Most folks recognize the historic cry "Remember the Alamo" as a memorial to those who sacrificed their lives for Texas independence.

But there were other significant battles that are not as well known both before and after the famous battle at the Alamo. Those include the Black Bean Incident, which is now remembered in a mural at Monument Hill State Historic Site in LaGrange.

Artist Pat Johnson was commissioned by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to paint a mural of that fascinating but not very well known piece of Texas history.

"Even in it's time, I think it was something to be, not exactly forgotten but de-emphasized because it was a series of defeats," Dale Martin of Texas Parks and Wildlife said.

The Black Bean mural is part of an interpretative exhibit at the Monument Hill State Historic Site in LaGrange. The focal point of the monument is a tomb containing the remains of Texas soldiers from both the Dawson Massacre and the Black Bean Incident.

The mural depicts the aftermath of a skirmish between Texan and Mexican forces at Ciudad Mier in 1842. More than 170 Texas soldiers who were part of what became known as the Mier Expedition were captured and, following a failed escape attempt, Mexican General Santa Anna ordered every 10th man shot. The prisoners drew from a pot containing 17 black beans and 159 white beans. Those drawing the black beans were executed by firing squad on March 25, 1843.

"It changed public opinion in Texas to where the vast majority of people discredited the old political war party, which wanted an independent and strong Texas, and changed their minds to want to join the United States," Martin said.

The new mural replaces a reproduction of a painting by 19th century artist Theodore Gentilz that is now 20 years old.

"[The original mural is made of a] kind of a laminated paper, actually. You can see over the years how this has started to peel," Martin said.

So Johnson was hired to create a mural that would last and be historically accurate. She...
spent six months researching every aspect of the Black Bean Incident from the uniforms, hats, rifles and even the style of drumming.

"I hadn't even thought about the fact of how he was holding the sticks, and as soon as you get a musician in on it, they'll look at it and go, 'No, that's not correct.' I talked to a couple of historians, music historians. I got a book that's been very helpful," Johnson said.

The mural was unveiled at a ceremony that honored not only the men who died, but also the artist who, 150-years later, set out to accurately portray the events of the day.

"It drives home the story of just how bad the Black Bean Incident really was, I think. And it's kind of a unique piece of art. Really serves its purpose here," Martin said.

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One point long debated is whether or not the members of the Mier Expedition were acting on their own as renegades or with the blessing of General Somervell upon turning back his original expedition.

Read about the Somervell Expedition and one survivor's statement regarding the legitimacy of the Mier Expedition.

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Events leading up to the Black Bean Incident (or Episode)

From the Handbook of Texas Online:

April 21, 1836 -- Texans under the command of Sam Houston defeat Santa Anna and his army in the Battle of San Jacinto. After signing a treaty with the Texans, Santa Anna is later allowed to return to Mexico.

October 1841 -- Santa Anna reemerges as provisional president of Mexico.

January 1842 -- General Arista announces his intention to invade Texas.

March 1842 -- General Vasquez seizes San Antonio but subsequently retreats.

July 7, 1842 -- Texas soldiers gathered at Lipantitlan turn back a surprise attack by Mexican troops under Colonels Canales and Montero. The Texas congress subsequently passes a "War Bill" but President Sam Houston vetoes it due to the fact that it appropriates no funds for a military campaign.

September 11, 1842 -- Mexican soldiers led by General Woll, under orders from Santa Anna, retakes San Antonio.

September 18, 1842 -- Woll's men attack Texans under Col. Caldwell at Salado Creek then withdraw to San Antonio and subsequently evacuate for the Rio Grande.

November 1842 -- General Somervell, sent by President Houston, takes command of individuals and companies who had rushed to San Antonio demanding retaliation against Mexico. The Somervell Expedition, more than 750 strong, later seizes Laredo. Subsequently, 187 men, disgusted by plundering by Texas soldiers, abandon the effort and return home.

December 1842 -- Somervell's Expedition seizes Guerro. Unable
to secure adequate supplies, General Somervell ends the campaign and orders his men home. A large contingent of 309 men, refusing to return home, breaks off under the command of Col. Fisher and crosses the Rio Grande opposite Mier.

December 26, 1842 -- The Texans surrender to Mexican troops who rushed in cutting off supplies the Texans had demanded from Mier.

February 11, 1843 -- On their march to Mexico City, the prisoners escape their guards but 176 of them are recaptured.

March 25, 1843 -- Prisoners are required to draw beans (17 black beans among 159 white beans) to fulfill the order than ever 10th man be executed.