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# The Alamo Collection: A Testament to the Rich History And Cultural Heritage of Texas

The Alamo stands as a symbol of Texas’ enduring spirit; a place where history has been both made and preserved for over 300 years. While the Battle of the Alamo is undoubtedly the most well-known event associated with this historic site, the Alamo’s story is far more expansive. This narrative is richly documented through the Alamo Collection, a growing repository of artifacts that now includes approximately 5,000 items that contribute to the broader understanding of the site’s history. The Alamo Collection, enhanced by acquisitions such as the Phil Collins Collection and the Donald and Louise Yena Spanish Colonial Collection, is a cornerstone of the

ongoing \$550 million redevelopment project known as the Alamo Plan. Central to this plan is the creation of a \$185 million visitor center and museum, which will showcase the entire collection, telling the full, complex story of the Alamo.

## The Growth of the Alamo Collection

The Alamo has been a site of historical significance since its inception as Mission San Antonio de Valero in 1718. Over the centuries, the Alamo evolved from a mission to a military fort, and eventually, a symbol of resistance during the Texas Revolution. Recognizing the need to preserve this rich history, the Alamo has been collecting artifacts since it became a museum in 1905 under the stewardship

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of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. Initially, the collection focused on items related to the defenders of the Alamo, their descendants, and the people of the Republic of Texas. However, as the understanding of the Alamo's historical significance deepened, so did the scope of the collection.

### A Diverse and Expansive Collection

Today, the Alamo Collection represents a broad spectrum of Texas history, encompassing artifacts from the Spanish colonial period, Mexican Texas, the Battle of the Alamo, and the Texas Revolution, as well as items from the Quartermaster period, the Preservation era, and even modern history. This expansion reflects a commitment to telling the full story of the Alamo, beyond the 13-day siege that made it famous.

Among the most treasured items in the collection include Santa Anna's battle orders from the Alamo, two of Santa Anna's swords, and two of David Crockett's rifles. Additionally, the collection includes the only known rifle to have been present at both the Battle of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto. These artifacts offer a tangible connection to the individuals who played pivotal roles in the events that shaped Texas' fight for independence.

### The Phil Collins Collection: A Catalyst for Change

In 2014, the Alamo Collection was significantly enriched by the addition of the Phil Collins Collection. British rock star Phil Collins, known for his success as a former mem-

ber of Genesis and as a solo artist, has long been fascinated by the history of the Alamo. This passion led him to amass one of the most comprehensive private collections of Alamo-related artifacts in the world, totaling 432 items.

### A Lifelong Passion for History

Collins' love for the Alamo began as a child when he first learned about the legendary Battle of the Alamo through a Disney production. Over the years, this childhood fascination grew into a lifelong passion for collecting artifacts related to the Alamo and the Texas Revolution. His collection includes everything from weapons and relics to original documents, each piece meticulously acquired over several decades.

### A Generous Donation

In a gesture of extraordinary generosity, Collins donated his entire collection to the Texas General Land Office in 2014, ensuring that these invaluable artifacts would be preserved for future generations. This donation not only enriched the Alamo Collection but also ignited a renewed interest in the Alamo's history, serving as a catalyst for the larger redevelopment efforts now underway.

The Phil Collins Collection is now on display at the Alamo Exhibit in the Ralston Family Collections Center, where visitors can view these priceless artifacts and gain a deeper understanding of the events that unfolded at the Alamo. The collection has played a crucial role in the narrative expansion of the Alamo's history, allowing for a more comprehensive interpretation of the site's significance.



▲ Spanish Miquelet pistol. Donald and Louise Yena Spanish Colonial Collection.

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◀ Mexican Cavalry Helmet from the *Regimiento Permanente de Dolores*. Phil Collin's collection.

### The Donald and Louise Yena Spanish Colonial Collection: A Window into the Past

While the Phil Collins Collection provides insight into the events of the Texas Revolution, the Donald and Louise Yena Spanish Colonial Collection offers a window into the history of the Alamo before it became a battlefield. This collection, which focuses on the Mission era, showcases the tools, weapons, and everyday items used by the early Spanish settlers and indigenous people of the region.

#### A Legacy of Authenticity

Donald Yena, a renowned Western artist, began collecting artifacts in the 1950s to ensure the accuracy of his paintings depicting life in early Spanish Texas. Over the years, he amassed a collection of over 400 items, including swords, knives, cannons, firearms, lances, kitchen utensils, ranching instruments, agricultural tools, and blacksmith items. These artifacts not only served as inspiration for his artwork, but also provide valuable insight into the daily lives of those who lived at the Alamo during its Mission period.

#### A Valuable Addition to the Alamo Collection

In 2023, the Alamo announced the acquisition of the Donald and Louise Yena Spanish Colonial Collection, marking a significant milestone in the preservation of Texas history. This collection, now housed in the Ralston Family

Collections Center, allows the Alamo to present a more complete narrative of its history, from its founding as a mission to its transformation into a military fort.

The Yena Collection is particularly important because it fills a critical gap in the Alamo's narrative, providing context for the site's early history. It highlights the role of religion and ranching in the development of Spanish Texas and illustrates the complex interactions between the Spanish settlers and the indigenous people of the region. These artifacts will play a central role in the new exhibits planned for the visitor center and museum, helping to educate visitors about the mission era and its significance in Texas history.

#### The Alamo Plan: Preserving And Showcasing the Collection

The Alamo Collection's continued growth and preservation are integral to the Alamo Plan, a \$550 million redevelopment project aimed at transforming the site into a world-class destination. Central to this plan is the construction of a \$185 million visitor center and museum, which will provide the space, and facilities needed to showcase the entire Alamo Collection.

#### A World-Class Facility

Currently, only about 6% of the Alamo Collection can be displayed at any given time in the Ralston Family Collec-

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tions Center. The new visitor center and museum, set to open in 2027, will change this dramatically. With 100,000 square feet of exhibit space, the museum will be able to display the full breadth of the collection, allowing visitors to explore the rich history of the Alamo in greater detail than ever before.

### Enhancing the Visitor Experience

The visitor center and museum will feature state-of-the-art exhibits that combine traditional artifacts with interactive and immersive experiences. Visitors will be able to engage with the history of the Alamo through a variety of multimedia presentations, including augmented reality and 360-degree video displays. These exhibits will bring the stories of the Alamo to life, providing a deeper and more engaging experience for the 2.5 million visitors expected annually.

### Preserving the Legacy

The Alamo Plan's emphasis on preservation extends beyond the physical structures of the site to include the careful conservation of the artifacts in the Alamo Collection. The new museum will be equipped with the latest technology to ensure that these priceless items are preserved for future generations. This commitment to preservation is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the collection and ensuring that the stories it tells continue to inspire and educate visitors from around the world.

### Looking to the Future: A Legacy of Education and Preservation

As the Alamo Collection continues to grow, so does the Alamo's ability to tell the full, complex story of its history.

The Phil Collins Collection and the Donald and Louise Yena Spanish Colonial Collection are just two examples of how the Alamo is expanding its narrative to include a broader range of perspectives and historical contexts.

### A Comprehensive Narrative

The Alamo's history is woven from the stories of diverse peoples and cultures. From its origins as a Spanish mission to its role in the Texas Revolution and beyond, the Alamo has been shaped by the interactions of indigenous peoples, Spanish settlers, Mexican soldados, and Texian defenders. The Alamo Collection, enriched by recent acquisitions, reflects this complexity, offering a more comprehensive narrative that honors all who played a part in its history.

### Educating Future Generations

The Alamo's mission is not only to preserve history but also to educate future generations about the significance of the events that took place there. The new visitor center and museum will play a central role in this effort, providing a world-class facility where visitors can learn about the Alamo's history through engaging and immersive exhibits.

By showcasing the full Alamo Collection, the museum will help to ensure that the stories of the Alamo continue to resonate with visitors for generations to come. This is not just a project of preservation; it is a project of education, one that seeks to inspire a deeper understanding of Texas history and the diverse cultures that have shaped it.

### A Legacy of Preservation

The Alamo Collection is more than just a repository of artifacts; it is a testament to the enduring legacy of the Alamo and the people who fought to preserve it. Through the Alamo Plan, this legacy will be preserved and expanded, ensuring that the Alamo remains a symbol of Texas pride and heritage for centuries to come.

As the Alamo Trust, Inc. continues its work to preserve and enhance this iconic site, the Alamo Collection will remain at the heart of its efforts. The new visitor center and museum will provide the space and resources needed to showcase the collection in all its richness. **MM**