

# A journey and alamo

[History](#)



History is a giant puzzle that when someone pieces them together you come up with a better picture as to what actually happened without being there. It takes several perspectives to give a good foundation to be able to build one's own theory as to what happened in any historical event and James Crisp's book " Sleuthing the Alamo" should help to show this.

In this book Crisp investigates the Texas Revolution and the fall of the Alamo which took place between autumn of 1835 and spring of 1836. He confronts the questions why and how myths are made and show how art can be very influential in attitudes that individuals develop about certain historical events.

The author is excellent at showing how everyone should really pay attention to what is written in history and that everyone should analyze primary sources for themselves to come up with a conclusion and a perspective of their own.

Crisp's work searches for the truths and un-truths in historical literature during that time and does a really good job of it. As the book unfolds Crisp re-examines accepted views of this historical event. His main thesis is and what bind the different topics are race and its influence over how history is perceived and remembered.

James Crisp begins his analysis with his own life story that began in a small town in southern Texas. Segregation and racism was a fact of life in that community and probably influenced much of what Crisp writes on this subject. Even after attending Rice University he dealt with racism first hand.

He talks of the Texan type of mentality and how even today legends along with culture are important to individuals in that unique geographical area. This is to let the reader understand where he is coming from and why he believes his findings of the facts to be accurate.

He even admits that the way that Davy Crockett really disappointed him giving him a different perspective on that event, but he would rather know the truth than to believe a myth.

The first chapter deals with the accuracy of some racist statements made by Sam Houston about Indians and Mexicans in an address to troupes in 1836. This speech made in Refugio has been published many times in scholarly articles.

What James Crisp asserts is that those statements made by Houston were not what he finds to be consistent with what information he found to give indication's to the man's true attitude of those two ethnic groups.

The speech was written in German and through mistranslation of this speech led to this problem. Crisp also goes on to show how this along with what is chosen among scholars and writers on what is to be written in the past about history needs to be re-examined for accuracy.

In chapter two Crisp focuses on a diary written by a Mexican Officer, Enrique de la Pena, who was in the battle and wrote down events as they were supposedly happening. Many scholars criticize the accuracy of this diary. But through careful research and analysis Crisp believes this diary to be pretty accurate.

The most disturbing part of this diary is the way Davy Crockett died at the hand of the Mexican President Santa Anna. The diary was trying to explain why Texas was lost. This along with another writing of an account of the Texas campaign helped to support Crisp's findings.

Chapter three discusses the myth of how Davy Crockett died showing how legends are distorted and how these myths play a part in our own view as to what we believe. When the Alamo fell David Crockett did not die fighting as books and legends state but was captured and executed while pleading for his life.

I saw a movie recently that did not portray it that way. It had him fighting bitterly to the end and having a "kiss my butt" attitude at the end. This is also how many individuals believe to be true. The battle was bloody and harsh with probably many brave men dying. To me just to be in the battle during anytime in that history makes for brave and heroic men.

Then in the final chapter Crisp addresses art and how art portrays meaning to individuals. Art that was produced between the 1850's and early twentieth century that depicts the battle of the Alamo Crisp asserts show that racial attitude of Anglos to Mexicans and Mexican Texans have become the main stream of thought over time.

The author believes that by the end of the 1800's it became embedded into the individuals in that area. But to me the artwork gave a good understanding of how ethnicity and race were thought of back then and gives us a perspective of where we were and where we are going.

This book helps in giving individuals a picture of how perspectives can alter history and help to understand history. Crisp does an excellent job of showing how history and myth are intertwined and that to see the truth sometimes we must unravel both.

Reference:

Crisp, J. E. (2005). *Sleuthing the Alamo: Davy Crockett's last stand and other mysteries of the Texas revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press.