

## **This Month in Texas History: The Beginnings of the Battle of Flowers and Fiesta**

[Excerpt from an article by Caitlyn Donnelly for “Inside the Gates”](#)

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The first Battle of Flowers parade was held in 1891 due to the convergence of several factors, namely the desire of some San Antonians to replicate the flower festivals they had observed in Mexico City and in Nice, France; the movement in the city to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21; and the interest in marking the two hundredth anniversary of the naming of San Antonio by Spanish explorers. According to historian Judith Berg Sobré, “in spite of these vague plans, however, no concrete arrangements were made until the announcement of the impending visit of President Benjamin Harrison.” This “first visit to San Antonio by a sitting U.S. chief executive...galvanized the flower-battle enthusiasts to organize their own procession.”

The parade organizers – largely a group of well-to-do women who were active community volunteers – decided that the event would begin at 5:00 pm on April 20, not April 21, in honor of the president’s visit. This “would be long after the president’s departure,” writes Sobré, “but his schedule was too tight at any rate to permit him to witness such an entertainment.” Despite his absence, “the planners were counting on many visitors flocking to San Antonio that day and staying around to shop, so that the parade would have a large audience when the stores closed.” Furthermore, the planners decided that the parade would “form just off



The Alamo decorated for the Battle of Flowers Parade, circa 1890s.  
Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library Collection, Alamo Research  
Center

Alamo Plaza, pass through the plaza to Commerce Street, circle Main Plaza, and then return to Alamo Plaza. There, the [parade] marshals would divide the carriages into two columns, which would circle the plaza in opposite directions so that their occupants could throw flowers at each other.” The first parade was postponed due to rain and took place on April 24.

While initially the Battle of Flowers Parade was unique in that no larger festival occurred in conjunction with it, within a couple of years this changed as local

organizations began hosting events associated with the event. Today, the Battle of Flowers Parade is the largest parade in Fiesta and is second only to the Tournament of Roses parade as the largest parade in the country. Additionally, the Battle of Flowers Association has been exclusively a female group for most of its history, and the parade is the only parade in the country that is planned and directed completely by women.