

Title of Lesson: *The Alabama Man Who Survived a Massacre in 1836 and Became a Texas Hero*
(Suggested grade level: 10th grade American History or Advanced Placement U.S. History)

This lesson was created as a part of the Alabama History Education Initiative, funded by a generous grant from the Malone Family Foundation in 2009.

Author Information: Mary Hubbard, Advanced Placement History Teacher, Retired,
Alabama History Education Initiative Consultant

Background Information:

The story of how Texas gained its independence from Mexico is one of the most dramatic developments in American history. It includes the fall of the Alamo, an event that became an instant legend in 1836 when it occurred, and has retained its hold on the American imagination ever since. Most high school students will have heard the slogan “Remember the Alamo” and know the basic outline of what happened there before they study anything about it in their textbook. But they’re not likely to know that the outbreak of the Texas Revolution in 1835 inspired tremendous support in the South, particularly in Alabama, or that Texas named one of its counties in honor of an Alabama doctor who fought in the war (Dr. Jack Shackelford).

Alabama-Texas connections go way back. Many of the Anglos who originally settled in Texas in the 1820s and early 1830s came from Alabama, and we were one of the first states to offer assistance to Texas in the form of money and arms when their resistance to the Mexican government stiffened. Once the revolution began, meetings were held around our state, and volunteers formed companies to serve with the Texas army. Alabama organized and sent a total of four such companies---one each from Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery, and Courtland, a town in Lawrence County in northeast Alabama. This last unit, called the Red Rovers because of the color of their homespun uniforms, was organized, drilled, and commanded by Dr. Jack Shackelford, an Alabama resident and physician living in Courtland. He would become one of heroes of the Texas revolution.

Shackelford and his 55 volunteers (including one of his sons and two nephews) arrived in Texas in February of 1836 and joined up with a Texas regiment. Two weeks after the fall of the Alamo, they engaged with the enemy at the Battle of Coleto. Badly outnumbered and surrounded on all sides, they suffered significant losses and were facing certain defeat when the Mexican field general in charge agreed to generous terms of surrender. The Americans gave up their arms, expecting to be spared their lives. The field general’s decision, however, was shortly overruled by Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, commander of all the Mexican forces. He sent word that the American prisoners were to be executed. In what was later referred to as the Goliad Massacre, 370 unarmed American soldiers were shot or bayoneted to death, including Shackelford’s son and two nephews. Only twenty-seven men managed to escape. Shackelford and another physician were not among them, but the two were spared because the Mexican military leaders wanted them to tend to their wounded soldiers.

About a month after the massacre, Shackelford and his companion were finally able to escape, eventually joining up with Texan troops. The Republic of Texas issued Shackelford an honorable discharge in 1836, and the wording of the document expresses the state’s strong sense of gratitude, “Captain Shackelford and his men entered the service of Texas without engaging for any particular period, but the evidence is satisfactory that their determination was to defend the soil of Texas so long as there was an enemy in it. In consideration of his meritorious services and the great sufferings he has undergone, Captain Shackelford is hereby most honorably

discharged with the thanks and sympathies of this government." (From Jim Noles's article, "Doctor Jack Shackelford and the Red Rovers.") Shackelford returned to Courtland, Alabama, and resumed his life.

News of the Goliad Massacre spread and, combined with what had already happened at the Alamo, helped inflame American opinion against Mexico. Shackelford's account of what transpired is one of only a very few first-hand summaries of the Battle of Coleto and the massacre which followed. While not totally unbiased or complete, his description brings the past vividly alive. Students should enjoy reading the document. It provides a personal window into the past.

Overview of lesson:

This lesson fits within the larger themes of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny. It would serve as a good introduction to a study of the Texas War for Independence in spite of the fact it doesn't relate to the first event. The drama inherent in Shackelford's account of the Goliad Massacre will spark greater interest in the topic of the war as a whole. Once student interest is piqued, they'll be more motivated to learn about what else happened and, hopefully, connect more readily and personally to the material in their textbook.

For purposes of this lesson, Shackelford's document is divided into different parts, with questions between the different parts. At the conclusion of each segment, students are invited to respond – what have they learned, what does it mean, how might the overall event unfold? These questions are designed to encourage critical thinking and develop a sense of suspense.

Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)

Grade 10: Content Standard 9

- Analyzing the Westward Expansion from 1803 to 1861
- Identifying causes leading to the Westward Expansion

[National Standards for History, 1996](#)

Standard 2: The student comprehends a variety of historical sources. Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative
- B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed
- C. Read historical narratives imaginatively, taking into account (a) the historical context in which the event unfolded---the values, outlook, crises, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and (b) what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals involved---their probable motives, hopes, fears, strengths, and weaknesses
- E. Appreciate historical perspectives---the ability to (a) describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, arts, artifacts, and the like

Standard 5: The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making

- B. Analyze the interests, values, and points of view of those involved in the dilemma

[United States History Standards for Grades 5-12](#)

Era 4, Standard 1C – The student understands the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the nation's expansion to the Southwest, and the Mexican-American War. Therefore, the student is able to explain the causes of the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican-American War.

Primary Learning Objective(s):

Students will:

- Learn basic facts about the Goliad Massacre
- See the events through the eyes of an Alabama man who was there
- Analyze a primary source
- Engage in logical conjecture about how events might have unfolded
- Write an essay comparing and contrasting what happened at Goliad with what happened at the Alamo

Time allotted: 90 minutes

Materials and Equipment:

- Part One of Shackelford's account (give each student a copy)
- [PowerPoint: The Alabama Man Who Survived a Massacre in 1836 and Became a Texas Hero](#) to show students
- Comparison/Contrast Essay Instructions
- Rubric for grading assignment

Technological Resources:

- Summary [article about Shackelford](#), found at the Texas State Historical Association's online "Handbook of Texas."
- ["Shackelford County,"](#) contains information about when and why the state of Texas decided to name a county in honor of this individual. The entry appears on a website hosted by Deep Creek Ranch, a Bed and Breakfast located in Shackelford County. There are several pictures on the site that show the kind of vegetation in that part of Texas.
- ["Alabama and the Texas Revolution,"](#) a comprehensive, 15-page article written in 1947 by Claude Elliott, a member of the history department at Texas State University. It covers the extensive contributions Alabama made to Texas's War for Independence. Dr. Shackelford and the Red Rovers are first mentioned on page 9.
- ["Goliad Massacre,"](#) an article about the event found on the Texas State Historical Association's online "Handbook of Texas." Most of the facts on the *PowerPoint* were obtained from this site.
- ["Shackelford's Red Rover" Historical Marker.](#) The Alabama Historical Association's Historical Marker Program website includes information about this marker. At the bottom of the page is a link to a map at the University of Alabama which shows the town of Courtland, which is where Shackelford was living when he formed the Red Rovers.
- [A map of the counties of Texas](#) (for showing where Shackelford is located).
- [Map showing battle sites](#) from Texas War for Independence (includes Goliad).

Background/Preparation:

Students should be familiar with the physical expansion of the United States in the years following the Louisiana Purchase. They should also have been introduced to the term "Manifest Destiny" and understand the concept. Since this lesson is intended as an introduction to any study of the Texas War for Independence, it isn't necessary students know anything about it beforehand. In fact, it's preferable they don't. They should,

however, know that Mexico achieved its independence from Spain in 1821, and that the new nation believed it could improve its economy by encouraging Americans to settle in an area they owned which was then called Tejas (now Texas). (In the 1820s, it was Americans who wanted to go to Mexico, not Mexicans who wanted to come to America.) Even though American settlers accepted Mexican citizenship as part of the bargain, most of them chose not to assimilate culturally. Some even began to challenge Mexican authority, which led to tensions. As a result, Mexico closed its border to further immigration by Americans in 1830. In 1834, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna renounced Mexico's constitution and made himself dictator, and Texans began to organize themselves for war in 1835. In short order, fighting broke out.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity:

- Display [a map of the counties in Alabama](#). (This is an interactive map.) Have students look at the list of county names and identify the ones that were named after men. See if a student can identify one of the men and explain why the Alabama legislature decided to commemorate him in that manner. (If they don't recognize anyone else on the list, students should know that Jefferson County was named after Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and president of the United States.) Emphasize that it's a great honor to have a county named after you (as opposed to just a street.)
- Display [a map of the counties in Texas](#) and ask one student to come to the front of the room and point to Shackelford County. (It's toward the middle, and the name is so long it had to be hyphenated).
- Tell students that this county is named after Dr. Jack Shackelford, a physician who lived in Courtland, Alabama, in the 1800s. (Courtland is in Lawrence County, near Decatur, in the north central section of Alabama. You could go back to the Alabama map and show them where it is.) Tell students that Shackelford played a significant role in the Texas War for Independence (1835-36), and that his actions inspired the state legislature to name the county after him.
- Inform students that they are about to read some of Shackelford's account of events, describing a very dramatic part of the Texas War for Independence. Give students a little background information by telling them that:
 1. Shackelford, on his own initiative and at considerable expense, organized and led a company of 55 volunteers who served as soldiers in the war, under Texan leadership.
 2. One of his sons and two of his nephews were part of his company.
 3. They called themselves the Red Rovers, because of the color of their homespun uniforms.

Step 1	Distribute photocopied copies of Part One of Shackelford's account. Give students time to read this portion of the document, answer the questions at the bottom, and possibly confer with a neighbor about what they wrote (if time allows)
Step 2	Conduct a whole class discussion, using the questions as a guide. Write answers to the last question (about what sort of surrender terms might have been imposed) on the board and accept all reasonable speculation.
Step 3	Display the first four slides of the PowerPoint presentation. Go over any information students want clarified, and solicit answers to the questions that appear on the fourth slide before proceeding through the rest. This will encourage critical thinking and help build suspense.

Step 4	Show slide 5 and quickly survey the class about what they think will happen next and why.
Step 5	Show slides 6-12 . Slide #12 asks students to speculate as to why the Mexican commanders spared Shackelford's life. Encourage responses.
Step 6	Continue through the rest of the slides, 14-20 , ending with the two questions about how the public reacted to the Goliad Massacre and what other event from the war was similar. If no student mentions the Alamo, provide them with the name. Inform students that they'll write an essay in which they compare and contrast these two events.
Step 7	Hand out instructions for the essay, along with the rubric.

Assessment Strategies:

- Comparison/contrast essay.

Extension:

- The Alabama Department of Archives and History has copies of two letters Shackelford wrote home while he was in Texas, one to his [wife](#) and the other to a young [son](#). Students would undoubtedly enjoy reading both documents. The only reason they're not included in this lesson plan has to do with time considerations. But if students were interested, they could be given a link to the Archives or supplied with copies of the letters.
- This lesson raises some broader questions: How should prisoners of war be treated? Why? Are there any international laws governing treatment of prisoners? How have prisoners of war been treated during other wars in history? Students could be encouraged to research one or more of those questions for extra credit.

Part One

Dr. Jack Shackelford's Account of the Battle of Coletto

“At the time of the attack, we were in an open prairie, drawn up in a hollow square, numbering about two hundred and seventy-five effective men. The force of the enemy must have been at least five hundred cavalry and fifteen hundred infantry---that with this disparity of force we fought about three hours---repelling charge after charge, and mowing down large numbers of the enemy in every attempt made upon our lines, until they were finally driven from the contest and compelled to take refuge in the very timber which we had endeavored to reach ourselves. Our whole loss was between seven killed and between forty and fifty wounded, some mortally. I have frequently been asked why we did not retreat that night. In answer to this inquiry I will remark that the night was dark and gloomy, that we had no way of taking off our wounded, and that we were determined never to abandon them to the mercy of the enemy. In addition to this, we had repelled every charge made on us, and compelled our enemy to seek safety in retreat, and we anxiously looked for a re-enforcement in the morning, when we expected to consummate our victory. The fatal morning however arrived, and instead of being re-enforced ourselves, the enemy received a large accession to their force, and opened upon us a piece of artillery. We were suffering greatly from the want of water, and there was no alternative left us but to abandon our wounded and cut our way through the enemy, or to make an honorable capitulation. A flag was sent out and promptly met by the enemy, who offered the following terms:”

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

1. According to the author of this document, what is the total number of soldiers fighting on his side? How many did the enemy have altogether?
2. How many on Shackelford's side were killed and wounded during the first day? What do all these numbers suggest to you about how each side performed?
3. Why does Shackelford say he and the other soldiers didn't retreat during the night? How do you respond to the reasons he gives for not doing that? Agree? Disagree? Explain.
4. What happened the next day to convince Shackelford and the others to surrender?
5. What specific terms of surrender do you think the enemy force might have imposed? What guarantees do you think they might have given Shackelford and the other men in return?

COMPARE/CONTRAST ESSAY INSTRUCTIONS

Your assignment is to:

- **Read** the material in your text that deals with the Alamo. (If the text doesn't provide much information, you can consult several reputable websites (see below) that provide concise and accurate accounts. Use material from these sites...NOT information found on wikipedia.
- **Think** about the similarities AND differences between these two events in terms of their
 1. Basic facts
 2. Immediate impact
 3. Long-term legacies
 4. Connections to the concept of Manifest Destiny
- **Compose** a five paragraph essay of between 350-400 words that incorporates 3 of the 4 topics listed above
- **Discusses** both similarities (at least one) AND differences (at least one)

WEBSITES YOU CAN CONSULT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AT THE ALAMO:

[Texas State Historical Association](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qea02) <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qea02>

[Sons of the South](http://www.sonofthesouth.net/texas/battle-alamo.htm) <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/texas/battle-alamo.htm>

[Texas State Archives and Library Commission](http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/republic/alamo-01.html) <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/republic/alamo-01.html>

Comparison and Contrast Rubric

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Purpose & Supporting Details	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly. The paper points to specific examples to illustrate the comparison. The paper includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, but the supporting information is general. The paper includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, but the supporting information is incomplete. The paper may include information that is not relevant to the comparison.	The paper compares or contrasts, but does not include both. There is no supporting information or support is incomplete.
Organization & Structure	The paper breaks the information into whole-to-whole, similarities - to-differences, or point-by-point structure. It follows a consistent order when discussing the comparison.	The paper breaks the information into whole-to-whole, similarities - to-differences, or point-by-point structure but does not follow a consistent order when discussing the comparison.	The paper breaks the information into whole-to-whole, similarities - to-differences, or point-by-point structure, but some information is in the wrong section. Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.	Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized.
Transitions	The paper moves smoothly from one idea to the next. The paper uses comparison and contrast transition words to show relationships between ideas. The paper uses a variety of sentence structures and transitions.	The paper moves from one idea to the next, but there is little variety. The paper uses comparison and contrast transition words to show relationships between ideas.	Some transitions work well; but connections between other ideas are fuzzy.	The transitions between ideas are unclear or nonexistent.
Grammar & Spelling (Conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.