiving land . Bowie was baptized into the Roman Catholic faith in San Antonio on April 28 , 1828 , sponsored by the alcalde (chief administrator) of the town , Juan Martín de Veramendi , and the wife of the administrator , Josefa Navarro . For the next 18 months , Bowie traveled through Louisiana and Mississippi . In 1829 , he became engaged to Cecilia Wells , who died in Alexandria , on September 29 , two weeks before they were to be married .

On January 1 , 1830 , Bowie left Louisiana for permanent residency in Texas . He stopped at Nacogdoches , at Jared E. Groce 's farm on the Brazos River , and in San Felipe , where Bowie presented a letter of introduction to Stephen F. Austin from Thomas F. McKinney , one of the Old Three Hundred colonists . On February 20 , Bowie took an oath of allegiance to Mexico and then proceeded to San Antonio de Bexar . At the time , the city was known as Bexar and had a population of 2500 , mostly of Mexican descent , and Bowie 's fluency in Spanish helped him establish himself in the area . Bowie was elected a commander , with the rank of colonel , of the Texas Rangers later that year . Although the Rangers would not be organized officially until 1835 , Stephen F. Austin had founded the group by employing 30 men to keep the peace and protect the colonists from attacks by hostile Indians . Other areas assembled similar volunteer militias , and Bowie commanded a group of the volunteers .

Bowie renounced his American citizenship and became a Mexican citizen on September 30 , 1830 , after promising to establish textile mills in the state of Coahuila y Tejas . To fulfill his promise , Bowie entered into partnership with Veramendi to build cotton and wool mills in Saltillo . With his citizenship assured , Bowie now had the right to buy up to 11 leagues of public land . He convinced 14 or 15 other citizens to apply for land in order to turn it over to him , giving him 700 @, @ 000 acres (280 @, @ 000 ha) for speculation . Bowie may have been the first to induce settlers to apply for

empresario grants , which could then be sold in bulk to speculators as Bowie had . The Mexican government passed laws in 1834 and 1835 that stopped much of the land speculation .

On April 25 , 1831 , Bowie married nineteen @-@ year @-@ old Maria Ursula de Veramendi , the daughter of his business partner , who had become the vice governor of the province . Several days before the ceremony , he signed a dowry contract promising to pay his new bride 15 @,@ 000 pesos (approximately \$ 15 @,@ 000 then , or \$ 333 @,@ 000 today) in cash or property within two years of the marriage . At the time , Bowie claimed to have a net worth of \$ 223 @,@ 000 (\$ 4 @,@ 960 @,@ 000 today) , mostly in land of questionable title . Bowie also lied about his age , claiming to be 30 rather than 35 . The couple built a house in San Antonio on land Veramendi had given them near the San José Mission . After a short time , however , they moved into the Veramendi Palace , living with Ursula 's parents , who supplied them with spending money . The couple had two children , Marie Elve (b . March 20 , 1832) and James Veramendi (b . July 18 , 1833) .

Maria Ursula , her parents , and both children died in September 1833 from cholera .

= = Los Almagres Mine = =

Shortly after his marriage Bowie became fascinated with the story of the " lost " Los Almagres Mine (also known as the lost San Saba Mine and the lost Bowie Mine) , said to be northwest of San Antonio near the ruin of the Spanish Mission Santa Cruz de San Saba . According to legend , the mine had been operated by local Indians before being seized by the Spanish . After Mexico won independence from Spain , government interest in the mining potential waned . A number of native groups roamed the area , including Comanche , Lipan Apache , Tawakoni , and Tonkawa . Without government troops to keep hostile natives at bay , mining and mineral exploration were impossible . Some believed that after the Mexican citizens left the area , the Lipan took over the mine .

After obtaining permission from the Mexican government to mount an expedition into Indian territory to search for the legendary silver mine , Bowie , his brother Rezin , and ten others set out for San Saba on November 2 , 1831 . Six miles (10 km) from their goal , the group stopped to negotiate with a large raiding party of Indians ? reportedly more than 120 Tawakoni and Waco , plus another 40 Caddo . The attempts at parley failed and Bowie and his group fought for their lives for the next 13 hours . When the Indians finally retreated , Bowie reportedly had lost only one man , while more than 40 Indians had been killed and 30 were wounded . In the meantime , a party of friendly Comanche rode into San Antonio bringing word of the raiding party , which outnumbered the Bowie expedition by 14 to 1 . The citizens of San Antonio believed the members of the Bowie expedition must have perished , and Ursula Bowie began wearing widow 's weeds .

To the surprise of the town , the surviving members of the group returned to San Antonio on December 6 . Bowie 's report of the expedition , written in Spanish , was printed in several newspapers , further establishing his reputation . He set out again with a larger force the following month , but returned home empty @-@ handed after two and a half months of searching .

Bowie never talked of his exploits despite his increasing fame . Captain William Y. Lacey , who spent eight months living in the wilderness with Bowie , described him as a humble man who never used profanity or vulgarities .

= = Texas Revolution = =

= = Texan rumblings = =

Between 1830 and 1832 the Mexican Congress passed a series of laws that seemed to discriminate against Anglo colonists in the province of Coahuila y Tejas , increasing tension between the Anglo citizenry and Mexican officials . In response to the rumblings , Mexican troops established military posts in several locations within the province , including San Antonio de Béxar . Although much of the military supported the administration of President Anastasio Bustamante , Antonio

López de Santa Anna led an insurrection against him in 1832 . Anglo colonists in Texas supported Santa Anna and General José Antonio Mexía , who led soldiers into Texas to oust commanders loyal to Bustamante .

After hearing that the Mexican army commander in Nacogdoches , José de las Piedras , had demanded that all residents in his area surrender their arms , Bowie cut short a visit to Natchez in July 1832 to return to Texas . On August 2 , 1832 , he joined a group of other Texans and marched into Nacogdoches to " present their demands " to Piedras . Before the group reached the building housing the town officials , they were attacked by a force of 100 Mexican cavalry . The Texans returned fire and the Battle of Nacogdoches began . After the cavalry retreated , they initiated a siege of the garrison . After a second battle , in which Piedras lost 33 men , the Mexican army evacuated during the night . Bowie and 18 companions ambushed the fleeing army and , after Piedras fled , marched the soldiers back to Nacogdoches . Bowie later served as a delegate to the Convention of 1833 , which formally requested that Texas become its own state within the Mexican federation .

Several months later , a cholera epidemic struck Texas . Fearing the disease would reach San Antonio , Bowie sent his pregnant wife and their daughter to the family estate in Monclova in the company of her parents and brother . The cholera epidemic instead struck Monclova , and between September 6 and September 14 , Ursula , their children , her brother , and her parents all died of the disease . Bowie , on business in Natchez , heard of his family 's deaths in November . From then on , he drank heavily and became " careless in his dress . "

The following year , the Mexican government passed new laws allowing land sale in Texas , and Bowie returned to land speculation . He was appointed a land commissioner and tasked with promoting settlement in the area purchased by John T. Mason . His appointment ended in May 1835 when President Antonio López de Santa Anna abolished the Coahuila y Tejas government and ordered the arrest of all Texans (including Bowie) doing business in Monclova . Bowie was forced to flee Monclova and return to the Anglo areas of Texas .

The Anglos in Texas began agitating for war against Santa Anna , and Bowie worked with William B. Travis , the leader of the War Party , to gain support . Bowie visited several Indian villages in East Texas in an attempt to persuade the reluctant tribes to fight against the Mexican government . Santa Anna responded to the rumblings by ordering large numbers of Mexican troops to Texas .

= = = Battle of Concepción = = =

The Texas Revolution began on October 2 , 1835 , with the Battle of Gonzales . Stephen F. Austin formed an army of 500 men to march on the Mexican forces in San Antonio with the cannon that had precipitated the fight . The name " Texian Army " sometimes is applied to this militia . On October 22 , Austin asked Bowie , now a colonel in the volunteer militia , and James W. Fannin to scout the area around the missions of San Francisco de la Espada and San José y San Miguel de Aguayo to find supplies for the volunteer forces . The scouting party left with 92 men , many of them members of the New Orleans Grays who had just arrived in Texas . After discovering a good defensive position near Mission Concepción , the group requested that Austin 's army join them .

On the foggy morning of October 28 , Mexican General Domingo Ugartechea led a force of 300 infantry and cavalry soldiers and two small cannons against the Texian forces . Although the Mexican army was able to get within 200 yards (183 m) , the Texian defensive position protected them from fire . As the Mexicans stopped to reload their cannon , the Texians climbed a bluff and picked off some of the soldiers . The stalemate ended shortly after Bowie led a charge to seize one of the Mexican cannons , at that time only 80 yards (73 m) away . Ugartechea retreated with his troops , ending the Battle of Concepción . One Texian and ten Mexican troops had been killed . One of the men under Bowie 's command during the battle later praised him " as a born leader , never needlessly spending a bullet or imperiling a life , who repeatedly admonished ... Keep under cover boys , and reserve your fire ; we haven 't a man to spare . "

= = = Grass Fight and commission difficulties = = =

An hour after the battle ended , Austin arrived with the rest of the Texian army to begin a siege of San Antonio de Béxar , where General Martín Perfecto de Cós , the overall commander of Mexican forces in Texas , and his troops were garrisoned . Two days later , Bowie resigned from Austin 's army because he did not have an official commission in the army , and he disliked the " minor tasks of scouting and spying " .

On November 3 , 1835 , Texas declared itself an independent state , and a provisional government was formed with Henry Smith of Brazoria elected provisional governor . Austin requested to be relieved of his command of the army , and Sam Houston was named army chief . Edward Burleson was chosen as temporary commander of the troops in San Antonio . Bowie appeared before the council at some point and spoke for an hour , asking for a commission . The council refused Bowie 's request , likely because of lingering animosity over his land dealings .

Houston offered Bowie a commission as an officer on his staff , but Bowie rejected the opportunity , explaining that he wanted to be in the midst of the fighting . Instead , Bowie enlisted in the army as a private under Fannin . He distinguished himself again in the Grass Fight on November 26 . Cós had sent approximately 187 men to cut grass for his horses . As they returned to San Antonio , Bowie took 60 mounted men to intercept the party , which they believed carried valuable cargo . The Mexican troops quickened their pace in the hopes of reaching the safety of the city , but Bowie and his cavalry chased them . At the end of the fight , the Texians had two wounded men , but had captured many horses and mules .

Shortly after Bowie left San Antonio , Ben Milam led an assault on the city . In the ensuing fighting , the Texians suffered only a few casualties , while the Mexican army lost many troops to death and desertion . Cós surrendered and returned to Mexico , taking with him the last Mexican troops in Texas . Believing the war was over , many of the Texian volunteers left the army and returned to their families . In early January 1836 , Bowie went to San Felipe and asked the council to allow him to recruit a regiment . He again was turned down as he " was not an officer of the government nor army . "

= = = Battle at the Alamo = = =

After Houston received word that Santa Anna was leading a large force to San Antonio , Bowie offered to lead volunteers to defend the Alamo from the expected attack . He arrived with 30 men on January 19 , where they found a force of 104 men with a few weapons and a few cannons , but not many supplies and little gunpowder . Houston knew that there were not enough men to hold the fort in an attack and had given Bowie authority to remove the artillery and blow up the fortification . Bowie and the Alamo commander , James C. Neill , decided they did not have enough oxen to move the artillery , and they did not want to destroy the fortress . On January 26 , one of Bowie 's men , James Bonham , organized a rally which passed a resolution in favor of holding the Alamo . Bonham signed the resolution first , with Bowie 's signature second .

Through Bowie 's connections because of his marriage and his fluency in Spanish , the predominantly Mexican population of San Antonio often furnished him with information about the movements of the Mexican army . After learning that Santa Anna had 4 @, @ 500 troops and was heading for the city , Bowie wrote several letters to the provisional government asking for help in defending the Alamo , especially " men , money , rifles , and cannon powder " . In another letter , to Governor Smith , he reiterated his view that " the salvation of Texas depends in great measure on keeping Béxar out of the hands of the enemy . It serves as the frontier picquet guard , and if it were in the possession of Santa Anna , there is no stronghold from which to repel him in his march toward the Sabine . " The letter to Smith ended , " Colonel Neill and myself have come to the solemn resolution that we will rather die in these ditches than give it up to the enemy . "

On February 3 , Davy Crockett appeared with thirty Tennesseans . Neill went on furlough on February 11 to visit his sick family , leaving Travis , a member of the regular army , in command . Bowie was older than Travis with a better reputation and considered himself a colonel , thus outranking Travis , a lieutenant colonel . He refused to answer to Travis , who called an election for

the men to choose their own commander . They chose Bowie , infuriating Travis . Bowie celebrated his appointment by getting very drunk and causing havoc in San Antonio , releasing all prisoners in the local jails and harassing citizens . Travis was disgusted , but two days later the men agreed to a joint command ; Bowie would command the volunteers , and Travis would command the regular army and the volunteer cavalry .

On February 23 , the bells of San Fernando sounded the alarm of the approach of the Mexicans . Travis ordered all the Texan forces into the Alamo . James Bowie hurried to gather provisions and herd cattle into the Alamo compound . Fearing for the safety of his wife 's relatives in San Antonio , Bowie invited her cousins Getrudis Navarro and Juana Navarro Alsbury , as well as Alsbury 's 18 @-@ month @-@ old son , Alijo Perez Jr . , to stay inside the walls of the Alamo . Bowie also brought several black servants , some of whom worked at the Veramendi Palace , into the security of the Alamo fortress . Bowie had been ill , and two doctors , including the fort surgeon , were unable to diagnose his illness . Travis became the sole commander of the forces when Bowie was confined to bed . Santa Anna and his army began a siege of the Alamo on February 24 . The Mexican army raised a red flag to warn the defenders that no quarter would be given .

Bowie and Travis began sending out couriers with pleas for provisions and assistance . Travis sent Juan Seguin on Bowie 's horse , to recruit reinforcements on February 25 , and 32 additional men arrived . On February 26 , David Crockett reported that Bowie , though suffering from his affliction , continued to crawl from his bed around noon every day and presented himself to the Alamo 's inhabitants , which much boosted the morale of his comrades . Thirty @-@ five years after the Alamo fell , a reporter identified Louis " Moses " Rose as the only man to have " deserted " the Texian forces at the Alamo . According to the reporter 's version of Rose 's account , when Travis realized that the Mexican army would likely prevail , he drew a line in the sand and asked those willing to die for the cause to cross the line . At Bowie 's request Crockett and several others carried the cot over the line , leaving Rose alone on the other side . After its publication , several other eyewitnesses confirmed the account , but as Rose was deceased the story can only be authenticated by the word of the reporter , who admitted to embellishing other articles , " and thus many historians refuse to believe it . "

Bowie perished with the rest of the Alamo defenders on March 6 , when the Mexicans attacked . Most of the noncombatants in the fort , including Bowie 's relatives , survived . Santa Anna ordered the alcalde of San Antonio , Francisco Antonio Ruiz , to confirm the identities of Bowie , Travis , and Crockett . After first ordering that Bowie be buried , as he was too brave a man to be burned like a dog , Santa Anna later had Bowie 's body placed with those of the other Texans on the funeral pyre .

When Bowie 's mother was informed of his death , she calmly stated , " I 'll wager no wounds were found in his back . " Various eyewitnesses to the battle gave conflicting accounts of Bowie 's death . A newspaper article claimed that a Mexican soldier saw Bowie carried from his room on his cot , alive , after the conclusion of the battle . The soldier maintained that Bowie verbally castigated a Mexican officer in fluent Spanish , and the officer ordered Bowie 's tongue cut out and his still @-@ breathing body thrown onto the funeral pyre . This account has been disputed by numerous other witnesses , and it is thought to have been invented by the reporter . Other witnesses maintained that they saw several Mexican soldiers enter Bowie 's room , bayonet him , and carry him , alive , from the room . Various other stories circulated , with some witnesses claiming that Bowie shot himself and others saying he was killed by soldiers while too weak to lift his head . Alcalde Ruiz said that Bowie was found " dead in his bed . " According to Wallace O Chariton , The " most popular , and probably the most accurate " version is that Bowie died on his cot , " back braced against the wall , and using his pistols and his famous knife . " One year after the battle , Juan Seguin returned to the Alamo and gathered the remaining ashes from the funeral pyre . He placed these in a coffin inscribed with the names of Bowie , Travis , and Crockett . The ashes were interred at the Cathedral of San Fernando .

= = Legacy = =

Despite his continual pronouncements of wealth , Bowie 's estate was found to be very small . His possessions were auctioned for only \$ 99 @. @ 50 . His larger legacy is his position as " one of the legendary characters of the American frontier . " Bowie left a " frustratingly sparse paper trail " of his life , and for many " where history failed , the legends prevailed . " Although Bowie 's name and knife were well known during his lifetime , his legend grew after October 1852 , when DeBow 's Review published an article written by his brother John Jones Bowie called , " Early Life in the Southwest ? The Bowies . " The article focused primarily on the exploits of Jim Bowie . Beginning with that article , " romanticized stories " about Bowie began appearing in national press . In many cases , " these stories were pure melodrama , with Bowie rescuing some naïve planter 's son or damsel in distress . "

Jim Bowie was inducted posthumously into the Blade Magazine Cutlery Hall of Fame at the 1988 Blade Show in Atlanta , Georgia , in recognition of the impact that his eponymous design made upon generations of knife makers and cutlery companies .

A number of films have depicted the events of the Battle of the Alamo , and Bowie has appeared as a character in each .

From 1956 to 1958 , Bowie was the subject of a CBS television series , The Adventures of Jim Bowie , which was primarily set in 1830s Louisiana , although later episodes ventured into the Mexican province of Texas . The show , which starred Scott Forbes as Jim Bowie , was based on the 1946 novel Tempered Blade .

Bowie also is the namesake of rock star David Bowie , who was born David Robert Hayward @-@ Jones . Jones changed his name in the 1960s because he feared his name was too similar to Davy Jones , a member of the already famous The Monkees . He chose the surname Bowie because he admired James Bowie and the Bowie knife , although his pronunciation uses the BO @-@ ee (/ ?bo?.i /) variant .

Bowie County in northeast Texas , and the city of Bowie in Montague County , Texas , were both named in honor of James Bowie .