Juan Nepomuceno Seguin (1806–1890) was a member of a prominent Tejano (or native Texan) family of San Antonio. In this memoir, published in 1858, he describes his leadership of the movement for Texan independence and his military service in the rebellion along with the American settlers. Sent from the Alamo with his company to summon reinforcements, he narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Mexican army.

SOURCE: Juan Nepomuceno Seguin, Personal Memoirs (1858).

In October 1834, I was Political Chief of the Department of Bejar [in south-central Texas]. Dissatisfied with the reactionary designs of General Santa Anna, who was at that time President of the Republic of Mexico, and endeavored to overthrow the Federal system, I issued a circular, in which I urged every Municipality in Texas to appoint delegates to a convention that was to meet at San Antonio, for the purpose of taking into consideration the impending dangers, and for devising the means to avert them. All the Municipalities appointed their delegates but the convention never met, the General Government having ordered Col. Jose Maria Mendoza to march with his forces from Matamoras to San Antonio, and prevent the meeting of the delegates....

In April 1835, the Governor of Coahuila and Texas [the two Mexican provinces were joined as a single state] called for assistance from the various Departments to resist the aggressions of Santa Anna against that State. I volunteered my services, and received from the political Chief, Don Angel Navarro, the command of a party of National Guards sent from San Antonio to Monclova. In our encounters with the troops of Santa Anna, I was efficiently assisted by Col. B. R. Milam and Maj. John R. Allen. On our withdrawal from Monclova, disgusted with the weakness of the Executive, who had given up the struggle, we pledged ourselves to use all our influence to rouse Texas against the tyrannical government of Santa Anna....

We had agreed that the movement should begin in the center of Texas but not hearing from that quarter, I determined to send an agent to Brazoria [on the Brazos River, where many of the Americans had their settlements], Juan A. Zambrano, with directions to sound the disposition of the people. On the return of the agent, we were apprized that there was a great deal of talk about a revolution, in public meetings, but that the moment for an armed movement was still remote. Our agent was sent to Victoria [in south Texas], and there called a meeting of the citizens, but the Military Commander of Goliad sent down a detachment of troops to prevent the assembly and arrest the promoters.

We were despairing of a successful issue, when the Military Commander of Texas, informed of the revolutionary feelings which were spreading over the colonies, determined upon removing from the town of Gonzales a piece of artillery, lent to that corporation by the Political Chief Saucedo. This was at the time a delicate undertaking. A lieutenant was detailed to carry it into execution, with orders to use force if necessary. On the same day that the military detachment started for Gonzales, I went to the lower ranchos on the San Antonio River; at Salvador Flores I held a meeting of the neighbors, and induced several to take up arms, well satisfied that the beginning of the revolution was close at hand....

Major Collinsworth, surprising the garrison of Goliad, took possession of that place. So soon as I was informed of that circumstance, I marched with my company to reinforce the Major, but, at the “conquista” crossing on the San Antonio River, I was overtaken by an express from General Stephen F. Austin, who informed me that he was marching on San Antonio, and requested me to join him, in order to attack General Cos. I retraced my steps, after having requested Captain Manuel Flores to go and meet General Austin and inform him of my readiness to comply with his wishes, and that I would take with me all the men I could possibly enlist on my route.

On the 13th of October, I met Austin on the Salado, at the crossing of the Gonzales road, and joined my forces with his small army. Upon this occasion I had the honor to become acquainted with General Sam Houston, who accompanied Austin. On the same day we had a slight encounter with the forces under Cos, who retired into San Antonio. Austin, as Commander-in-Chief of the army, gave me the appointment of Captain....

I was detailed to forage for the army, and was successful in doing so, returning to the camp with a liberal supply of provisions. Our camp was shortly moved to within one mile of the Alamo, whence we proceeded to the “Molino Blanco,” and established head-quarters. On the 11th of December we entered the city, and after having taken possession of the houses of the Curate Garza, Vermendi, Flores, and others, we obliged the enemy to capitulate and withdraw towards Laredo.

After the capture of San Antonio, Captain Travis’ company and mine were detailed to go in pursuit of the Mexican forces and capture from them a cavallado [a herd of horses] which they had in the Parrita, Laredo road; we succeeded, taking nearly one hundred head of horses, which were sent to San Felipe de Austin, for the benefit of the public service. I was afterwards detailed to the ranchos on the San Antonio river, to see if I could find more horses belonging to the Mexican troops.

On the 2d of January, 1836, I received from the Provisional Government [of Texas] the commission of Captain of Regular Cavalry, with orders to report to Lieutenant-Colonel Travis in San Antonio. On the 22d of February, at 2 o’clock P.M., General Santa Anna took possession of the city, with over 4000 men and in the mean time we fell back on the Alamo.

On the 28th, the enemy commenced the bombardment; meanwhile we met in a Council of War, and taking into consideration our perilous situation, it was resolved by a majority of the council, that I should leave the fort, and proceed with a communication to Colonel Fannin, requesting him to come to our assistance. I left the Alamo on the night of the council....I sent Fannin, by express, the communication from Travis, informing him at the same time of the critical position of the defenders of the Alamo. Fannin answered me, through Lieutenant Finley, that he had advanced as far as “Rancho Nuevo,” but, being informed of the movements of General Urrea, he had counter-marched to Goliad, to defend that place; adding, that he could not respond to Travis call, their respective commands being separate, and depending upon General Houston, then at Gonzales, with whom he advised me to communicate. I lost no time in repairing to Gonzales, and reported myself to the General, informing him of the purport of my mission. He commanded me to wait at Gonzales for further orders. General Houston ordered Captain Salvador Flores with 25 men of my company to the lower ranchos on the San Antonio river, to protect the inhabitants from the depredations of the Indians.
Afterwards, I was ordered to take possession, with the balance of my company, of the "Perra," distant about four miles on the road to San Antonio, with instructions to report every evening at head-quarters. Thus my company was forming the vanguard of the Texan army, on the road to San Antonio. On the 6th of March, I received orders to go to San Antonio with my company and a party of American citizens, carrying, on the horses, provisions for the defenders of the Alamo.

Arrived at the Cibolo, and not hearing the signal gun which was to be discharged every fifteen minutes, as long as the place held out, we retraced our steps to convey to the General-in-Chief the sad tidings. A new party was sent out, which soon came back, having met with Anselmo Verara and Andres Barcena, both soldiers of my company, whom I had left for purposes of observation in the vicinity of San Antonio; they brought the intelligence of the fall of the Alamo. Their report was so circumstantial as to preclude any doubts about that disastrous event.