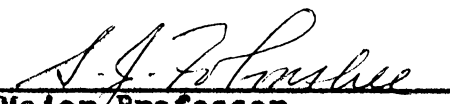


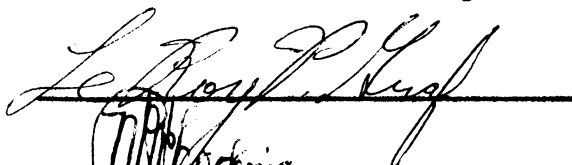
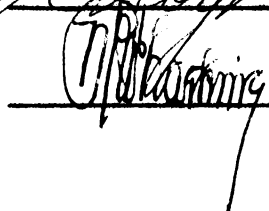
August 10, 1955

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Anna Grace Catron entitled "The Public Career of David Crockett." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.


Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

THE PUBLIC CAREER OF DAVID CROCKETT

A THESIS

Submitted to
The Graduate Council
of
The University of Tennessee
in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

by

Anna Grace Catron

August 1955

PREFACE

There are two David Crocketts--the mythical hero and the living man. Young readers devour with thrill and excitement the legendary lore of Davy's feats as Indian fighter, bear killer, and expert rifleman. To them he is something of a superman. Mature readers, historians, and others read biographies and other accounts pertaining to the real David Crockett. Since it is difficult to place him in history and to appraise his public life, to them he becomes a controversial person.

The legendary Davy Crockett weighed two hundred pounds at birth, was rocked in a cradle made of a snapping turtle shell, and brought up on such "delicate baby foods" as wild buffalo's milk, mixed with boiled corncobs and tobacco leaves. He grew up into half-horse and half-alligator, so tall that he had to be whittled down to man size with an ax and adze by his Uncle Rearious before he could go hunting in the forests around his home. He could wade the Mississippi, ride a streak of lightning, hug a bear too close for comfort, whip his weight in wildcats, grin a coon out of a tree, and clip a leaf off the twig with his rifle. His companions were a pet bear, Death Hug, a buffalo which he called Mississipp, and his hunting dogs, Whirlwind, Tiger, Deathmaul, and Thunderbolt.¹

¹Irwin Shapiro, Yankee Thunder: Legendary Life of Davy Crockett (Julian Messner, Inc., New York, [c 1944]).

Many writers, drawing largely from Crockett's Autobiography, have produced works designed to capture the imagination of the juvenile reader. As a result a number of popular stories have been written about David Crockett. But on the other hand, writers have neglected to provide pertinent material for the adult reader, with the result that sources for an objective study of the subject are relatively inadequate. Although the Autobiography, first published in 1834, is woven around indisputable facts of Crockett's life and gives a fairly accurate account of his life story, some critics have questioned its authorship. A professor at the University of Georgia wrote an article which summarizes the following evidence supporting the claim that Augustin[e] Smith Clayton, a judge of Georgia, wrote the books that have been published with the name of David Crockett as author. He states that Crockett and Clayton were contemporaries and political colleagues in Congress during the early 1830's. In the Autobiography Crockett refers to Clayton, who substituted for him at a public meeting when he was touring the North and East, as a fluent speaker. Possibly this is a case of a man being able to boast of his own ability as a speaker. The article also mentions that Clayton's son, William Wirt Clayton, had said in a letter that his father had written for Colonel Crockett in his lifetime a book about the Colonel's life. Concerning a biography of Martin Van Buren, which Crockett is supposed to have written, the Georgia writer

states that much of it is devoted to the finer points of Georgia politics, for which Judge Clayton's vocabulary would have been adequate, but not Crockett's.²

The writer lives near Crockett Ridge, northwest of Morristown, in the section of East Tennessee where Crockett spent his early life. She began her research on the subject in 1952. In this brief biography an attempt has been made to give the mature reader an authentic and unbiased presentation of David Crockett--frontiersman, soldier, legislator, and finally a defender of the Alamo.

The writer wishes to express her sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Stanley J. Folmsbee who guided the research, gave many valuable suggestions, and devoted much time to helping the writer to improve the study. She is also grateful to Dr. LeRoy P. Graf and Dr. Ralph W. Haskins who read the manuscript and gave many useful criticisms. The writer also wishes to thank the members of the library staff for their courteous and valuable assistance in helping her to procure needed materials.

A. G. C.

²J. D. Wade, "The Authorship of David Crockett's 'Autobiography,'" The Georgia Historical Quarterly, VI (September, 1922), 265-268. William Wirt Clayton's letter was published in Stephen F. Miller, Bench and Bar of Georgia, I, 185. Ibid., 265-266.

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CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE

When the first census of the United States was taken as authorized by the Constitution, it contained the name of David Crockett, born on the Nolichucky River near the present Limestone, Tennessee, on August 17, 1786, only seventeen years after the first settlement was made on the Watauga River in what is now the state of Tennessee.¹

His early ancestors lived in France, but persecuted for being Huguenots, they escaped along with other Protestants to England, Ireland, or America in the last years of the seventeenth century. Their French name was de Crocketaigne and the de Crocketaignes were among those who found refuge in Ulster, Ireland. It was from Ireland that the sons and two daughters of the Sieur de Crocketaigne sailed to America. In the New World the de Crocketaignes abbreviated their name by dropping the last syllable and omitting the "de."²

¹Austin P. Foster, "David Crockett," Tennessee Historical Magazine, IX (October, 1925), 166. For information concerning a D.A.R. marker erected on the site of his birthplace between Greeneville and Jonesboro, see Louise Wilson Reynolds, "The Pioneer Crockett Family of Tennessee," Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine, LV (April, 1921), 187. At the time that this study is being written, the Greeneville Chamber of Commerce, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Limestone Ruritan Club are completing plans to restore the cabin in which it is believed David Crockett was born. Knoxville Journal, June 13, 1955.

²Mrs. A. A. Campbell, "David Crockett, The Go-Ahead Man," Confederate Veteran, XXVIII (March, 1920), 104.

The Crocketts had migrated from Ireland to this country in the early eighteenth century, but, because they were of a roving disposition, in less than a half-century they had lived in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia; and finally they had settled in North Carolina. The records of Lincoln County, North Carolina, list land transactions made by grandfather David as early as 1771 and similar transactions made by his oldest son William from 1771 to 1794.³

After the boundary had been established between North Carolina and Virginia, the settlers of Watauga learned that they were not under the jurisdiction of Virginia. For a time they governed themselves, but in May, 1776, they asked that the settlements across the mountains be annexed to North Carolina.⁴ Among the signers of the Watauga petition to North Carolina in 1776 were grandfather David Crockett and his oldest son William.⁵

When the Chickamaugas made a raid on Carter's Valley in 1777, David's grandfather Crockett was killed in the family cabin, located on Crockett Creek, where the city of Rogersville

³James Atkins Shackford, "David Crockett and North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, XXVIII (July, 1951), 299.

⁴Reynolds, loc. cit., 187.

⁵W. L. Saunders, Colonial Records of North Carolina, 10 vols. (Josephus Daniels, Printer to the State, Raleigh, 1890), X, 711.

now stands. Most of the other settlers of the valley had fled, but the Crocketts had remained.⁶

David Crockett was the fifth son⁷ of John Crockett, who is said to have been in Pennsylvania at the time of the Carter's Valley Massacre,⁸ and Rebecca Hawkins Crockett. His father was born in Ireland or in passage across the Atlantic Ocean from Ireland to this country, but his mother was born in America in the state of Maryland.⁹

Rebecca Hawkins was a sister of Jane Hawkins, who married Colonel Richard Campbell, and also a sister of Sarah Hawkins, the first wife of General John Sevier.¹⁰ The Hawkins sisters were genuinely proud of their ancestors, who had held important places in the history of both France and Scotland.¹¹

Not only did David have a right to be proud of the heritage bequeathed to him by his mother, Rebecca Hawkins Crockett,

⁶Samuel Cole Williams, Tennessee During the Revolutionary War (The Tennessee Historical Commission, Nashville, 1944), 62.

⁷David Crockett, The Autobiography (Charles Scribner's Sons, Chicago, [c 1923]), 21.

⁸Reynolds, loc. cit., 187.

⁹William J. Ghent, "David Crockett," Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., Dictionary of American Biography, 21 vols. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1928-1944), IV, 555.

¹⁰Janie Preston Collup French and Zella Armstrong, Notable Southern Families: The Crockett Family and Connecting Lines (The King Printing Company, Bristol, Tennessee [c 1928]), 329. This is Volume V in an open series of Notable Southern Families.

¹¹Amelia Williams, "A Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and of the Personnel of Its Defenders," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVII (October, 1933), 104.

but he could also feel equally honored by the patriotism and military passion of his father, John Crockett, who served his country with valor during the Revolutionary War at the battle of King's Mountain under Colonel Isaac Shelby.¹² After the war a new county was made from Washington County and named for General Nathanael Greene of Revolutionary War fame. This was the county in which John Crockett was then living and in which he afterwards held at various times the offices of magistrate, constable, and road commissioner.¹³

With this ancestral background of Huguenot virtues and Irish hardiness, the primitive environment of the Western frontier provided a perfect and natural setting for the birthplace of one who was equipped by nature to become a famous hunter, an Indian fighter, and a typical frontiersman always pushing farther into the West as civilization caught up with him.¹⁴ As a lad of the frontier he had no opportunity to get

¹² *Reynolds*, loc. cit., 329.

¹³ Reynolds, loc. cit., 188. At the time of David Crockett's birth, the East Tennessee country was engaged in a revolt against North Carolina, attempting to establish a separate state of Franklin under the leadership of John Sevier. John Crockett seems to have been identified with the Franklinites. Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin (Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tennessee, 1924), 273. Therefore, there is some point to the claim advanced recently by Tennesseans that David was born in the State of Franklin. Since that state later collapsed, however, and North Carolina's authority was confirmed, it is technically true that he was born in North Carolina.

¹⁴ Fremont P. Wirth, The Development of America (American Book Company, Atlanta [c 1941]), 303-304.

any formal education, but roaming through the wilderness, canebrakes, thickets, and grape jungles, he had access to unlimited resources as a student of nature with the Indians as tutors.¹⁵

David never grew tired of his primitive surroundings for John Crockett moved often and to points distant. When David was a small boy, his parents settled about ten miles above Greeneville, Tennessee. While they were living here, an incident happened which lingered in David's young and impressionable mind. His uncle, Joseph Hawkins, while hunting for deer, was deceived by the twitching of some leaves and mistaking him for a deer shot a neighbor who was gathering grapes in a thicket of brushes. The neighbor recovered and the memory of the accident was less agonizing to David than it might have been.¹⁶

When David was about seven or eight years old, the Crocketts made another move, this time to the mouth of Cove Creek. Here David's father and a partner by the name of Thomas Galbreath started to build a mill. But before the mill was completed, a storm raised the creek to flood stage and the mill was washed away. This unfortunate incident put the

¹⁵"David Crockett," Richards Topical Encyclopedia, edited by Ernest Hunter Wright and Mary Heritage Wright, 15 vols. (The Richards Company, Inc., New York [c 1951]), XIV, 567.

¹⁶Crockett, op. cit., 23.

Crocketts on the road again. This time they settled in the part of North Carolina which is now Jefferson County, Tennessee, and here David's father opened a small tavern to serve teamsters who traveled from Abingdon to Knoxville.¹⁷ In 1870 this part of Jefferson County was joined with portions of Grainger and Hawkins Counties to form the present Hamblen County.¹⁸

Living in a tavern, which was visited by western immigrants, was a new experience for Davy, who had always lived in a backwoods cabin in a solitary and isolated atmosphere with little outside contact. In his new home, although he was becoming acquainted with hard work as well as hard times, he was also becoming acquainted with people. These teamsters, who stopped at his father's tavern, were rough, unpolished men; but their stories were interesting to young Crockett, whose knowledge of the outside world was necessarily very limited.¹⁹ The exact location of the tavern was about a mile east of the Morris settlement, which was the beginning of the present city of Morristown, Tennessee. During the Civil War it was used

¹⁷Ibid., 24. Andrew Jackson stopped at Crockett's tavern en route to Jonesboro. Maxine Mathews, "Old Inns of East Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, No. 2 (1930), 31.

¹⁸Cora Davis Brooks, Tennessee - Hamblen County - History of Morristown, 1787-1936: Transcriptions of the County Archives of Tennessee, No. 32. Hamblen County (The Historical Records Survey, Nashville, July 18, 1940), 38.

¹⁹William C. Sprague, Davy Crockett (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1925), 7.

as a smallpox hospital, and therefore burned after the war to destroy infection.²⁰

While living in the present Hamblen County, most of which was then covered by forests, David as a young hunter doubtless spent many hours of the day searching for wild animals. For this reason a mountain northwest of Morristown today bears the name of Crockett Ridge.²¹

This was David Crockett's home until he was about twelve years of age when he left home to earn money to help his father, who was usually in hard financial circumstances. At this time a Dutch teamster, Jacob Siler, stopped at the Crockett tavern en route to Rockville, Virginia. Since the drover was taking a herd of cattle a distance of four hundred miles across mountains and could well use a small boy as a helper, he made John Crockett an offer for the services of his son David, whose good nature and industry had attracted the teamster. Although it meant a hard and perilous trip and furthermore David's

²⁰Brooks, op. cit., 10. A few years ago the Robert McFarland Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution met on the site of the Crockett home and placed a marker near the old Crockett well. Ibid. In the summer of 1949 a resident in the Morningside section of Morristown, while excavating for a business project, uncovered the historic Crockett well, which was lined with hand-hewn cedar. It may be seen today at the shed of the Stapleton and Bryant Tobacco Warehouse at the corner of Park and Trade Street only a few feet from the old Russellville Pike. Morristown Daily Gazette and Mail, July 21, 1949.

²¹Brooks, op. cit., 10.

daily wages would probably not exceed twenty-five cents, John and Rebecca Crockett willingly hired out David, because the family needed money.²²

When they reached their destination, only a short distance from what is now the Natural Bridge, David was surprised and happy to be given a bonus of five or six dollars by his employer, who had found his young employee to be a responsible and trustworthy helper. David, typical of youth, was so pleased with the extra money, that he agreed to the teamster's request that he stay with him rather than go back home.

However, the enthusiasm aroused by the extra cash soon wore off; David grew homesick and determined to escape from his employer. He was quick to see his chance to escape when one day three teamsters came along who were bound for Knoxville and who would be passing near the Crockett tavern. These teamsters made arrangements for David to meet them the next morning at a point seven miles from his employer's home; this David did by rising early, quietly slipping out of his master's house, and trudging through a heavy snow which had fallen during the night.

So anxious was the boy to reach home and so impatient had he become with the slow horses, that he started out alone ahead of the teamsters and horses when he was still two hundred

²²Sprague, op. cit., 9.

miles or more away from home. After traveling alone for several days, he reached the Roanoke River where luckily he met up with a jovial drover, who was returning to his home over the mountains, wanted a companion, and permitted David to ride the horse that he was leading. Within fifteen miles of the Crockett tavern the drover took another road and David lost no time covering the remainder of the journey home alone and on foot.²³

Although David was very happy to be at home again, unfortunate circumstances soon made a prodigal of him. His father started him to school, but becoming a truant after four days, he left home to avoid being punished by his father and the schoolmaster, Benjamin Kitchen.

This time David hired out to a neighbor teamster who had also employed his elder brother and who was starting to Virginia with a drove of cattle. At Front Royal his employer sold his cattle to another drover, and David started back home with a brother of the original owner.

Since they had only one horse, David was forced to walk while his companion rode. He soon grew tired of this and hired out to another wagoner whom he happened to meet on the way. Whereupon David turned around in the road, and in the company of his new employer was again moving away from

²³Ibid., 10-13.

home when he met his brother who was returning to Tennessee with the remainder of the original company. David's brother advised him to return home with him, but memories of his truancy from school and the forthcoming punishment induced him to refuse.²⁴

For the next several months young Crockett's life was one of aimless direction. After parting at Gerardstown with his latest employer, who went on to Alexandria to get a return load, David hired out to a farmer by the name of John Gray for twenty-five cents a day. By frugality he accumulated enough from his meager wages as a farm employee to buy a good suit of clothes, for he hoped to go to Baltimore with the wagoner when he returned from Alexandria. This he did the following spring with much enthusiasm and great anticipation of what the city of Baltimore and its people would be like.

When David and the wagoner had almost reached their destination, their horses became frightened, ran away, and damaged their wagon so badly that they had to stop at a shop in Baltimore to have it repaired.

According to Crockett's Autobiography, this incident came near to being a turning-point in David's life. While delaying in the city two or three days for their wagon to be repaired, David decided to go down to the wharf. Here he became

²⁴Edward S. Ellis, The Life of Colonel David Crockett (Porter & Coates, Philadelphia [c 1883]), 12-13; Crockett, op. cit., 28.

interested in the big ships and the sailors' stories. So keen was his interest that he was on the verge of boarding one of the vessels and taking a voyage to London. However, when he informed his employer of his intentions, the latter stoutly refused to allow him to go, kept his money and his clothes, forced him to return homeward with him, and began to treat him very cruelly.²⁵

Exasperated from harsh treatment, David stealthily broke away from his employer and took to the road again wholly on his own. For the next three years in a slow and arduous homeward journey, young Crockett worked at various places and at different occupations, but always for very low wages. At one point on the return journey he narrowly missed being drowned in crossing Little River, which high winds had made violent and dangerous. Even veteran boatmen refused to take him across the angry river, but David was so anxious and determined to reach home that he procured a canoe in which he finally succeeded in getting across the river. After warming his half-frozen body at a house close by, he went on to Sullivan County where he met his brother with whom he had started from home many months previously.

According to Crockett's Autobiography, after remaining with his brother for a few weeks, David set out on the last

²⁵Crockett, op. cit., 31-32.

lap of the journey to his father's tavern. Luckily, when he reached home late one evening, several teamsters had stopped at the Crockett tavern for the night and David, now almost fifteen years of age, was able to slip in unnoticed and take his place at the family table before being recognized by his eldest sister. His unexpected return brought so much joy and happiness to the once anxious but now excited family that David was overcome with humility and regret for his long absence from home.²⁶

Such vivid experiences with teamsters, farmers, and sailors, together with the fact that David was now fifteen years old, were ample reasons to give him an exceptional measure of maturity as shown by the manner in which he responded to his improvident father's need for financial aid. Soon after his return home John Crockett hired him out to a neighbor, to whom the elder Crockett owed a note of thirty-six dollars, with the promise that any money David might earn thereafter would be his own. Because of his sincere love for his family, David worked for this creditor neighbor for six months and thus paid off the note. But, since this neighbor kept a disreputable place, David refused to make a new contract with him.

Having discharged this financial obligation of his father's, David now engaged his services to a Quaker, John

²⁶Ibid., 33-36.

Kennedy, who lived fifteen miles from the Crockett home. But he had worked only a short time when his second employer presented him with a note for forty dollars which John Crockett owed him. Therefore, David worked a second six months to cancel another note for his father.²⁷ The average boy of David's age and training, recalling his promised freedom, would have felt no obligation to accept any responsibility for the second note held against his father, but David realized that his father's honor was at stake and therefore felt that it was his filial duty to help him in this embarrassing financial situation.²⁸

After paying off the note which his father owed the Quaker, David continued to work for the latter to buy himself some clothes which he needed very much. This introduced David to a new experience, the beginning of another milestone in his life. He had been working the second time as an employee of the Quaker only two months when Kennedy's niece, a young Quakeress from North Carolina, came to visit in the Kennedy home. David admired this young woman very much, but soon learned regretfully that she was engaged to her cousin, a son of the Mr. Kennedy for whom young Crockett was working.

David felt that his lack of education, for he had been to school only four days, was perhaps responsible for his not

²⁷Ellis, op. cit., 17.

²⁸Sprague, op. cit., 24.

being able to attract the interest of this young woman. So, determined to get some education, he arranged to go to a school taught in the neighborhood by a married son of his employer. He agreed to work for the schoolmaster two days a week for his board and schooling so that he might attend school four days a week. David proceeded with his education on these terms for six months and during this time he learned to read in a primer, to write his name, and to do some very elementary arithmetic.²⁹

With six months of schooling and being eighteen years of age, David decided that he needed to marry and establish a home. So he lost no time in falling in love a second time. The records of Jefferson County show that on October 21, 1805, he obtained the license to marry Margaret Elder,³⁰ but she broke the engagement.³¹

Disappointed and deceived by Margaret Elder, but invested with youth, vigor, the call of outdoor life, and a gay spirit, he was able to cast off a gloomy countenance and mood

²⁹Crockett, op. cit., 38-39.

³⁰Marriage License and Bond Book, 1792-1840, Jefferson County (Jefferson County Courthouse, Dandridge), 53.

³¹Foster, loc. cit., 169. The returned license hangs in a frame on the walls of the Clerk's office at Dandridge, Tennessee.

and soon fell in love with a beautiful Irish girl, whom he eventually married.³² Although Crockett in his autobiography declined to reveal the names of the three girls mentioned in his experiences of courtship, the Irish girl whom he married in 1806 was Polly Finlay.³³

Not only did David have ancestors of whom he might have been justly proud, but Polly could also have boasted of illustrious ancestry, even descent from royal blood. Her father, William Finley, who accompanied Daniel Boone to the West, was a direct descendant of Macbeth, son of the Earl of Moray, King of Scotland.³⁴

The young couple's earthly possessions were few, even for a frontiersman's home. David owned a horse and his bride's dowry was two cows and two calves. With meager capital stock, David rented a small farm near the home of his father-in-law. His latest employer, the Quaker, helped the young couple furnish their cabin with the bare necessities by

³²Marcus J. Wright, "Colonel David Crockett of Tennessee," Publications of the Southern History Association, XI (January, 1897), 55.

³³Davy Crockett's marriage is on record in Jefferson County, Tennessee, as follows: "Davy Crockett, with Thomas Dogett, security, binds himself in a bond of twelve hundred and fifty dollars to Gov. John Sevier, Aug. 1, 1806, to marry Polly Finlay." See Ellis, op. cit., 20 n. Ellis is in error when he states that it is on record in Weakley County.

³⁴Amelia Williams, loc. cit., 106. Note the variation in the spelling of the last name.

presenting David an order of fifteen dollars for purchases at a local store.

Polly had a wheel and was an excellent weaver; and the young Crocketts, despite their meager material equipment, with industry and courage worked hard for a few years on rented ground, but were not able to accumulate much fortune.³⁵ They now had two sons--John Wesley, born on July 10, 1807, and William, born in 1809.³⁶

Since Crockett's earnings as a farm tenant were too limited to support his increased family, he decided to pull up stakes and seek fertile land farther west beyond the Cumberland Mountains. With this resolve and an instinct for unsettled country, David and Polly started with their small sons on a trek to the West. They were accompanied by her father, who went along to see them safely through a wilderness of wild beasts and Indians and to assist them in getting settled in a new home. Finally after a long and tiresome journey, the courageous little company reached a beautiful spot near the Alabama line where Mulberry Creek flows into the Elk River in what is now Lincoln County, Tennessee. Here David's father-in-law helped him build a cabin and then returned home.³⁷

³⁵Crockett, op. cit., 49.

³⁶French and Armstrong, op. cit., 341.

³⁷Sprague, op. cit., 34-35. An atlas shows that Rothrock is in error in stating that it was in the present Moore County. Mary U. Rothrock, "David Crockett, the Legend and the Man," The Tennessee Teacher, XXII (March, 1955), 10.

The forests surrounding the Crockett's new frontier home were full of deer and smaller game, much to the liking of David, who was by nature an ardent hunter. But even plenty of wild game could not long entice David Crockett, and in two years time his restless nature required another move. This time he moved his family to Franklin County, Tennessee, and settled on Bean Creek about ten miles below the present town of Winchester. This was Crockett's home until after the War of 1812.³⁸

To this home Crockett gave the name "Kentuck" and on the farm he hunted as well as farmed as the initials of David Crockett and James Hatchett, a frequent hunter companion, carved on numerous trees indicate.³⁹ Crockett's cabin home was noted for its hospitality to strangers as well as friends. No needy guest was turned away without being generously cared for in true frontier style. The friendship and neighborly spirit of the Crocketts was often an inspiration to homesick and discouraged newcomers to the wilderness of the West.⁴⁰

³⁸Crockett, op. cit., 50-51.

³⁹Mrs. Jessie Arn Henderson, "Unmarked Historic Spots of Franklin County," Tennessee Historical Magazine, III, Series 2 (January, 1935), 117. "Kentuck" is owned now by someone evidently interested in the life and history of David Crockett, for in the center of a cultivated field may be seen a fenced-off portion, which encloses the Crockett well, which supplied water for the Crockett home, located on a knoll a short distance away. Ibid.

⁴⁰Robert H. White, Tennessee, Its Growth and Progress (Robert H. White, Publisher, Nashville, Tennessee, 1947), 60.

CHAPTER II

A SCOUT IN THE CREEK WAR

Crockett had been living near Winchester in Franklin County about two years¹ when a faction of Creek Indians under the leadership of Chief Weatherford (Red Eagle) attacked Fort Mims in the vicinity of Mobile, Alabama, on August 30, 1813.²

When Crockett heard the news of the massacre at Fort Mims, his anger was aroused and his patriotic urge to respond to his country's call had been stimulated by a meeting of the militia to recruit volunteers. Convincing his wife that they were in danger of being attacked in their own houses by hostile Indians, he gained her unwilling consent that he report to the authorities at Winchester, where the mobilization was to take place.³

At Winchester a lawyer by the name of Francis Jones, later a Congressman from Tennessee, was organizing a company of volunteers of which Jones was later elected captain.

¹Crockett, op. cit., 50-51.

²John Trotwood Moore and Austin P. Foster, Tennessee, The Volunteer State, 1769-1923, 4 vols. (The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, Nashville, 1923), I, 339-340. This so-called fort was a fortified stockade of Samuel Mims on Lake Tensaw. John Spencer Bassett, The Life of Andrew Jackson, 2 vols. (Doubleday, Page, and Company, New York, 1911), I, 91.

³Crockett, op. cit., 51-52.

Crockett, according to his Autobiography, was the second or third man to volunteer. The term of service was only sixty days, since this seemed to be the maximum time needed to check the hostilities of the Creeks. Crockett then returned home and with his wife's help equipped himself for camp and rode off to join his company, in which he served as a private in the 2nd Regiment of Mounted Gunmen commanded by Colonel Newton Cannon.⁴

The news of the tragedy at Fort Mims reached Nashville through letters from George S. Gaines to General Andrew Jackson and Governor Willie Blount. Here, as at Winchester and elsewhere, excitement, indignation, patriotism, and a determination to avenge this deed of treachery were much in evidence.⁵ Immediately Governor Blount called back into service the Tennessee volunteers, recently dismissed after their return from Natchez.⁶ Soon after the beginning of hostilities between the United States and Great Britain in the War of 1812 and several months before the Fort Mims massacre, more than

⁴Ibid., 52. Captain Jones is identified in Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D. C. For one term of service extending from September 24, 1813, to December 29, 1813, Crockett received \$65.59. This included rations for his horse at 40 cents a day. Ibid.

⁵Albert James Pickett, History of Alabama (Robert C. Randolph, Sheffield, Alabama, 1896), 552.

⁶Bassett, Jackson, I, 92.

2000 West Tennessee militia under Andrew Jackson marched to Natchez by an executive order of President Madison. However, Congress refused to approve the President's proposed expedition against Spanish Florida and Jackson's troops were recalled to Nashville.⁷

The Legislature convened in a special session in late September⁸ and passed an act which authorized the governor to call for 3500 volunteers to be organized as infantry, riflemen, cavalry, or artillery in proportions that Governor Blount and General Jackson considered expedient for the public welfare.⁹

Major-general Andrew Jackson and Colonel John Coffee, who had commanded respectively the infantry and cavalry divisions of the futile Natchez expedition, were again in command of the Tennessee campaign to drive the Creeks out of the Alabama country. Coffee and his mounted riflemen had accepted the commission to occupy Huntsville.¹⁰ Accordingly, the rendezvous was near Huntsville on October 4, 1813; here Colonel Coffee and his Tennessee regiment of mounted riflemen waited

⁷ John Spencer Bassett, A Short History of the United States, 1492-1920 (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1925), 332.

⁸ Augustus C. Buell, History of Andrew Jackson, 2 vols. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1904), I, 295.

⁹ Edward Scott, Laws of the State of Tennessee, 2 vols. (Heiskell & Brown, Knoxville, 1821), II, 103-104.

¹⁰ Buell, op. cit., 295.

ten days for the arrival of Jackson and his forces.¹¹

While Coffee's forces remained at Camp Batey near Huntsville, waiting for the arrival of other volunteers and making preparations to invade the Creek territory, Major John H. Gibson came to request some trustworthy volunteers to accompany him across the Tennessee River for the purpose of scouting in the Creek territory. Gibson was referred to Captain Jones, who selected Crockett, because he was good with the rifle, and gave Crockett the privilege of selecting a scouting companion. Crockett chose George Russell, and early the next morning Major Gibson set out with twelve mounted scouts from Coffee's camp.¹²

Since historians of the Creek war seldom mention David Crockett in their accounts of the battles, the writer is, of necessity, relying on Crockett's Autobiography for the following account of Crockett as a scout in Major Gibson's expedition. Having crossed the Tennessee River at Ditto's Landing, they penetrated into the Creek territory about seven miles before camping for the night. Here John Haynes, a well-known Indian trader, and familiar with the Creek country, agreed to join them as a guide.

¹¹John H. DeWitt, ed., "Letters of General John Coffee to His Wife, 1813-1815," Tennessee Historical Magazine, II (December, 1906), 274.

¹²Crockett, op. cit., 52-53. Major Gibson is identified in John Spencer Basset, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, 6 vols. and index (Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D. C., 1926-1933), 248.

The next morning the scouts separated with Major Gibson in charge of one group and Crockett in charge of the other. It was understood that Gibson was to stop at the house of a friendly Cherokee by the name of Dick Brown and Crockett was to go to the house of Dick's father. After obtaining all possible information, Gibson and Crockett, as pre-arranged, were to meet at the junction of two roads about fifteen miles distant. When Crockett and his scouts reported to the appointed place that night, Major Gibson had not returned.

The next day Crockett, although concerned about the possible fate of Gibson and his scouts, pushed ahead several miles with his scouting mates to the house of a white man by the name of Radcliff, who had married a Creek woman and lived just inside the boundary of the Creek territory. Radcliff informed Crockett that ten painted warriors had stopped at his house that morning. After dinner Crockett and his men hurried off to the camp of some friendly Creeks about eight miles away from whom they learned that the "Red Sticks," as the hostile faction of the Creek warriors was called, were really on the warpath.¹³

Late that night Crockett was informed by an Indian runner that the "Red Sticks" had been crossing the Coosa River

¹³Crockett, op. cit., 54-55. The Creeks' emblem was a stick painted red, the color worn by the soldiers of Great Britain. Buell, op. cit., 293.

all day at Ten Islands and were moving forward to give General Jackson battle. Crockett felt that he should get this information to Colonel Coffee and the main army at Camp Batey, more than sixty miles distant, as quickly as possible. But when he succeeded in getting back to Coffee's camp with this information, which seemed very important to Crockett, it was ignored by Coffee.¹⁴

Major Gibson, who had been reported killed, not officially, but by men whose word was considered reliable,¹⁵ returned the next day and made the same report. Colonel Coffee believed Gibson and became very much alarmed. For immediate protection Coffee ordered that extensive breastworks be thrown up and then sent a message to General Jackson at Fayetteville about the situation at Ten Islands, requesting that he and his troops join him as soon as possible. By a forced march Jackson and his men arrived the next day.¹⁶

At Ten Islands, Jackson received word that there was a large camp of Indians at Tallushatchee on the south side of the Coosa River about thirteen miles distant.¹⁷ Before opening

¹⁴Crockett, op. cit., 56-57.

¹⁵Bassett, Correspondence, I, 332.

¹⁶Crockett, op. cit., 57. Crockett concluded that his report was not believed because he was not an officer, just a soldier. Ibid.

¹⁷Moore and Foster, op. cit., 346.

a campaign to disperse these Indians, Jackson reorganized his army. The mounted riflemen to which Crockett belonged, and which had formerly been attached to Coffee's volunteer cavalry, was now organized into a distinct regiment under the command of Colonel Newton Cannon. Colonel John Coffee was promoted to a brigadier-general.¹⁸

According to Crockett in his Autobiography, General Coffee permitted him to hunt as they marched toward Tallushatchee, for their supplies were very meager, consisting chiefly of parched corn. At various time Crockett succeeded in bringing back to his company a supply of meat which was indeed a rarity.¹⁹

At daybreak on November 3, 1813, Coffee with a force of 1000 troops attacked the Red Sticks at Tallushatchee. No warrior escaped, eighty-four women and children were captured and taken as prisoners to Fort Strother, General Jackson's base of operations at Ten Islands.²⁰ Concerning this battle, Crockett remarked: "We shot them like dogs; and then set the house on fire, and burned it with the forty-six warriors in it."²¹

¹⁸Bassett, Correspondence, I, 338-339.

¹⁹Crockett, op. cit., 59.

²⁰Marquis James, The Life of Andrew Jackson (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York, [c 1938]), 159; Buell, op. cit., 303; Moore and Foster, op. cit., 346.

²¹Crockett, op. cit., 61.

Andrew Jackson in a letter to Governor Blount, November 4, 1813, called it retaliation for the butchery at Fort Mims.²²

One evening in early November, while the army was remaining at Fort Strother and subsisting on almost starvation rations, a Cherokee half-breed scout by the name of Ross came to the camp and informed General Jackson that Lashley's Station, a trading-post near Talladega occupied by friendly Creek Indians, was in danger of being attacked by one thousand Creeks under Weatherford. Jackson gave orders for the men to be ready to march on notice. Leaving three hundredmen at the fort to guard the sick and wounded, at one o'clock in the morning on November 8, Jackson's infantry and Coffee's mounted riflemen headed toward Talladega. Early the next morning they reached Weatherford's outpost two miles from the village.²³

According to Crockett's Autobiography, Major Russell and his scouts had gone ahead to open battle. When Jackson's forces drew near the fort, they divided in an effort to surround it. When Jackson's men came near the fort they could see that the top of it was lined with friendly Creeks who were trying to tell Russell by frantic gestures that he was leading his company directly into a trap of Creek warriors. When these Creek warriors fired on Russell's company, these

²²Bassett, Correspondence, I, 341.

²³Buell, op. cit., 306-307.

scouts quickly sprang from their horses and took refuge in the fort. At this point Crockett and the company to which he belonged fired on the approaching warriors and killed a great number of them. When the remainder tried to escape, they met the same resistance from Jackson's men on the other side of the fort; but finally they were able to escape through a line of drafted militia which in desperation had broken ranks.²⁴

For several weeks after the victory at Talladega, Jackson remained at Fort Strother and abandoned any immediate campaign against the Creeks. The threat of mutiny among his men, who were in need of provisions and who were furthermore determined to return home at the termination of their period of enlistment, was such that Jackson considered any offensive campaign at this time unwise.²⁵

Jackson was receiving petitions repeatedly from the militia officers requesting permission for the volunteers, whose enlistment had already expired, to return home for provisions for the next campaign into Creek territory. But Jackson, since he was expecting supplies from Fort Deposit, denied the request; and most of the volunteers decided to stay with the expectation of receiving provisions from Fort Deposit.²⁶

²⁴Crockett, op. cit., 63-64. After Jackson's victory at Talladega, the northern Hillabee clan sent delegates to him asking for peace. Jackson to John Cooke, November 18, 1813, Bassett, Correspondence, I, 345-346.

²⁵Ibid., I, 390 et seq.

²⁶Jackson to Governor Blount, November 14, 1813, ibid., I, 345-346.

However, Crockett in his Autobiography states that he and others began to prepare to return home in defiance of Jackson's decision. To prevent their return, Jackson covered with cannon and the guns of drafted men a bridge that Crockett and his group had to cross. Since the drafted men wanted to return home also, they made no concerted effort to guard the bridge. Furthermore, when they saw that Crockett and the other volunteers were ready to defy any attempt to block their crossing the bridge, they let them pass without firing a gun. Crockett remained at home a short time and, having procured a supply of clothing and provisions, rejoined the army.²⁷

Jackson's men were already on the march again in the direction of Tohopeka or Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River. Before dawn, January 22, 1814, the Creeks attacked Jackson's forces at Emuckfaw Creek about three miles from Tohopeka. But Jackson dispersed the Creeks, moved on, and that evening reached Enotochapko. Jackson would probably have lost the battle of Enotochapko had it not been for the bravery of Colonel William Carroll.²⁸ At a very trying moment

²⁷Crockett, op. cit., 64-66. Marquis James gives a different version of this mutiny. He states that when one brigade of the militia started home, General Jackson threw some volunteers across their path and they returned to quarters. Also, when one company of infantry started back toward Tennessee, the General threatened the deserters with volley and the mutineers formed their lines. James, op. cit., 162-163.

²⁸Ibid., 166-168.

Colonel Perkins of the right column and Colonel Stump of the left column in the rear guard deserted, followed by the greater part of Carroll's center column. But victory was realized through the outstanding bravery of Colonel Carroll and Russell's company of scouts²⁹ to which David Crockett belonged.³⁰

After this battle the troops returned to Fort Williams, from which Crockett went home on a furlough and did not rejoin the army until after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend or Tohopeka.³¹

Late in March, Jackson crossed the region between the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers and arrived at Tohopeka where the Tallapoosa makes a bend in the shape of a horseshoe. About 1200 warriors, assembled on this peninsula, were cut off from their only way of escape by strategy of Jackson and Coffee. After two hours of hard fighting, the Indians were utterly defeated and Jackson had scored another victory.³²

²⁹Jackson to Thomas Pinckney, January 29, 1814, Bassett, Correspondence, I, 451-452.

³⁰Crockett, op. cit., 66. Crockett mentioned the desertion of the two colonels, but declined to give their names. Ibid., 67.

³¹Ibid., 67-68. This fort was named in honor of Colonel John Williams of Knoxville, Tennessee, who was commander of the 39th regiment. Pickett, op. cit., 587. The victory at Enotchapko encouraged the people back home and made it easier to recruit the necessary troops sufficient to end the war. Judge Hugh L. White was so interested and moved with patriotism that he left the Supreme Court bench and traveled throughout East Tennessee urging new enlistments for the aid of General Jackson and the termination of the Creek War. Moore and Foster, op. cit., 353.

³²Moore and Foster, op. cit., 354-355.

After the battle at Horseshoe Bend (Tohopeka), the Creeks refused to engage in battle with Jackson's forces; several of their chiefs asked for terms of peace; and thus the Creek War was quickly drawing to a close.³³ Following the surrender of Weatherford and subsequent negotiations which lasted one month, the Treaty of Fort Jackson was signed on August 10, 1814.³⁴ The terms of the treaty provided for the cession of one-half of the Creek territory, forbade the Creeks to have any dealings with British or Spanish agents, guaranteed the United States the right of erecting military posts in their territory, and stipulated that we should have free use of their rivers.³⁵

Meanwhile Jackson, suspicious of the British and their Indian allies in Florida,³⁶ left Fort Jackson after negotiating the foregoing peace treaty, and asked Blount for a new group of Tennessee volunteers to drive the British from Pensacola.³⁷

When Crockett learned that an army was being raised by General Jackson for an expedition against the British in

³³Jackson to Blount, April 18, 1814, Bassett, Correspondence, I, 503.

³⁴James Parton, Life of Andrew Jackson, 3 vols. (Mason Brothers, New York, 1861), I, 532, 560. Text of Weatherford's surrender. Ibid., 532-533.

³⁵Moore and Foster, op. cit., 359-360.

³⁶Pickett, op. cit., 601.

³⁷Buell, op. cit., 340, 346.

Pensacola, he was determined to return to war although his wife entreated him to remain at home. According to Crockett, he again joined Major William Russell's scouts, crossed Muscle Shoals, passed through the land of the Choctaws and Chickasaws to Fort Stephens, and from there to the Cut-off, where the Tombigbee flows into the Alabama River.³⁸

The main army under General Coffee had left their horses at a place near the Cut-off in the care of keepers, because without supplies they could not take them on to Pensacola. Coffee and his men had marched ahead on foot. When they reached Montgomery, they rested a few days before continuing the march to Pensacola.³⁹

When Russell's company, including Crockett, reached the Cut-off, they also left their horses there in the care of keepers. They made the remaining distance of eighty miles to Pensacola on foot, reaching Jackson's army which was encamped on a hill overlooking the city, at noon on the second day. They arrived too late, however, to participate in the Battle of Pensacola, as this city had already been captured. Nevertheless, General Jackson welcomed the arrival of Russell and his scouts, since they would be valuable for future campaigns.⁴⁰

³⁸Crockett, op. cit., 69. Russell is identified in Coffee to Jackson, October 4, 1814, Bassett, Correspondence, II, 68.

³⁹Pickett, op. cit., 604.

⁴⁰Crockett, op. cit., 69-70.

The remainder of Crockett's service with Russell's company in the Creek War consisted in scouting for hostile Creeks who had not surrendered, and in foraging for food and provisions for the army. He scouted and hunted along the Escambia, Coosa, and Tallapoosa Rivers, and retraced points of the battleground in Alabama between Fort Williams and Fort Strother.⁴¹

On the way to Fort Strother, Crockett met some East Tennessee troops who were going to Mobile, Alabama. Crockett's youngest brother was in this group and he and David had a happy reunion. While the rest of the army went across the Coosa River to the fort, Crockett remained with the East Tennessee troops that night and joined his company at Fort Strother the following day.

Crockett remained at the fort a few days before returning home to his family. He had been at home only a short time when he received orders to scout for Indians on the Black Warrior and Cahawba Rivers. But Crockett, since he had remaining only thirty days to serve in the army, gave his month's pay to a young man who agreed to go in his place. This was the end of David Crockett's military experiences as a scout in the Creek War and he was happy to settle down to a peaceful life at his Franklin County home in Middle Tennessee.⁴²

⁴¹Ibid., 72 et seq.

⁴²Ibid., 81-82.

CHAPTER III

A LEGISLATOR IN THE TENNESSEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

After the Creek War Crockett remained at his home in Franklin County and followed the pursuits of farming and hunting for two years. However, the peace and contentment of this period was soon broken by the greatest sorrow of his life--the death of Polly, his faithful, understanding, and affectionate companion. But Crockett accepted this tragedy with Christian grace and bore it with submission and courage.¹

In a short time after Polly's death, Crockett, realizing that his three small children needed a mother's love and care, decided to remarry.² Among his neighbors was a widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Patton, who was the fourth child of Robert Patton and had married James Patton, her first cousin.³ James Patton was killed in the Creek War. After a short acquaintance and courtship, Mrs. Patton and Crockett were married.⁴

¹Crockett, op. cit., 84. Two miles south of Maxwell, Tennessee, tourists may visit the grave of Polly Crockett by following a gravel road that leads to the former David Crockett farm. Federal Writers' Project of the Works Projects Administration for the State of Tennessee, compilers, Tennessee: A Guide to the State (The Viking Press, New York, 1945), 485.

²Crockett, op. cit., 84.

³Shackford, loc. cit., 303.

⁴Crockett, op. cit., 85.

The following fall Crockett and three of his neighbors decided to explore the Creek country. They crossed the Tennessee River, passed through Jones' Valley, and camped at the present site of Tuscaloosa in Alabama. However, they did not like the Creek country and the next fall Crockett explored the territory which the government had purchased from the Chickasaws. He stopped at Shoal Creek, about eight miles from his home. Crockett liked the Shoal Creek community and decided to move his family there.⁵

Accordingly, in 1818 Crockett built a cabin at the head of Shoal Creek about two miles from Lawrenceburg,⁶ the county seat of Lawrence County, which had been created the previous year.⁷ During the time between the creation of the county and the establishment of a permanent government, an interim government served the purpose of maintaining law and order. Crockett was a magistrate of this temporary government and his judgments were summarily carried out by his constable.

When a permanent government was established in Lawrence County to replace the provisional one, Crockett felt that being a magistrate was a greater honor and likewise implied more

⁵ Ibid., 85-88.

⁶ Foster, loc. cit., 171.

⁷ Joseph H. Parks and Stanley J. Folmsbee, The Story of Tennessee (Harlow Publishing Corporation, Chattanooga, 1952), 418.

responsibility. Since, at this time, he could barely write his name, the duties of issuing written warrants, keeping books, and writing proceedings would have been very difficult except for the assistance of a more educated constable. However, according to his Autobiography, by persistent effort Crockett improved his handwriting and was able to issue legible warrants; and although he had never read any books on law, his judgments, based on justice, honesty, and common sense, were never appealed.⁸ While living in Lawrence County, Crockett was also a lieutenant-colonel of the militia, a town commissioner of Lawrenceburg, a court referee, and one of the first road commissioners for this backwoods country.⁹

While Crockett was serving as magistrate of this new and primitive settlement, Captain Clint Matthews, who was candidate for colonel of the militia of Lawrence County, approached Crockett and insisted that he become a candidate for first major in the same regiment. Crockett finally agreed to become a candidate for this office. Later, to his dismay, he learned that he had been deceived by Matthews, who was canvassing for his son for the office of first major against Crockett. Matthews'

⁸Crockett, op. cit., 89-90. Lawrence County has records bearing the signature of David Crockett as magistrate of that county. Foster, loc. cit., 171. For a copy of an execution, which Crockett issued while serving as magistrate of Lawrence County, see Ellis, op. cit., 59.

⁹Shackford, loc. cit., 301.

duplicity aroused Crockett's anger and resentment. Accordingly, he decided to run for colonel against Captain Matthews instead of running for major against Matthews' son.¹⁰ In the election both Captain Matthews and his son were decisively defeated, and Crockett was equally victorious. Being elected colonel of the militia gave him more popularity and prestige and soon he was asked to become a candidate for the Legislature, to represent Lawrence and Hickman Counties.

Crockett began electioneering in Hickman County. In making a campaign speech at a celebration following a competitive squirrel hunt on Duck River in which Crockett's team was victorious, he admitted that he had never read a newspaper in his life and was ignorant about matters of government. However, what Crockett lacked in knowledge, he seemed to be able to make up in his ability to appeal to prospective voters with humorous anecdotes and sometimes to influence them with a treat of liquor. Moving from place to place, but always employing the same political tactics, he finished the campaign with a decisive victory over his opponent. In a short time Crockett had advanced from colonel of the militia to a state legislator. Soon after the election Crockett met James K. Polk in Pulaski. Polk in the presence of a large crowd remarked to Crockett:

¹⁰Crockett, op. cit., 91. Captain Matthews is identified in V. F. Taylor, David Crockett (The Naylor Company, San Antonio, 1955), 44.

"Well, Colonel, I suppose we shall have a radical change of the judiciary at the next session of the Legislature."

Crockett's brief answer, "Very likely, sir," was given quickly and he moved on to another part of the crowd. Crockett admitted that he didn't know the meaning of the word judiciary and wished to avoid being questioned about it.¹¹

On September 17, 1821, the first session of the Fourteenth General Assembly convened at Murfreesboro. When the business of appointing committees was taken up, Crockett was named to serve on the Committee of Propositions and Grievances.¹²

The first and only resolution of importance submitted by Crockett at this session of the General Assembly was one on September 28 in regard to the work of some of the surveyors south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line. It had been reported to the General Assembly that, contrary to law, certain surveyors had permitted more than one entry to be

¹¹Crockett, op. cit., 92-95. Through Felix Grundy's influence James K. Polk had been elected clerk of the state senate in 1819 and continued to serve in this position until he was elected to the Legislature in 1823. Charles G. Sellers, Jr., "James K. Polk's Political Apprenticeship," East Tennessee Historical Society, Publications, No. 25 (1953), 39.

¹²Tennessee House Journal, 1821, pp. 3-4, 34. Others on this committee were Isaac Taylor, Isaac Allen, John Billingsly and Noah Jarnagin. Ibid., 34. The first petition presented by Crockett as a Tennessee legislator was on September 20, 1821, in the form of a request from citizens of Lawrence County for a precinct election at Elijah Melton's in that county. It was referred to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances of which Crockett was a member and then apparently dropped from the Assembly's agenda. Ibid., 42. Hereafter cited as House Journal.

made on the same warrant or certificate other than the entries made by the occupants of this territory. Crockett's resolution stated that the register of West Tennessee should not issue grants on certificates of survey if more than one entry, the occupant's entry being excepted, had been made on the same warrant. The resolution further stated that if the register had already issued such grants, which did not yet bear the State Seal and the signature of the governor and the secretary of state, then these grants should not be completed until an investigation could be made by the General Assembly.¹³ On November 6, 1821, the Legislature passed an act implementing Crockett's resolution of September 28, 1821. The act forbade any surveyor to make more than one entry on the same warrant, and made the penalty for any infraction of this law removal from office, payment of a fine ranging from \$1000 to \$5000, and imprisonment for a term of not less than one year.¹⁴

During this session of the General Assembly Crockett also submitted some minor bills, which apparently did not pass, namely: a petition for the benefit of the occupants in the territory south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line; a bill requesting that the time of holding the regimental

¹³Ibid., 84-85. The following day Crockett was given a leave of absence for several days. Ibid., 92.

¹⁴Tennessee Acts, 1821, p. 38. Hereafter cited as Acts.

musters be changed; a bill to reduce the fees of constables; and a number of private petitions affecting various people of his constituency.¹⁵

When Crockett made his first appearance at the state Capitol, he could boast of no formal education. His handwriting was barely legible; he had never read a newspaper; and he had no knowledge of law. However, a lack of acquired learning was compensated with a good measure of common sense. Because he possessed determination, courage, and a will to learn, he made great progress during the three months he represented his district in the first session of the Fourteenth General Assembly.¹⁶

Before the Legislature adjourned and Crockett returned to his regular pursuits of farming and hunting, a financial misfortune visited the Crockett family back home. His large grist mill, powder mill, and distillery on Shoal Creek, valued at about three thousand dollars, and built partially on borrowed money, was swept away by a flood. Soon after returning from Murfreesboro, empty-handed but with a good conscience, because he paid his debts as far as he was able, Crockett tried a new venture.

¹⁵House Journal, 1821, p. 91 et seq.

¹⁶Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization, 2 vols. (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1927), I, 540-541. The records of the Journal show that Crockett attended 62 days, traveled 160 miles, and received \$273.00. House Journal, 1821, p. 382.

In the spring of 1822, accompanied by his eldest son John and a young neighbor, Abram Henry, he started for the West in search of a new home. In this wilderness country, full of Indians and game, Crockett found a suitable place about 150 miles distant on the Rutherford fork of the Obion River in Gibson County. He decided to settle here and build a cabin. When Crockett laid by his crops the following fall, he left his new cabin on the Obion and returned for his family. But, when he arrived home, he learned that he must attend an extra session of the Legislature before returning with his family to their new home in Gibson County.¹⁷

This special session of the Fourteenth General Assembly, which convened on July 22, 1822, and remained in session until August 24, 1822, was called by Governor William Carroll because the public good required that attention be given to some important matters.¹⁸

One of these matters in which the Tennessee legislators had a special interest and of which Governor Carroll spoke in his message to the Legislature on the opening day was in regard

¹⁷Mary U. Rothrock, "David Crockett, the Legend and the Man," The Tennessee Teacher, XXII (March, 1955), 11. Samuel Cole Williams, author of Beginnings of West Tennessee (Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tennessee, 1940), and as a small boy a native of Gibson County, says he visited the Crockett cabin, which he describes as built of rough-hewn logs and covered with oak boards. See p. 262n of this book.

¹⁸House Journal, 1822, p. 5.

to the adjudication of land warrants. The governor recommended that the time for receiving and settling land claims in Tennessee under the land act of 1819 be extended; and also a definite time be set for priority in making land entries.¹⁹ Accordingly, on August 10, the Legislature passed an act that extended the time for filing of land claims until October 1, 1823, and moved up the time of making land entries to the first Monday of November, 1822,²⁰ with Crockett voting in the affirmative.²¹

During the first days of this session Crockett presented a petition signed by several citizens of Hickman County, requesting that the seat of justice of that county remain at the town of Vernon. This petition was referred to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances and later strengthened by similar requests from the Hickman County Court and from the citizens of the town of Vernon itself.²²

Meanwhile, settlers north of Hickman County asked to be annexed to that county. Their motive was to throw the center of the county farther north. However, settlers south of the county sent in a similar petition, thus tending to counteract

¹⁹Robert H. White, ed., Messages of the Governors of Tennessee, 1821-1838, 3 vols. (The Tennessee Historical Commission, Nashville [c 1952-1954]), II, 32. Hereafter cited White, Messages.

²⁰Acts, 1822, pp. 7-8.

²¹House Journal, 1822, p. 56.

²²Ibid., 34, 37, 66.

that of the settlers north of the county. Although the General Assembly passed an act which enlarged Hickman County by adding certain lands north of the county line,²³ it also passed an act which retained the town of Vernon as the seat of justice of Hickman County.²⁴

A review of Crockett's work as legislator in the special session, which was called in the summer of 1822, reveals that he introduced two other bills of a public nature that were enacted into law, namely: to extend the boundaries of Hickman and Lawrence Counties and to remove the office of the surveyor of the seventh district to Lawrenceburg. In addition to these public bills, Crockett introduced several minor bills, affecting individuals, that were either rejected at the time they were presented or subsequently failed to pass.²⁵

Although two sessions in the Legislature had necessarily added something to Crockett's knowledge of law, he still retained much of his own peculiar demeanor. The story is told that during the called session of 1822, Crockett, because he

²³W. Jerome D. Spence and David L. Spence, A History of Hickman County, Tennessee (Gospel Advocate Publishing Company, Nashville, 1900), 387-389.

²⁴Acts, 1822, pp. 117-118. The act stated further that the Hickman County Court should appropriate a sum of money sufficient to pay the commissioners appointed by the previous session to fix a site for the seat of justice in the said county at the rate of \$4.00 per day for the time they had spent in fixing the site. Ibid., 167.

²⁵House Journal, 1822, p. 39 et seq.

was losing in a debate, grasped his colleague's collar, tore out the false front of his shirt and carried it back to his seat, and seemed satisfied to have won a physical victory.²⁶ Because he was so eccentric in manners, speech, and dress, Crockett early in the role of a solon acquired the sobriquet of "the member from the Cane."²⁷

When the Legislature adjourned in the latter part of August, Crockett returned home and moved his family to the Obion country in the northeastern corner of Gibson County in West Tennessee.²⁸ After gathering his corn in late October, he hunted until Christmas and laid up a good store of various kinds of game for the winter months.

During the winter season Crockett had accumulated so many skins that in February, 1823, he had to make a trip to Jackson forty miles distant to sell them. While in Jackson he decided to take a little time out to be sociable with some of his old soldier acquaintances. In doing this he met by chance three candidates for the next Legislature--Doctor William E. Butler, who was a nephew of General Jackson by

²⁶W. and D. Spence, op. cit. 387.

²⁷Abner D. Jones, The American Portrait Gallery (J. M. Emerson and Company, New York [c 1855]), 586. James A. Shackford, North Carolina State College, is writing a biography of David Crockett, entitled Gentleman From the Cane. Shackford, loc. cit., 304n and 305n.

²⁸Mary U. Rothrock, Discovering Tennessee (Mary U. Rothrock, Publisher, Knoxville [c 1951]), 516.

marriage, a Major Lynn, and a Mr. McEver. During a jovial morning social at a tavern one of Crockett's soldier friends jokingly, as Crockett thought, suggested that he enter the race for the Legislature. Because his friend went so far as to have his candidacy announced in a newspaper, Crockett accepted the challenge, and began to electioneer as "the man from the Cane."²⁹

Crockett's opponents decided to have a caucus to determine which one was the strongest. Since Madison County was the strongest in the district, they decided to have their meeting in that county during the March session of court. Dr. Butler succeeded in getting the nomination and Crockett admitted that Butler was the most talented man that he ever ran against.

Although Crockett lacked talents possessed by Dr. Butler, he had some native ability for acquiring votes. According to his account, he had a special hunting-shirt which he wore when campaigning. It was made of buckskin, unusually large, and had two huge pockets. In one pocket he carried tobacco and in the other whiskey. When he met a prospective voter, he would treat him first with whiskey. But before leaving him, he would give him a twist of tobacco to replace the "chaw" he had disposed of when he took the drink. Crockett reasoned that if he left a man in a good humor, in as good shape as he found him, he would vote for him on election day.

²⁹Crockett, op. cit., 101, 108.

Two other men, a Mr. Shaw and a Mr. Brown, also announced their candidacy for the Legislature. But Crockett gave more attention to defeating Dr. Butler,³⁰ who made the race more difficult for Crockett, since he was one of the wealthiest, most public-spirited, aristocratic, and hospitable men in Jackson. Butler owned a race track, many fine horses, and, of course, a beautiful home. During the campaign Crockett canvassed in Jackson, because it was apparent that Butler would be very strong in his home town. While electioneering in Jackson, Crockett was invited to dinner at the Butler home. The story is told that when Crockett entered the parlor of the Butler home, he leaped to his chair to avoid stepping on the fine carpet, kept his feet on the rounds of the chair, and leaped again when leaving the parlor.³¹

Crockett used good psychology in capitalizing on Dr. Butler's wealth. In hunter's garb he would mount the stump to speak, usually entertaining the crowd with this remark, "Why, my fellow citizens, my wealthy competitor walks every day on 'store goods' finer than any your wives and daughters ever wore!" His frontier style and appearance appealed to the people; and his witticisms and clever tricks confused even the intelligent Dr. Butler. The story is told that on one

³⁰Ibid., 109-110.

³¹J. G. Cisco, "Madison County," American Historical Magazine, VIII (January, 1903), 29-30.

speaking occasion Crockett persuaded Butler to let him speak first. In those days it was the custom for opponents to speak to the same crowd on the same afternoon. Mischievously Crockett took the stump, and since he had heard Dr. Butler's speech many times before, gave it verbatim. Thus, Dr. Butler was left without a speech.³²

So Crockett's unique method of canvassing proved more effective than Dr. Butler's advantages of money, aristocracy, and family connection with General Jackson, with the result, that, when the votes were counted, he had won over his three opponents by a majority of 247 votes. Crockett had accepted the candidacy as a challenge; he had won over his opponents in the August election; and in the next General Assembly he would represent a new district.³³

The first session of the Fifteenth General Assembly met at Murfreesboro on September 16, 1823, with David Crockett representing the district composed of Humphreys, Perry, Henderson, Carroll, and Madison Counties. Various committees were appointed early in the session with Crockett being selected to serve on the following standing committees: the Committee on Vacant Lands Lying North and South of the Congressional Reservation Line, the Committee on Propositions and

³²Emma Inman Williams, Historic Madison: The Story of Jackson and Madison County Tennessee (Madison County Historical Society, Jackson, Tennessee, 1946), 50-51.

³³Crockett, op. cit., 110.

Grievances, and the Committee on Military Affairs.³⁴

Two groups were opposing each other in the state at this time. One was led by John Overton, wealthy judge, land speculator, and bank president. In the Legislature of 1823 the spokesman for this group was Felix Grundy. In the period of prosperity following the War of 1812, the Overton group had done a lucrative business in bank speculation. But the panic which followed the boom gave rise to a group of anti-Overton men, composed mainly of farmers and merchants, whom the banks were pressing for payment of their debts. However, at the same time the banks were refusing to pay specie for their notes. William Carroll, a Nashville merchant, who was hostile toward the bank group because of a great personal financial loss, became the leader of the anti-Overton forces. Running on an anti-bank ticket in 1821, Carroll defeated for governor, Edward Ward, the Overton candidate. In the Legislatures of 1821 and 1823 David Crockett was a leading supporter of Carroll, and in 1823 he was joined by James K. Polk, who became the spokesman for the group.³⁵

³⁴House Journal, 1823, pp. 4, 17, 18, 23. Later in the session Crockett was placed on a number of special joint committees of Senate and House, namely: on forming new counties, on establishing the seat of justice in Monroe County, on locating the courthouse in the town of Greeneville, and on forming eleven electoral districts in the state. Ibid., 36, 168, 312, 61, 62.

³⁵Sellers, loc. cit., 37-40.

Acting on the governor's recommendation, on November 13, 1821, the Legislature had passed a law to compel the banks to resume specie payments on or before the first Monday of April, 1824.³⁶ In the House vote on this measure, Crockett had voted in favor of the banks resuming specie payments.³⁷ The bank men were ready with a resolution to be placed before the 1823 Legislature for the repeal of the bank law of 1821. Crockett joined Polk in speaking against the bank men's resolution and their arguments in its defense. When the Overton group accused the merchants of initiating the agitation against banks, Crockett spoke in behalf of the merchants and added that he "considered the whole Banking system a species of swindling on a large scale."³⁸ Crockett also declared that when difficulties were created by the banks, it was the farmers who really suffered the most, and he would cast his vote in favor of the banks' paying specie on April 1.³⁹ After a heated argument extending over a period of several days, the bank bill, with a modifying amendment extending gradually the period of resumption to 1826, passed the House by a vote of 23 to 14. However, Crockett, as well as Polk, voted against it.⁴⁰

³⁶Acts, 1821, pp. 51-52.

³⁷House Journal, 1821, p. 284.

³⁸Sellers, loc. cit., 40.

³⁹Nashville Whig, October 13, 1823.

⁴⁰Sellers, loc. cit., 41-42.

Another major problem with which the Legislature in 1823 had to deal was the disposition of lands belonging to the state. Furthermore, this issue was magnified by its relation to public education.⁴¹ When North Carolina ceded her western lands to Congress, she reserved the right under the North Carolina act of 1783, to issue grants in the ceded area to satisfy the claims of her Revolutionary soldiers.⁴² Under the auspices of this act prominent Tennesseans had forthwith developed a prosperous business in land speculation in this area.⁴³

When Tennessee was admitted into the Union, the land issue became more tense, since now the United States, Tennessee, and North Carolina were involved in the disposition of North Carolina's ceded lands. But in 1806 they reached an agreement which became the basis of the Tennessee land system. Under this settlement the United States had title to the land south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line, which included all of West Tennessee and the southwest corner of Middle Tennessee. Tennessee acquired ownership of the remaining land, but was required to satisfy all North Carolina claims. Under this

⁴¹Ibid., 43.

⁴²Thomas Perkins Abernethy, From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1932), 112.

⁴³Sellers, loc. cit., 43.

arrangement, North Carolina grants had taken the most desirable lands; and therefore, in 1818, the same year the Chickasaws ceded the West Tennessee country to the United States, Tennessee succeeded in inducing Congress to open the Congressional reserve to North Carolina warrants.⁴⁴ The last group of claims under the North Carolina act of 1783 had been made in this area. Consequently, in the Legislature of 1823 land speculators and politicians were engaged in a controversy over the lands. The contention was complicated by the fact that the Legislature of North Carolina had reverted to her state university any land grants unclaimed by her Revolutionary veterans. Accordingly, the University of North Carolina began presenting these unclaimed soldier land rights to Tennessee for location. Despite opposition to these dubious claims, Tennessee had accepted some of them, on condition that two Tennessee colleges be given a share of the lands.⁴⁵

When the trustees of the University of North Carolina presented additional warrants to the Legislature in 1823, James K. Polk raised objections in which he was supported by Crockett. Polk argued that the lands in the Western District should be reserved for a fund to support education. Crockett, coming

⁴⁴Stanley J. Folmsbee, Sectionalism and Internal Improvements in Tennessee, 1796-1845 (East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, 1939), 21-22.

⁴⁵Sellers, loc. cit., 43-44.

from the ranks of the poor people, and interested in the rise of the common man, demanded that the squatters occupying lands in this district be given priority in securing the land on which they were living. By a close vote the University's petition for the validation of its warrants failed, but soon thereafter a court order allowed some of the University's claims. In the 1824 session of the Legislature Crockett, Polk, and others made a futile effort to investigate the "illegal" proceedings of the Tennessee court.⁴⁶

Although Polk, Crockett, and their supporters had succeeded in thwarting temporarily the plans of the University of North Carolina trustees, they lost by strong majorities in an attempt to stop the appropriation of lands in the Western District by Tennessee's land speculators. However, they did win for the occupants preemption rights in purchasing the land on which they were living and had improved.⁴⁷

A second land controversy to come before the Legislature in 1823 concerned the sale of land in the Hiwassee District, which included the territory between the Little Tennessee and Hiwassee Rivers. Recently acquired from the Cherokee Indians, this area was a part of the "Cherokee Reservation,"

⁴⁶Ibid., 44-46. In 1825 the University's warrants were accepted, with the provision that they be divided as before with Tennessee colleges. Ibid., 46n.

⁴⁷Abernethy, Frontier to Plantation, 254-255; Sellers, loc. cit., 46-47.

the only part of Tennessee in which no North Carolina land warrants had been or could be satisfied. Congress in 1823 had removed the minimum price requirement of \$2.00 per acre. This made it possible for the Legislature to introduce a graduation system ranging from \$1.50 to 12-1/2 cents per acre, with preference made to squatters during each period. Three significant amendments were submitted, one by Polk, one by Felix Grundy, and another by Thomas Kelly. Polk proposed to fix the top price in the graduation scale at \$2.00 instead of \$1.50, but the House rejected it. Crockett was among those who voted against Polk's amendment. Grundy proposed that the Hiwassee lands should be sold for cash. Crockett also opposed Grundy's resolution, because he was convinced that poor people would be able to acquire very little land if sales were made on a cash basis. Furthermore, Crockett stated that he did not come to the Legislature to negotiate for rich men, but for poor men and, therefore, he was in favor of selling the land on credit terms for the greater part of the purchase. Grundy's amendment was adopted by a vote of two to one, with Polk voting in favor of it. Thomas Kelly proposed that the poor widows of the Hiwassee district be allowed to keep the quarter sections on which they were living, but it was rejected by a vote of 18 to 19. Crockett, again acting in interest of the poor people, voted for Kelly's amendment, but Polk opposed it. On November 15, 1823, the original bill

and graduation system was enacted into law.⁴⁸

A third land controversy in which education was again involved concerned land sales in the area south of the French Broad River. By the Compact of 1806 Tennessee was required to set aside two tracts of 100,000 acres each in the area south of the French Broad for the support of colleges and academies. Under the terms of this agreement, squatters in this region had preemption rights at one dollar an acre. However, since they had carved their homes out of this Indian wilderness, they were unwilling to pay even this price, but thought it should be given to them. These people comprised a large part of the voting population. Therefore, the Legislature did not consider it politically expedient to collect the one dollar per acre and considered a compromise.⁴⁹

On November 15, 1823, the Legislature passed an act which provided further relief for squatters on the college and academy lands south of the French Broad. It postponed the collection of interest due on their unpaid installments

⁴⁸Ibid.; House Journal, 1823, pp. 32, 41, 223, 242-243; Nashville Whig, September 29, 1823; Acts, 1823, pp. 25-27. The origin of a graduated land price is credited to J. C. Mitchell who proposed the idea in the 1819 Legislature, but was defeated. St. George Leakin Sioussat, "Some Phases of Tennessee Politics in the Jackson Period," American Historical Review, XIV (October, 1908), 53-54. In 1819 a graduation scale would have been against federal law.

⁴⁹Stanley J. Folmsbee, "Blount College and East Tennessee College, 1794-1840: The First Predecessors of the University of Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, No. 17 (1945), 31.

to May 1, 1824; remitted one third of the whole debt and interest; stipulated that the remainder, bearing interest at six per cent, should be paid in seven installments on or before May 1 of each successive year. But the act further stated if any installment was not paid when due, foreclosure and sale at public auction would follow, with colleges and academies receiving the benefit of the proceeds. The Legislature also voted to give colleges and academies the proceeds from sales of land south of the French Broad outside of the college and academy tracts. Crockett supported this bill, but Polk voted against it because he was more interested in a fund for common schools.⁵⁰

Although the legislators in 1823 spent a considerable portion of their time on the discussion and passage of bank and land bills, due attention was given to other measures also. Polk introduced a bill to pay talesmen jurors at the same rate as jurors who were regularly summoned. To this bill was offered an amendment to pay overseers and hands working on the road. Crockett spoke in favor of the original bill but against the amendment which he said was designed to kill Polk's bill. Crockett saw a great difference in serving as talesmen jurors and working on the road. He claimed that talesmen jurors cited without notice were often interrupted in their daily

⁵⁰Acts, 1823, pp. 33-39; House Journal, 1823, pp. 188-189.

business; but those who worked on the roads did so near their homes, were not put to any great inconvenience, and received benefits from their own labor. After some discussion the amendment was rejected.⁵¹

In another instance Crockett showed his concern for the welfare of the poor man when he spoke in favor of a bill to reduce the state tax. He argued that it was difficult for poor people to pay their taxes, and, furthermore, the state allowed the money to remain idle in the treasury without using it for public benefit. But the Assembly passed an act which stated that the state tax should remain the same for the next two years.⁵²

Crockett presented three bills in the 1823 Legislature, namely: to establish the town of Overton in Perry County opposite Perryville on the northeast bank of the Tennessee River and to build a jail in Perryville; to authorize the continuance of certain branches of the Bank of Tennessee; and to grant no bills of divorce during the present session. Laws

⁵¹Nashville Whig, October 6, 1823. A talesman juror is one summoned from among the by-standers in the court, or a juror summoned from time to time during a term of court to replace one of the original panel who may have become disqualified. Black's Law Dictionary, 3rd edn. (West Publishing Co., St. Paul, Minn., 1933), 1701; Sam B. Gilreath, Caruther's History of a Lawsuit, 7th edn. (The W. H. Anderson Company, Cincinnati [c 1951]), 357.

⁵²Nashville Whig, November 24, 1823; Acts, 1823, pp. 47-48.

were passed by the Assembly which authorized establishing the town of Overton in Perry County, building a jail in Perryville, and continuing the branches of the Bank of Tennessee until January 1, 1826. The section of the bank act of 1822 which authorized the president and directors of a bank to discontinue that branch was also repealed.⁵³

Crockett's resolution that the Legislature grant no divorces called forth the most argument and discussion. Crockett contended that all divorce bills should be treated alike regardless of the situation or character of the husband or wife involved. In indigent cases, where the problem of defraying the expenses of obtaining a divorce in regular court proceedings was involved, Crockett was in favor of the Legislature's authorizing that such cases be prosecuted in the several districts at public expense rather than being brought before the Legislature. Polk spoke at length in behalf of Crockett's divorce bill, which was adopted by the House by a vote of 25 to 13, but rejected by the Senate by a vote of 13 to 6. Although Crockett's resolution was defeated, no divorce was granted by the Legislature during this session. Thus the "legislative divorce mill that had been grinding away at each session since 1799"

⁵³House Journal, 1823, pp. 199, 206, 312, 17; Nashville Whig, September 22, 1823; Acts, 1823, pp. 179, 196, 66, 67.

apparently was checked, at least in part through Crockett's efforts.⁵⁴

At the session of 1823, Colonel John Williams, a candidate for reelection to the United States Senate, was opposed by the Overton faction because they feared that Williams, who had had some differences with Andrew Jackson, would not favor the nomination of Jackson for the presidency in 1824. When it became evident that neither of the two pro-Jackson opponents of Williams could command enough votes to defeat him, they decided to present the name of Jackson himself as Williams' opponent for the Senate, as the only man sure to defeat him. Jackson did defeat Williams for the position, by a margin of 35 to 25,⁵⁵ but not by Crockett's vote. At this early date Crockett said he wanted to prove to the people that he had convictions and was too independent politically to wear a collar with these letters engraved on it:

MY DOG.

Andrew Jackson.

⁵⁴Nashville Whig, September 22, 1823; House Journal, 1823, p. 38; White, Messages, II, 61-62. In the session of 1821, Ex-Governor Joseph McMinn submitted a petition requesting a divorce from his wife Nancy. By the narrow margin of 19 to 20, McMinn's petition was denied, with Crockett voting in the negative. Ibid., 23.

⁵⁵Sellers, loc. cit., 51-52; Abernethy, op. cit., 244.

In this election issue, Polk broke ranks and voted with the Overton men for the General, while Crockett voted with the Carroll men for Williams.⁵⁶

Finally, it may be of interest to note Crockett's position at this time on a proposal to take steps toward amending Tennessee's Constitution. Although the proposition failed to pass, Crockett voted in favor of calling the convention.⁵⁷

In reviewing Crockett's work in the 1823 Legislature, it is evident that he was more active than he had been in previous sessions. He served on numerous committees, participated in the debates on a number of major bills, and presented a number of bills and resolutions, some of which were passed, but others were rejected.⁵⁸

An extra session of the Fifteenth General Assembly, called by Governor Carroll to correct a mistake in the act of

⁵⁶Crockett, op. cit., 111; Sellers, loc. cit., 52. According to Hamer, it was Crockett's vote for Williams against Jackson that distinguished him in the Legislature of 1823. Philip M. Hamer, Tennessee: A History, 1673-1932, 4 vols. (The American Historical Society, Inc., New York, 1933), I, 283.

⁵⁷Nashville Whig, October 27, 1823.

⁵⁸Nashville Whig, 1823, and House Journal, 1823, cited supra. Crockett introduced three minor bills that apparently did not get farther than a first reading passage: to substitute a state license for the then present county license for showmen; to abolish imprisonment for debt; and to appoint the time for holding courts west of the Tennessee River. Nashville Whig, September 22, October 27, 1823. Records show that Crockett attended 76 days, traveled 400 miles, and received \$368.00. House Journal, 1823, p. 340.

1823 regulating the election of electors of President and Vice-President of the United States, convened on September 20, 1824, at Murfreesboro. Ten days later the Assembly passed an act which corrected the error in the 1823 electoral law. The former law stated that the electors would be elected on the first Thursday and Friday in October, 1824, a date preceding the Presidential election by one month. The new law changed the date to the first Thursday and Friday in November, 1824, thus enabling Tennessee to cast her weight in the coming Presidential election in which Andrew Jackson was a candidate.⁵⁹

Early in the session Crockett presented a bill for improving navigation of the rivers in the Western District. On October 16, 1824, the General Assembly passed an act providing for improved navigation of rivers in ten counties of Crockett's district. The act further stated that each county should levy a tax, not to exceed 12-1/2 cents per one hundred acres on its taxable lands and to be used exclusively for improving its navigable rivers. In 1823 Crockett had voted with Polk against a bill for improving navigation of rivers in this district, probably because an amendment had been added to use prisoners for labor on public projects.⁶⁰

⁵⁹White, Messages, II, 65-68; Acts, 1824, pp. 5-8. The called session of the Legislature to change the word "October" to "November" in the electoral law of 1823 cost the state \$11,715.86. White, Messages, II, 67.

⁶⁰House Journal, 1824, p. 13; Acts, 1824, p. 122; Sellers, loc. cit., 48.

Crockett introduced a second bill in the interest of internal improvement. He requested an apportionment of the surplus public money that had been acquired from the sale of lots in the town of Jackson in Madison County. This bill, which was passed October 8, provided that this surplus money, after some buildings specified by an act of 1822 had been completed, should be set aside for building a road through the swamp of the Forked Deer River.⁶¹

Lafayette, the French hero who had helped the United States win its independence in the Revolutionary War, had arrived in this country for a visit and had come to Tennessee while the Legislature was in session. Consequently, resolutions were adopted to pay him honor. Among these measures was a bill presented by Crockett to establish the county of Fayette in honor of our French patron and Revolutionary hero. The following day the General Assembly passed an act which authorized that a county, to be called Fayette, be established west of Hardeman County and east of Shelby County.⁶²

Crockett then presented a complaint to the Legislature in behalf of the occupants of the Western District. He deplored

⁶¹House Journal, 1824, p. 37; Acts, 1824, p. 64. The buildings specified in the act of 1822 were a courthouse, a prison, stocks, and clerk's offices. Ibid., 1822, p. 87.

⁶²House Journal, 1824, pp. 23-25, 46; Acts, 1824, pp. 46-47.

the practice of speculators locating fraudulent claims in the district and the occupants' being denied the easy terms they had been promised by a previous act. His bitter feeling about the whole matter was expressed in typical phrasing given below:

The speculators had pretended to be great friends to the people in saving their land, had gone up one side of a creek and down another, like a coon, and pretended to grant the poor people great favors in securing the occupant claims--they gave them a credit of a year and promised to take cows, horses &c in payment. But when the year came around, the notes were in the hands of others; the people were sued, cows and horses not being sufficient to pay; the land itself went to pay for securing it.

Although the House in 1824 again voted to continue to grant lands in the Western District, the speculators' majority was reduced to two votes, with Crockett and Polk voting in the negative. And the Assembly passed an act which stated that if any land warrant should be issued on improved land, the owner should pay for the improvement under the occupant law of 1819.⁶³

Crockett seemed less forcible in the Legislature of 1824. However, he presented some bills which were eventually made into law, namely: to improve the navigation of the rivers in the Western District; to apportion the excess money derived from the sale of lots in Jackson; and to establish a new county, Fayette.⁶⁴

⁶³Sellers, loc. cit., 46; House Journal, 1824, p. 199; Acts, 1824, p. 15.

⁶⁴House Journal, 1824, and Acts, 1824, cited supra. Crockett attended 33 days, traveled 400 miles, and received \$196.00. House Journal, 1824, p. 189.

Crockett's role as a legislator in the Tennessee Assembly is worthy of commendation. He consistently spoke and acted in behalf of the economic, educational, and social progress of his constituency, both in public and private matters. He began his career as a state solon with little formal education; he increased his judicial knowledge from observation and study; and although eccentric in manner and dress, he won the admiration of his colleagues by his moral courage and patriotism.

CHAPTER IV

CROCKETT IN CONGRESS

After the adjournment of the Legislature in 1824, Crockett again changed from the role of a solon to that of farmer and hunter. However, he had been back from Murfreesboro only a short time when he learned that the people of his district in Gibson County were dissatisfied with Colonel Adam Alexander, their representative in Congress, because of his vote for the tariff law of 1824. Consequently, in 1825 Crockett's neighbors and friends began to talk to him about running against Alexander in the coming Congressional election.

Because of the general criticism of Alexander, other candidates decided to enter the Congressional race with the result that Crockett and two other men announced their candidacies in 1825. But the economic situation favored Alexander. At this time cotton was selling for twenty-five dollars per hundred. Alexander led his constituents to believe that the tariff of 1824 was responsible for the rise in the price of cotton; but they returned him to Washington by a margin of only two votes.¹ After the election, a politician at Jackson in a letter to a friend expressed his opinion of Crockett and his defeat with the following remark: "Our bear hunter and

¹Crockett, op. cit., 111-112.

coon catcher, the beautiful, decent and accomplished Colo. David Crockett was in an age of being elected to Congress but the people showed good sense for once."²

The fall following the election, while Alexander was in Congress, Crockett not only hunted for his and a neighbor's winter supply of meat, but also engaged in lumber speculation. With the aid of some hired hands he built two large boats, loaded them with pipe staves, and started down the Mississippi River for New Orleans. A short distance down the river the boats capsized, the cargo was lost, and Crockett and his crew barely escaped drowning. Fortunately, the next day about sunrise a large boat picked them up and took them to Memphis. In this city Major Marcus Winchester, a merchant and a friend of Crockett's, supplied him and his comrades with clothing and money to return home. Another economic venture had proved unsuccessful for Crockett.³

Forgetting his close defeat in 1825, Crockett with new vigor and determination entered the Congressional campaign of 1827 against Colonel Alexander and Major-General William Arnold, both of Jackson, Tennessee. His friend, Winchester, now mayor of Memphis, furnished Crockett, in poor financial circumstances

²Quoted in Williams, West Tennessee, 264.

³Crockett, op. cit., 113, 126, 128-129. Major Winchester is identified in Shields Mollwaine, Memphis Down in Dixie (E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., New York [c 1948]), 73. Winchester was a major in the War of 1812 and first mayor of Memphis, 1827-1829. Ibid., 52, 57.

as usual, with money to conduct his campaign. Both Alexander and Arnold, underestimating their opponent's strength, made the mistake of ignoring Crockett and devoted their time and effort in working against each other.⁴ Crockett used part of his campaign money to buy some of the "creature" (whiskey) to treat his friends and keep them happy, but not intended, according to Crockett, to influence their voting.⁵ An incident during the campaign, which is typical of Crockett's fund of wit and his political genius in meeting a situation quickly, is quoted below. On one speaking occasion Arnold, disturbed by the cackling of some guineas nearby, asked that they be driven away. When Crockett got up to speak, he said:

Well, colonel, you are the first man I ever saw that understood the language of fowls. You've not had the politeness to mention me in your speech. And when my little friends, the guinea-fowls, came up and began to holler "Crockett, Crockett, Crockett," you have been ungenerous enough to stop and drive them away.

In his Autobiography, Crockett tells of a trick he played on a merchant during this campaign. Job Snelling had set up a shop at a place where the contestants were to speak on a particular occasion. Crockett sensed that the constituents' thirst for whiskey was greater than their interest in

⁴Williams, West Tennessee, 264.

⁵Crockett, op. cit., 130. The practice of purchasing votes with whiskey had become so prevalent that the Legislature had passed a law against such political tactics, but it had proved futile. Crockett was among those who opposed the law. Hamer, op. cit., I, 341.

the affairs of the nation. So he led part of the crowd over to Snelling's shanty to treat them. Upon learning that he could not get whiskey without money, or its equivalent, Crockett decided to go to the woods to kill an animal, in order to use its skin for barter. In a few minutes he had killed a coon and presented its skin to Snelling for a quart of liquor. But one quart not being sufficient to satisfy the crowd, Crockett went back to the shop. The skin was still on the counter where Crockett had thrown it. Snelling, busy at the bar, failed to notice as Crockett suddenly snatched it and threw it back on the counter, as if it were another skin. And, quoting Crockett, by repeating this trick,

. . . I wish I may be shot, if I didn't before the day was over, get ten quarts for the same identical skin, and from a fellow too, who in those parts was considered as sharp as a steel trap, and as bright as a pewter button.

Crockett had used the politician's gift of knowing how to appeal to the crowd. He defeated his leading opponent by a majority of 2,748 votes, and won the right to a seat in the House of Representatives at Washington.⁶ On September 18, 1827, Governor William Carroll signed the certificate of election, which commissioned David Crockett to represent the Ninth

⁶Crockett, op. cit., 131-132, 214-218. Winchester, who had loaned Crockett campaign money, also let him have \$100 for traveling expenses to Washington. Later from Washington Crockett sent him a check for \$250, drawn on a bank at Nashville. Ibid., 130.

Congressional District in the House of Representatives during the Twentieth Congress,⁷ the first session of which convened December 3, 1827, and remained in session until May 26, 1828.⁸

The period in which Crockett assumed the duties of a national solon was that in which Tennessee, as well as national, politics centered largely around Andrew Jackson, military hero of the War of 1812 and idol of the common people, the group to which Crockett himself belonged. In their ambition for a more representative participation in American democracy, they had great confidence in Jackson as one to sponsor their political ideas. Crockett's first two sessions in Congress were during the administration of John Quincy Adams. At this time the Jackson faction was usually opposed to the policies of President Adams and his supporters. But, according to his Autobiography, Crockett supported the measures of the Jacksonians in Congress.⁹

The first discussion in the House in which Crockett took part concerned a private bill for relief of the widow and

⁷Certificate of Election, Original Documents, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D. C. Hereafter cited as RG 233. Others in the Tennessee delegation were John Bell, John Blair, Robert Desha, Jacob C. Isaacs, Pryor Lea, John H. Marable, James C. Mitchell, and James K. Polk. Hamer, op. cit., II, 988.

⁸Congressional Debates, 1827-28, IV, 20 Cong., 1 sess., 1.

⁹Crockett, op. cit., 132. During the Twentieth Congress Crockett in writing home spoke kindly of Jackson and claimed to be one of his loyal supporters. Sioussat, loc. cit., 57, 57n, citing a manuscript letter of Crockett in possession of the Tennessee Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

family of Major-General Jacob Brown, hero in the battles of Chippewa, Niagara, and Erie during the War of 1812. Brown, a major-general in the Army, died in February, 1828, from a disease which he contracted while in service. Congress had proposed to give Brown's family, then in very poor financial circumstances, the remainder of the General's salary for that year. Crockett spoke against federal appropriations for the widows of veterans, but offered to contribute from his personal account toward a fund for the Brown family. On April 3 Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to pay Mrs. Brown her late husband's salary from the time of his death until December 31, 1828.¹⁰

On April 24, James K. Polk introduced a bill asking that the Legislature of Tennessee be authorized to issue grants and titles to the vacant or unappropriated lands south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line and to use the proceeds from the sale of these lands for the benefit of public education. By an act of Congress in 1806, Tennessee had agreed to satisfy any civil and military land warrants for which North Carolina was responsible when she ceded the present Tennessee land to the United States, with the stipulation that Tennessee should set aside, where possible, one section of land in each township for the support of education. In support of

¹⁰Congressional Debates, 1827-28, IV, 20 Cong., 1 sess., 1608, 2083-2084, 2086; Appendix, ix. See Appendix.

Polk's bill, Crockett argued that school lands had not been provided as promised in the agreement of 1806, because the North Carolina warrants had been satisfied with the choice land in each township. Crockett stated that, having lived in this section of Tennessee for ten years, he knew its great need in respect to schools and education, and therefore requested the support of the House in the passage of this land and education bill. However, two days later the bill was laid on the table. Crockett himself, in the interest of the squatters, proposed that the Committee on Public Lands examine the expediency of donating one section with its improvements to each settler in this territory.¹¹

During this session Crockett introduced a resolution requesting that the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads investigate the expediency of establishing a mail route from Jackson to Mount Pierson, Purdy's office, and Perryville in Perry County. On April 3, 1828, Congress passed a law which provided for Crockett's proposed mail route.¹²

The second session of the Twentieth Congress convened on December 1, 1828, and remained in session until March 3, 1829.¹³ Again Crockett and Polk brought up the matter of the

¹¹Ibid., 2496, 2518-2520; RG 233.

¹²Ibid.; Congressional Debates, 1827-28, IV, 20 Cong., 1 sess., Appendix, xli.

¹³Ibid., 1828-29, V, 20 Cong., 2 sess., 1.

disposal of Tennessee's vacant lands south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line.

On January 5, 1829, Polk moved that the House consider the bill which he had presented in the previous session concerning the unappropriated lands in the Western District. Crockett submitted an amendment to Polk's bill which contained two major provisions. One of these provisions declared that all persons occupying land south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line on April 1, 1829, and having made certain improvements on the same should have priority in making an entry and receiving a grant for one hundred and sixty acres, including their improvements, on the condition that the entry be made by April 1, 1830. A second provision stipulated that these entries be made in the office of the surveyor of the district in which the land lay, be surveyed by him, and the regular fee for such service be paid by the occupants making the entries. It further stipulated that, if two or more occupants should be living so near to each other that it was not possible to allot to each his one hundred and sixty acres, then the surveyor should divide the land equally both as to quality and quantity. Crockett accepted a modification of his amendment which changed the date of entry from April 1, 1829, to December 1, 1828. He apologized for presenting this amendment to the bill introduced by his colleague, but declared that

he felt obligated to do so for the welfare of his constituents.¹⁴

Polk insisted that any act passed by the Tennessee Legislature for the disposition of the lands in the Congressional Reservation would provide for the welfare of the squatters. But Crockett disagreed with Polk. In a letter to the people of his district, Crockett informed them that he had opposed in Congress the relinquishment of the land south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line to the state, to be disposed of by the Legislature. He believed that any preference given to the occupants by an act of the Legislature would be in theory only, since the state could put a price on the land so prohibitive that the squatters could not buy it. In his letter he also told them that if the delegation had supported him the land could have been given to the squatters as a direct grant from Congress. He also informed his constituency that in the last session he had proposed a bill, whereby each squatter would have been given preemption to two hundred acres with the United States Government receiving the proceeds. The revenue received from the taxes would have gone to the state of Tennessee. Crockett considered that this would have been of greater advantage to the State than any other manner of disposal of the lands in question. But because his colleagues

¹⁴Ibid., 161-162, 164.

failed to support him, the measure was defeated by a vote of 89 to 92.¹⁵

Representatives from Ohio and Illinois questioned the wisdom of the United States' donating land to settlers in Tennessee, since such an act would obligate the federal government to make similar donations to other states. Crockett explained that the situation in Tennessee was peculiar, since her public lands had never been divided into sections by federal surveyors as in other states. Therefore, the poor people could not acquire a section of land in Tennessee as they could in Ohio and Illinois. On the other hand, warrant-holders had gone into the territory and located on all the valuable land, thus leaving the less desirable lands for the squatters.¹⁶

Before the House adjourned, Polk made a final appeal for the memorial sent to Congress by the Tennessee Legislature in 1823 asking for a relinquishment by the United States to Tennessee of its title to unappropriated land south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line for the support of public education. At this time Polk was a member of the Legislature

¹⁵Ibid., 162-165; David Crockett's Circular to the Citizens and Voters of the Ninth Congressional District in the State of Tennessee, February 28, 1831, pp. 5-7. A copy of this circular, with no publisher and date of publication given, is in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee. Hereafter cited as Crockett's Circular. For earlier aspects of this controversy, see supra, 48 et seq.

¹⁶Ibid., 165. Warrant-holders had legal authority to a certain amount of land from North Carolina. Occupants, or squatters, were dependent upon the Tennessee Legislature. Sioussat, loc. cit., 55.

and chairman of the committee which submitted the memorial, with the following resolution:

Resolved, That our senators and representatives in Congress be required to use their best exertions, whenever they shall deem it expedient so to do, to procure the passage of a law, authorizing the state of Tennessee to dispose of the vacant lands lying south and west of the Congressional reservation line, after the first day of June, 1825, at such price as may be thought prudent by the legislature for the purposes of education.

After a long debate, a motion to lay the Tennessee land bill and its amendments on the table carried by a vote of 103 to 63. Polk expressed regret that Crockett did not vote with the Tennessee delegation to carry out the state's instruction concerning public education.¹⁷

Polk was interested in the proceeds that might be derived from the sales of lands in the Congressional Reservation for educational purposes, whereas Crockett had lost his former enthusiasm for schools and was now more interested in securing preemption rights for the squatters. Polk's letters show the disgust of the Tennessee representatives and Senator Hugh Lawson White for Crockett's defection. They reported him to the home constituency and the newspapers of Tennessee censured Crockett for his action.¹⁸

¹⁷Congressional Debates, 1828-29, V, 20 Cong., 2 sess., 166, 211; White, Messages, 55-57; House Journal, 1823, pp. 325-329.

¹⁸Abernethy, Frontier to Plantation, 296; Sioussat, loc. cit., 58.

During the same session of Congress, Crockett, although much concerned about the Tennessee land bill and, engaged a great part of the time in arguing for the occupants, or squatters, introduced resolutions for the welfare of his district in regard to internal improvement and social progress. On January 20, 1829, Crockett introduced two resolutions designed to help Tennessee in these respects. The first asked the Committee on Roads and Canals to investigate the need of opening a road from Bolivar through the Chickasaw lands to Cotton-gin Port in Mississippi and a second road leading from Memphis to Jackson, Mississippi, and passing through the Chickasaw lands. The second resolution requested the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads to investigate the possibility of opening a mail route from Memphis to Loves' Settlement and Tocklish in the Chickasaw lands, thence to Columbus on the military road in Mississippi, intersecting the southern mail route at that point.¹⁹

However, Crockett, in his efforts for internal improvement at federal expense, did not receive the full support of the Tennessee delegation in the House, nor that of the Tennessee Senators, Hugh L. White and John H. Eaton. In February, 1829, only one of Crockett's colleagues, James C. Mitchell, voted

¹⁹RG 233. The writer found no references made to these resolutions in the publications of Congress.

with him in favor of a bill appropriating \$100,000 for the repair of the Cumberland Road.²⁰

In review of Crockett in the Twentieth Congress, we note that he voted against federal appropriations for widows of veterans. He did not vote with his delegation in support of a land bill to provide funds for the support of public education for which he was censured by the Tennessee press. On the other hand, he proposed that the squatters on the land in question receive a donation of one section of land with its improvements. However, he did show some interest in the social progress of Tennessee when he introduced resolutions requesting new mail routes and public roads.

In 1829 Crockett was again in the race for Representative to Congress from the Western District. Adam Huntsman, a lawyer of Madison County, would not condescend to enter the race at this time, because he considered it beneath his dignity to campaign with Crockett, whose methods he considered so questionable. But Captain Joel Estes of Haywood County and Colonel Alexander announced their candidacies. It appeared however, that the contest would be decided by the strength of the two major rivals, Alexander and Crockett.²¹

Below is a table which gives the counties of the Western District, the population of each, the votes cast for

²⁰Folmsbee, Sectionalism and Internal Improvements, 54, 55n.

²¹Williams, West Tennessee, 265.

each contestant, and Crockett's margin of victory or defeat.

<u>Counties</u>	<u>Population in 1830</u>	<u>Contestants</u>		<u>Crockett's Margin</u>
		<u>Crockett</u>	<u>Alexander</u>	
Hardeman	11,628	587	607	- 20
Haywood	5,354	249	216	+ 33
Henderson	8,741	729	295	+434
Fayette	8,654	354	349	+ 5
Shelby	5,652	258	92	+166
Obion	2,099	151	38	+113
Carroll	9,378	792	309	+483
McNairy	5,697	549	200	+349
Madison	11,750	555	862	-307
Dyer	1,904	154	93	+ 61
Henry	12,230	897	603	+294
Gibson	5,801	451	158	+293
Tipton	5,317	303	131	+172
Weakley	<u>4,796</u>	<u>449</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>+326</u>
Totals:	99,001	6,478	4,076	+2,402

It must have been a very vilifying race, for the Gazette, a paper published in Jackson, carried Crockett's complaints of attacks on his private character, particularly one circulated by Crockett's neighbor, a preacher in Gibson County.²²

Crockett had been successful in his race for re-election to Congress. On October 7, 1829, Governor William Carroll signed the certificate of election which commissioned David Crockett to represent the Ninth Congressional District of Tennessee in the House of Representatives, during the

²²Ibid., 266, 266n; Eastin Morris, Tennessee Gazetteer (W. Hasell Hunt & Co., Nashville, Tennessee, 1834), lxvix [lxix], lxx. Crockett claimed a larger majority than the table shows. Crockett, op. cit., 133.

Twenty-first Congress,²³ the first session of which convened December 7, 1829, and remained in session through May 31, 1830.²⁴

Andrew Jackson was President when Crockett began his second term in Congress. Jackson was a strong executive and with determination proceeded to carry out his domestic policies concerning internal improvement, the Indians, and the United States Bank. Although Crockett claimed to have supported the Jacksonians in the previous Congress, early in the present session, he broke with the Administration, as we shall see presently; and throughout the remainder of his Congressional career spoke boldly and publicly against the President and his measures.²⁵

On May 20, 1830, Congress passed a bill which authorized the government to buy stock in a company that was planning to build a road between Maysville and Lexington in Kentucky. Jackson revealed his views against internal improvement at public expense by vetoing the road bill. When the rejected bill was

²³RG 233. Others in the Tennessee delegation were John Bell, John Blair, Robert Desha, Jacob C. Isaacks, Cave Johnson, Pryor Lea, James K. Polk, and James Standifer. Hamer, op. cit., II, 988.

²⁴Congressional Debates, 1829-30, VI, Pt. 1, 21 Cong., 1 sess., 1.

²⁵Ralph Volney Harlow, The Growth of the United States, 2 vols. (Henry Holt and Company, New York [c 1943]), I, 379 et seq.

returned to the House, Crockett voted in favor of passing it over Jackson's veto, but the veto was not overridden. In the House debate Crockett stated that if he had spoken for five days on the subject, not a single vote would have been changed.²⁶

Early in 1830 John Bell of Tennessee introduced a bill providing for the removal of the Indians west of the Mississippi River. One of the longest debates in American history followed, in which Bell spoke for five hours. In its final form the bill had a provision for an appropriation of \$500,000 for the expense of their removal. It passed by a close vote of 103 to 97, with Crockett the only member of the Tennessee delegation voting against it, although he did not speak against it when it was under discussion.

Following the passage of the Indian bill, Crockett in a letter to his constituents reproached the President and his Cabinet for their inhuman policy toward the Indians. He also stated that Congress had ignored petitions from the Indians concerning their grievances; that the President had disregarded treaties made with the Indians; and had supported Georgia in legislation revoking the rights of the Indians under valid treaties.²⁷ By his vote against the Indian bill, Crockett had

²⁶ Homer Carey Hockett, Political and Social Growth of the United States (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1937), 499-500; Folmsbee, op. cit., 67; Congressional Debates, 1829-30, VI, Pt. II, 21 Cong., 1 sess., 820, 842.

²⁷ Congressional Debates, 1829-30, VI, Pt. I, 21 Cong., 1 sess., 580-581; ibid., Pt. II, 819, 993-994, 1133-1136; Crockett, op. cit., 133; Crockett's Circular, 2-3.

District were before this same committee. Crockett's final argument for a select committee was that he lived among the people of this district, knew their situation and needs, and was therefore qualified to serve on a committee to dispose of their lands. Crockett's resolution was accepted and he was made chairman. Crockett was also successful in getting the Legislature's memorial on public lands placed before his committee.³¹

Crockett introduced some resolutions concerning internal improvement and social service. One of these requested the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads to investigate the expedience of establishing a mail route from Duncan's post office in Hardeman County to Mitchell's store in McNairy County, thence to Cypress Bridge at James Smith's in the same county, thence to J. C. Simpson's in Hardin County, thence to Esquire Lettery's, and there intersecting the Savannah mail route through Hardin County. A second resolution requested a mail route from Dyersburg to Rutherford Mills, thence to Baerfields on the west bank of the Mississippi, thence to Rutherford Mills and Natchez Bluff, and thence to Eaton, Trenton, and Gibson City. A third resolution requested the Committee on Internal Improvements to investigate the expediency of surveying a canal route from the head of Muscle Shoals

³¹Congressional Debates, 1829-30, VI, Pt. I, 21 Cong., 1 sess., 474, 480-481.

on the Tennessee in Alabama to some point on the Big Hatchie above Bolivar.³²

Although Crockett was not successful in his efforts to get federal aid for internal improvement in West Tennessee, he supported federal aid for internal improvement elsewhere in the state and in the United States. In 1830 Joseph Hemphill of Pennsylvania, chairman of the Committee on Internal Improvements, introduced in the House a bill which provided for the construction of a national road at federal expense from Buffalo to Washington and thence through East Tennessee to New Orleans. In the bitter debate which followed in Congress the Tennessee delegation reflected the sentiments of its constituents, with the representatives of East Tennessee and David Crockett of West Tennessee speaking in favor of the Hemphill bill. Crockett expressed a preference for the road to terminate on the Mississippi River near Memphis and admitted that he voted for the passage of the bill because he wanted Tennessee to have her "share in the snacks" of the public funds. The Hemphill bill lost, however, by a vote of 88 to 105.³³

Crockett expressed his view on internal improvement at federal expense when he voted in favor of a bill authorizing

³²RG 233. The writer found no references to the above resolutions in the publications of Congress.

³³Folmsbee, Sectionalism and Internal Improvements, 64-66.

a \$50,000 appropriation to improve the navigation of the Ohio and Mississippi. In speaking for its passage, he criticized the states' rights men of the House who argued against it. Crockett declared that it was not feasible for any one state to undertake such a colossal project. It was more than two years later that Congress did pass a law which authorized an appropriation of \$50,000 for improving the navigation of the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers.³⁴

During the Twenty-first Congress Crockett again gave time and thought to the Tennessee land bill. He voted in favor of internal improvement at public expense and introduced some resolutions which concerned internal improvement and social progress in the state and district. His one singular resolution was that to abolish West Point. But he made a political blunder when he dared to oppose President Jackson by voting against the Indian bill. According to Crockett, when he returned home after the adjournment of Congress, he learned as he must have suspected, that his constituency had turned against him.³⁵

But criticism from his colleagues, constituents, and the press did not alter his decision to become a candidate for

³⁴Congressional Debates, 1830-31, VII, 21 Cong., 2 sess., 787-789; ibid., 1833-34, X, Pt. IV, 23 Cong., 1 sess., Appendix, 332.

³⁵Crockett, op. cit., 133.

re-election in 1831. He was opposed by William Fitzgerald, a lawyer of Dresden.³⁶ According to Crockett, and there seems to be no other authority except for writers who have drawn from his Autobiography, the newspapers opposed Crockett on a wide scale. But the thing, as he relates it, that defeated him was a stealthy plan initiated by the lawyers of his district. They made appointments for Crockett to tell the people why he deserted Jackson. But Crockett, not being informed of the meetings, of course was not present, and therefore was accused of trying to dodge the issue. The lawyers proceeded to attack his career in Congress, and substantiated their remarks with newspapers and journals of Congress produced from their saddle-bags. Crockett knew nothing of this political intrigue until it was too late to defend himself. He claims that he had a majority in the total vote of seventeen counties, but his opponent's majority in the populous county of Madison defeated him.³⁷ In April, 1831, Andrew Jackson in a letter to Samuel Jackson Hays said: "I trust for the honor of the state, your Congressional District will not disgrace themselves longer by sending that profligate man Crockett back to Congress." Shortly after the election Crockett in a letter to Dr. Calvin Jones about a land deal stated that he was expecting the

³⁶Williams, West Tennessee, 268.

³⁷Crockett, op. cit., 134.

returns to be in Fitzgerald's favor, but he was proud to say that he had not catered to any faction of the party and made this generalization: "I would rather be politically buried than to be hypocritically immortalized."³⁸

When the Twenty-second Congress convened in 1831, Crockett contested the votes cast in Madison County which gave a majority to Fitzgerald. Depositions taken by Allen Deberry, Justice of the Peace in that county, and signed by the election officials, were sent to the House of Representatives.³⁹ The House referred the depositions to the Committee of Elections. From a total of 16,482 votes, official returns showed that Fitzgerald had a majority of 586; and the committee being discharged from further investigations, the matter was laid on the table.⁴⁰

However, Crockett's defeat in 1831 did not end his political career. In 1833 he again announced his candidacy for Congress. Crockett hoped that before the election the Legislature would gerrymander the district in his favor by taking Madison, the county which had defeated him in 1831,

³⁸Williams, Historic Madison, 403; ibid., 422. Ed Knox Boyd of Bolivar, Tennessee, has the original letter from Crockett. Ibid.

³⁹RG 233. Election officials signing the depositions were two judges, James Freeman and William Jackson; a deputy sheriff, David Jarret; and a clerk, John T. Bryan. See Appendix.

⁴⁰Niles' Weekly Register, XLI, 150, 332; RG 233.

out of the district. But this was not done. Crockett's opponent was the incumbent Fitzgerald. But the people reversed the situation of 1831 and gave Crockett a majority of 202 votes. For the third time since 1827, Crockett had been elected to serve in the House of Representatives and would represent the Western District in the Twenty-third Congress.⁴¹ The first session convened on December 2, 1833, and remained in session until June 30, 1834.⁴² This was during Jackson's second administration and the President's bank policy was causing much public comment. Some praised the foresight of the executive but others denounced his action as brought out hereafter in this chapter. While the presidential election of 1832 was in progress Jackson had vetoed the bill to recharter the United States Bank. Jackson considered his re-election to be a mandate from the people, and was determined to destroy the bank.⁴³ Early in the second administration he began to withdraw the federal funds and deposit them in various state banks. Many in the South who had stock in the national bank

⁴¹Crockett, op. cit., 134-135.

⁴²Congressional Globe, 23 Cong., 1 sess., 1, 480. Others in the Tennessee delegation were John Bell, John Blair, Samuel Bunch, David W. Dickinson, William C. Dunlap, John B. Forester, William W. Inge, Cave Johnson, Luke Lea, Balie Peyton, James K. Polk, and James Standifer. Hamer, op. cit., II, 989.

⁴³Norman L. Parks, "The Career of John Bell as Congressman from Tennessee, 1827-1841," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, I (September, 1942), 235.

were, of course, opposed to Jackson's withdrawal policy. The bank had also loaned money to Richmond newspapers and to Southern men, including George McDuffie and David Crockett, at a low rate of interest.⁴⁴

Memorials were being sent to Washington from the various states requesting a recharter of the United States Bank. The House raised the question as to the expediency of spending money to print the many names signed to these memorials. Various representatives spoke for and against spending money for a mere listing of names. Crockett's speech in favor of printing the names seems typical of the language and reasoning of the speaker and is quoted below:

Sir, as I am the only person from Tennessee in this House who am opposed to the Administration, I hope I may get a few words in: that I may say what are my notions on these matters Sir, are we to stick at such trifles as a few dollars in the printing a matter so important? It seems, sir, to me to be something like loading a twenty-four pounder to shoot a flea. We are spending three or four thousand dollars in discussing the printing of a matter that perhaps, after all, will not be twenty cost [sic]. . . . I love, sir, to see the petitioners come here; . . . every day my letters tell me they wish this question settled. They know very well, in my district, the character of the man, who, when he takes anything into his head, will carry it into effect. They know how I should act in this bank business, for I told them before I was elected, how I should vote--that I would recharter the bank, and restore the deposits [sic]. . . . Sir, the people have a right to tell their grievances, and,

⁴⁴Bassett, United States, 414; William B. Hesseltine, The South in American History (Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1943), 238.

sir, I tell you, they must not be refused--I can't stand it any longer--I won't.

By a vote of 112 to 90 the House agreed to print the names signed to the memorials.⁴⁵ At this time Crockett in a letter to Colonel Thomas Henderson in Madison City spoke of Jackson's bank policy as unconstitutional and more serious even than the former nullification question in South Carolina.⁴⁶

Near the end of the session a debate was held in Congress in regard to Jackson's removal of the government funds from the United States Bank. A joint resolution of the Senate and House declared that the reasons for the removal of the deposits given in a report by the Secretary of the Treasury at the beginning of the session were neither sufficient nor satisfactory. Because Polk moved that the resolution be laid on the table, Crockett accused Polk of dodging the bank issue and proceeded to ask for a call of the House. Crockett was called to order so often that his speech could hardly be heard. He moved further that the Sergeant-at-arms bring in those members absent without excuses. This motion lost by a vote of 107 to 76, but Polk's motion to lay the resolution on the table carried by 114 to 101.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Congressional Globe, 23 Cong., 1 sess., 195-197.

⁴⁶Williams, Historic Madison, 423. Tomy McCorry, Jackson, Tennessee, has the original letter. Ibid.

⁴⁷Congressional Debates, 1833-34, X, Pt. IV, 23 Cong., 1 sess., 4467-4468.

Crockett revealed the potential evil, as he saw it, in Jackson's policy of putting federal money in state banks with the burlesque comparison quoted below:

It requires an eye as insinuating as a dissecting knife to see what safety there is in placing one million of the public funds in some little country shaving shop with no more than one hundred thousand dollars capital. This bank, we will suppose without being too particular, is in the neighbourhood [sic] of some of the public lands, where speculators, who have everything to gain and nothing to lose swarm like crows about carrion. They buy the United States' lands upon a large scale, get discounts from the aforesaid shaving shop which are made upon a large scale also upon United States' funds; they pay the whole purchase money with these discounts and get a clear title to the land, so that when the shaving shop comes to make a Flemish account of her transactions, "the Government" [President Jackson] will discover that he has not only lost the original deposit [sic], but a large part of the public lands to boot.⁴⁸

In June, 1834, in a letter to William Hack of Madison, Tennessee, Crockett gave his reasons for voting against a bank committee to examine the United States Bank after Jackson had removed the deposits. He compared it to hanging a man and then summoning a jury to prove his innocence or guilt. He objected to it for another reason, and perhaps this was the real one. He concluded that an investigation would only excite the people and have a tendency to revive Jackson's popularity, which Crockett believed to be waning.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Crockett, op. cit., 222-223.

⁴⁹"Some Pioneer Letters," American Historical Magazine, II (April, 1897), 179-180. See Appendix.

Crockett again, on December 17, 1833, placed the Tennessee land bill before the House with a resolution asking for the appointment of a select committee of seven members with the authority to make a fair, just, and advantageous disposal of the vacant lands south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line. Crockett presented other bills concerned with social service and internal improvement. One of these was a resolution requesting the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads to investigate the expediency of establishing a mail route from Totten's Wells in Obion County, by Seth Bedford's to Troy.⁵⁰ Failing apparently in his effort for a new mail route for his district, he presented a third resolution requesting an appropriation of \$60,000, but later reduced to \$30,000, to improve the navigation of the Forked Deer, Hatchie, and Obion Rivers. This resolution was likewise rejected.⁵¹ Although Crockett failed to get an appropriation to improve the navigation of these rivers, he was bidding for, if not intentionally, the patronage of his district. All classes of his constituency, the rich and poor, the merchants and politicians, were alike in their zeal for the execution of such an urgent project.⁵²

⁵⁰RG 233.

⁵¹Congressional Globe, 23 Cong., 1 sess., 392, 469.

⁵²Williams, Historic Madison, 124-125.

But, on the other hand, it seems that Crockett would have lost, in some measure, the respect of his constituency by refusing near the end of the session to vote for resolutions adopting a vote of thanks for the services of the late speaker, Andrew Stevenson. He did not vote against the resolutions, but withheld his vote for them, justifying his action with this remark: "I am not inclined to adopt a vote of thanks to any man without knowing what for, or being satisfied they are deserved."⁵³

Toward the end of this session Crockett decided to forego his duties as legislator for a couple of weeks and visit some cities in the East for a few personal reasons. He had never seen these parts of his country; he admired the members of Congress from these sections; he hoped to miss the discussions on the appropriation bill; and also he had been advised by his physician to take a rest. Accordingly, he left Washington on April 25, 1834, for a tour of Baltimore and other cities.⁵⁴ When visiting numerous places in these cities, he was called on to speak, apparently under the auspices of the Whigs.⁵⁵ It was expected that Crockett would be received with

⁵³Niles' Weekly Register, XLVI, 321. The vote was 97 to 49. No Tennessee Representative voted in the negative. Ibid., 337.

⁵⁴Crockett, op. cit., 143-144.

⁵⁵Walter Blair, "Six Davy Crocketts," Southwest Review, XXV (July, 1940), 458.

enthusiasm by the Whigs in the North because it was generally known that he belonged to the faction that opposed President Jackson and his policies.

However, the anti-Jackson faction did not become a unified group in Tennessee until 1834. In that year the revolt against Jackson was organized in Tennessee by John Bell around the candidacy of Hugh Lawson White for the Democratic nomination for President against Martin Van Buren, whom Jackson was grooming for his successor. White was nominated by the Tennessee Legislature in 1835, and he remained in the running even after Van Buren was nominated by the Democratic National Convention.⁵⁶ According to Gresham, Bell broke with the Democrats in 1834 when he defeated Polk for Speaker of the House. But in his speech at Vauxhall Gardens in Nashville on May 23, 1835, Bell stated that for the most part he agreed with the principles of the Democrats; he had supported and respected President Jackson; he had no ambitions to be the leader of a new party; but he did see in the policy of the Administration a threat to political independence.⁵⁷ It was

⁵⁶Powell Moore, "The Political Background of the Revolt against Jackson in Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, No. 4 (January, 1932), 60; Joseph Howard Parks, John Bell of Tennessee (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge [c 1950]), 84-88, 111-112.

⁵⁷L. Paul Gresham, "The Public Career of Hugh Lawson White," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, III (December 1944), 311; J. H. Parks, op. cit., 100-101.

the policy of the anti-Jackson group in Tennessee to claim that they were actually not Whigs but independent Democrats; but they worked in harmony with the national Whig organization.

In general three groups of people drifted into the Whig Party in the South: Jackson's personal enemies; those who opposed a party built around a personality that might become the party's dictator; and the conservative business men who wanted sound money.⁵⁸ Jackson was indignant over the activities of the Whigs in Tennessee in the middle 1830's. In a letter to Alfred Balch, he stated that all the Tennessee delegation, with Crockett as their tool, excepting Polk, Grundy, and Johnson, in a secret caucus had brought out White for President. In this letter and in others to Polk, Grundy, and Andrew J. Hutchings, he repeatedly referred to the rival Whig group as Bell, Crockett, & Co., and of their intentions to destroy the effects of his administration.⁵⁹

In the following discussion of Crockett's visit to Eastern cities, the writer is again, of necessity, relying on

⁵⁸N. L. Parks, loc. cit., 245. The Whig Party took its name from Englishmen and Americans of the eighteenth century who opposed King George III. It was organized in New York and Connecticut in 1834. Harlow, op. cit., 387.

⁵⁹Jackson to Balch, February 16, 1835, Bassett, Correspondence, V, 327; Jackson to Polk, May 12, 1835, ibid., 345-346; Jackson to Grundy, October 5, 1835, ibid., 371; Jackson to Hutchings, October 31, 1835, ibid., 374; Id. to Id., ibid., June 30, 1838 [sic], 554-555. J. H. Parks, op. cit., 108, corrects the date in question to 1835.

his Autobiography. As in the case of his campaign for re-election to Congress in 1831, writers about Crockett's tour to the East have relied on this book and to a great extent have quoted from it. Crockett visited Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. At Baltimore he visited some historic monuments. In speaking of the patriotism of heroes, who had fallen in defense of this country, he told the people that their country was in danger again--not from the British, but, as he saw it, from infidelity and dishonesty of the government at Washington.⁶⁰

After leaving Baltimore, he went to Philadelphia. Here he visited the Water-works, the Mint, the Asylum, and the Exchange. He told the people that he had not come to their city for political reasons, but on sight-seeing trips he sometimes made unfavorable references to President Jackson. At the Exchange he spoke to more than five thousand people and that evening attended the Walnut Street Theatre, which was showing "Jim Crow." But he did not consider the city theatre as capable of providing wholesome entertainment as the backwoods country dance. Philosophizing on the theatre, he had this comment:

What a pity it is that these theatres are not so contrived that everybody could go; but the fact is, backwoodsman as I am, I have heard some things in them that was a leetle [sic] too tough for good women

⁶⁰Crockett, op. cit., 144.

and modest men; and that's a great pity, because there are thousands of scenes of real life that might be exhibited, both for amusement and edification, without offending.

Some citizens of Philadelphia presented him with a seal for his watch chain which bore an engraving of two horses in full speed and over them the words "Go ahead." On the same occasion the Young Whigs of Philadelphia presented him with a rifle made to Crockett's order. After the presentation ceremonies a Colonel Pulaski took Crockett in his carriage to visit the Navy Hospital and Navy Yard. The next morning a Colonel Reeside took him to see the railroad, Schuylkill Bridge, and the Gerard School. Since this was his last evening in the Quaker city, Crockett was given a farewell picnic party.⁶¹

From Philadelphia he went to New York. Upon his arrival, a delegation of Young Whigs took him to the American Hotel. That evening he attended the Park Theatre and was more impressed by Miss Fanny Kemble than he had been by the showing of "Jim Crow" in Philadelphia. The next morning he visited the Courier, Enquirer, and Star newspaper offices, and at one

⁶¹Ibid., 147-153. Some years ago a great-great-granddaughter of Crockett in a letter to an editor stated that she had in her possession an autobiography of Benjamin Franklin published in 1825. The book belonged to Crockett and on the fly-leaf he had written and signed his motto, as follows:

"I'll leave this truth for others when I am dead.

First be sure you are right and then go ahead."

Sketch of David Crockett, prepared by The Haskin Service, Washington, D. C. See also Crockett, op. cit., 142.

o'clock made a speech at the Exchange. After speaking he went to Peale's Museum and then to the City Hall to meet the town mayor. That evening he dined with about one hundred Young Whigs. Augustine S. Clayton of Georgia and Gulian C. Verplanck were present. Clayton, at Crockett's invitation, made a lengthy after-dinner speech. Crockett concluded with a short speech in which he told his hosts that his connection with General Jackson could be compared to the following story of "the Red Cow."

. . . that as long as General Jackson went strait [*sic*], I followed him; but when he began to go this way, and that way, and every way, I wouldn't go after him: like the boy whose master ordered him to plough across the field to the red cow. Well, he began to plough, and she began to walk; and he ploughed all forenoon after her. So when the master came, he swore at him for going so crooked. "Why, sir," said the boy, "you told me to plough to the red cow, and I kept after her, but she always kept moving."

The next day he attended by invitation a flag raising at Battery Park and that evening, rather than offend the manager, he reluctantly attended the Bowery Theatre. The following day he participated in a rifle-match at Jersey City before going to Boston.⁶²

In Boston Crockett visited, among other things, the Harding Art Gallery, Faneuil Hall, and Bunker Hill. As in other cities, he was honor guest at a dinner given by the

⁶²Crockett, op. cit., 154-163.

Young Whigs. In his after-dinner speech, as was to be expected, he again attacked the Administration. However, his visit to Boston changed his thinking about the people of New England. He told the Whigs that he, like other Southerners, had always considered the people of New England selfish and cunning, but now he admired them for their independence of spirit, liberality, courage, and industry.⁶³ He declined an invitation to visit Harvard at Cambridge, because he feared they would make him a Doctor of Laws, a title which he said he did not deserve, because he had not earned it. But he visited the cotton mills at Lowell and was favorably impressed by the management, by the happy and prosperous state of the young girls employed in the mills, and by the beautiful cloth manufactured in the Lowell factories.⁶⁴

Before his visit to Boston, Crockett had been only a character of myth and fiction to the people of Massachusetts, because of the way the press had portrayed him in popular stories. Now the Boston editors referred to those stories as ridiculous, were impressed with the genuine Crockett, and changed the opinion of the populace about the Congressman visitor from Washington.⁶⁵ Crockett returned to Washington

⁶³Ibid., 167-176.

⁶⁴Ibid., 180, 183-185.

⁶⁵C. Grant Loomis, "Davy Crockett Visits Boston," The New England Quarterly, XX (March, 1947), 397, 399.

by way of Providence, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, arriving by a prearranged schedule just after the House had taken a vote on the appropriation bill and was setting the day of adjournment.⁶⁶

The second session of the Twenty-third Congress convened December 1, 1834, and continued in session until March 3, 1835.⁶⁷ The first resolution submitted by Crockett was another of his repeated efforts to get federal aid for improving navigation of the Obion, Forked Deer, and Hatchie Rivers. He had made three unsuccessful attempts for this project in the previous session. Again the House rejected Crockett's bid for internal improvement for his district.⁶⁸

Failing in this, Crockett turned his attention again to the Tennessee land bill. On January 2, 1835, as chairman of the select committee appointed to make the most equitable and advantageous disposition of the land south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line, he submitted House Report 120, drawn up in three sections, as follows. Section one provided that the proceeds derived from the sale of these lands should be placed in a permanent fund to be used for erecting common schools. According to the second section sales were to be

⁶⁶Crockett, op. cit., 187-189.

⁶⁷Congressional Globe, 23 Cong., 2 sess., 1, 329.

⁶⁸RG 233. On the reverse side of the resolution Crockett made a notation that the bill was rejected.

negotiated on a cash basis for a term of twelve months after the opening of the lands for sale and at a price not less than 12-1/2 cents per acre. Section three provided that all persons who, on or before December 1, 1833, should have cleared and enclosed one acre of land and built a house on it, should have priority in the purchase of at least two hundred acres of vacant land including his improvement. If two or more persons were settled upon the same land, it might be divided equally between them, unless they agreed to terms mutually satisfactory.⁶⁹

Crockett then submitted House Report 126, accompanying the foregoing report. The facts of the second report were based on a report made to the second session of the Twenty-first Congress by the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Tennessee. Crockett's report stated that more than half of approximately seven million acres of land under question had been appropriated by North Carolina military warrants; that the remaining land was undesirable, but occupied by poor people, who should have preemption rights, at a small price, to the land they occupied; and that the committee was requesting a grant from the state, equivalent to one section in each township, for the use of common schools.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

In a letter written to John R. Ash a few days before making these reports to the House, Crockett expressed optimism, even assurance, concerning the passage of the land bill, which, he said, would bless many poor men with homes.⁷¹ Crockett's confidence seems to have been premature. The Tennessee delegation opposed him and the opposition had the effect of postponing the relinquishment of this territory until 1846. However, Crockett's case for the squatters was won in 1841, for on February 18 of that year Congress passed an act which authorized Tennessee to act as agent for the United States in the disposition of her lands south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line. The act stipulated that when Tennessee had satisfied North Carolina claims, the squatters should have the right of preemption to not more than two hundred acres at 12-1/2 cents an acre. The proceeds from the sale of the remaining lands was to be paid to the United States Treasury.⁷²

In a memorial to Congress in 1845 the Tennessee Legislature asked the United States to relinquish the remaining vacant lands in the Congressional Reservation for the support

⁷¹Williams, Historic Madison, 426-427.

⁷²Henry D. Whitney, The Land Laws of Tennessee (W. H. Anderson & Co., Law Book Publishers, 1893), 283-285. Abernethy is in error in stating that the relinquishment was made in 1841. Abernethy, Frontier to Plantation, 260.

of public education. In anticipation of such relinquishment the Tennessee Assembly on January 19, 1838, passed an act to set aside \$40,000 from the sale of these lands for the support of a college in the Western District. Accordingly, on August 7, 1846, Congress enacted a law which surrendered to Tennessee the title to all land south and west of the Congressional Reservation Line; and released to the State the proceeds of the lands sold by Tennessee while acting as agent of the United States under the act of 1841.⁷³

At the close of the previous session a committee had been appointed to investigate conditions in the Post Office Department. This committee had submitted to this session two reports of their findings. The House was considering a resolution to print 25,000 extra copies of these reports. Crockett stated that he had brought charges four years ago against this department, but they had been ignored. Therefore, since he now believed that the committee's reports substantiated his charges, since he saw no reason for spending money to make investigations and not follow up with a dispersion of the information to the people, and since the newspapers published reports in part only, as a member of the Committee on the Accounts of the House, he moved to print 50,000 copies of the committee's reports. After a long

⁷³Whitney, op. cit., 277, 298-303.

discussion the House agreed by a vote of 101 to 93 to print only 20,000 copies of the reports.⁷⁴

March 3 was only a few days off and Crockett, along with other Congressmen, would soon be returning home. No doubt the Tennessee Representative from the Western District was eager to leave Washington. In a letter written to William Theodore Yeatman, he compared being in Congress to being a convict in a penitentiary, and spoke of President Jackson as being a Cromwell, Caesar, or Bonaparte.⁷⁵ Although unhappy in Congress at times as the foregoing letter shows, he always had a ready wit, which was often an occasion for mirth, such as the following incident. Once, when he was in the company of a Congressman from Massachusetts, a man drove some mules down Pennsylvania Avenue. Whereupon, the Congressman from Massachusetts said: "Hello, Crockett, here's a lot of your constituents passing. Where are they going to?" Crockett quickly replied: "They are going to Massachusetts to teach school."⁷⁶

As a member of the Twenty-third Congress, Crockett had worked to secure the passage of the Tennessee land bill and

⁷⁴Congressional Globe, 23 Cong., 2 sess., 135, 244-246, 249.

⁷⁵Knoxville News-Sentinel, April 5, 1955. Mrs. P. H. Moore, Knoxville, great-granddaughter of Yeatman, has a copy of the original letter, which is in the State Library at Nashville. Ibid.

⁷⁶"Instruction from the South," The Taylor-Trotwood Magazine, XI (October, 1910), 268.

to procure federal aid for internal improvement and social progress for his constituency, but in vain. On the other hand, he had opposed President Jackson's policies, especially that of withdrawing the government funds from the United States Bank. By his tour to the cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston he had unquestionably added to the political excitement already set in motion by the Whigs in those cities.

Although Crockett knew that he had made a political blunder by his adverse criticism of President Jackson, he still did not foresee that his political career might be endangered. In 1835 he was a candidate for re-election to Congress. Adam Huntsman, who, as previously stated, refused to run against Crockett in 1829, was his opponent in this Congressional race.⁷⁷

Of course Jackson and his friends were determined to defeat Crockett. This was no easy task, because Crockett's common sense, honesty, moral courage, humor, and wit had made him popular in his district.⁷⁸ Jackson wanted to defeat Crockett because of the position he had taken in Congress in regard to the President's policies toward the Indians, internal improvement at national expense, and the United States

⁷⁷Crockett, op. cit., 214.

⁷⁸Williams, Historic Madison, 80.

Bank. Moreover, he hoped to defeat Crockett because of his criticism of Martin Van Buren for whom Jackson was seeking the nomination for President in 1836. Crockett himself had aspirations, if meager, for the White House. Furthermore, he considered that in the past his friends had been as serious in considering him for President as had Van Buren's former promoters.⁷⁹ Crockett accused President Jackson of using his franking privilege to send copies of the Washington Globe to all the postmasters of the Western District for circulation. Referring to this, Crockett made this terse comment: "This is what I call small potatoes and few of a hill."⁸⁰

Near the close of the campaign, Crockett and Huntsman had spoken together for what they agreed was the last time. Each, returning home, remembered that a large crowd would be gathered at Dresden, and decided to stop at this town. Crockett reached Dresden first and was already speaking to the crowd when Huntsman arrived. But Huntsman made his way through the crowd and stood in front of Crockett. This irritated Crockett and he exclaimed: "Adam Huntsman, I believe if I were to go to hell, that you would follow me there."⁸¹

⁷⁹David Crockett, The Life of Martin Van Buren (Robert Wright, Philadelphia, 1835), 4-5, 24-25. Claude G. Bowers, The Party Battles of the Jackson Period (Houghton Mifflin Company, New York [c 1922]), 436-438, calls this book the most unconventional campaign biography ever published in America.

⁸⁰Crockett, Autobiography, 220.

⁸¹Williams, Historic Madison, 80n. Crockett referred to Huntsman as "Old Black Hawk." Crockett, op. cit., 135.

Crockett made a vigorous campaign, but on August 11, 1835, at his home in Weakley County he admitted that Huntsman had won by a majority of 230 votes.⁸² Shortly after his defeat, disappointed and depressed, he made this generalization about his past and future:

My life has been one of danger, toil, and privation, but these difficulties I had to encounter at a time when I considered it nothing more than right good sport to surmount them; but now I start anew upon my own hook, and God only grant that it may be strong enough to support the weight that may be hung upon it. I have a new row to hoe, a long and rough one, but come what will I'll go ahead.

Speaking later at a meeting of his constituents, he said:

"I am done with politics, for the present. You may all go to hell, and I'll go to Texas."⁸³

Before leaving, Crockett wrote a poem, revised by a more reputable poet, whom he called "Pe[g]leg" Longfellow. In this poem, which is quoted below, he expressed his sentiments on leaving his home and family for the strange land of Texas.

Farewell to the mountains whose mazes to me
Were more beautiful far than Eden could be;
No fruit was forbidden, but Nature had spread
Her bountiful board, and her children were fed.
The hills were our garner--our herds wildly grew,
And Nature was shepherd and husbandman too.
I felt like a monarch, yet thought like a man,
As I thank'd the Great Giver, and worshipp'd his plan.

⁸²Ibid., 219. Crockett's district failed to return him to Congress in 1835, but after his death at the Alamo, the same district sent his son, John Wesley Crockett, to Congress for two terms. Williams, West Tennessee, 269-270.

⁸³Crockett, op. cit., 222-224.

The home I forsake where my offspring arose:
The graves I forsake where my children repose.
The home I redeem'd from the savage and wild;
The home I have loved as a father his child;
The corn that I planted, the fields that I clear'd,
The flocks that I raised, and the cabin I rear'd;
The wife of my bosom--Farewell to ye all!
In the land of the stranger I rise--or I fall.

Farewell to my country!--I fought for thee well,
When the savage rush'd forth like the demons from hell.
In peace or in war I have stood by thy side--
My country, for thee I have lived--would have died!
But I am cast off--my career now is run,
And I wander abroad like the prodigal son--
Where the wild savage roves, and the broad prairies
spread,
The fallen--despised--will again go ahead!⁸⁴

⁸⁴Ibid., 224-225.

CHAPTER V

TO TEXAS AND THE ALAMO

When Crockett turned westward to Texas, soon after his defeat for Congress in August, 1835, he was not only breaking home ties, but was also giving up the once fervent but now blighted hope of reaching the last rung on the political ladder, that of President of the United States.

In such a state of mind it is not surprising that with a heavy heart Crockett made his way through the forest to Mill's Point where he boarded a river boat,¹ the Mediterranean, which carried him down the Mississippi on the first lap of his journey to Texas.² At this time the Texans were engaged in a revolution to redeem the political and economic rights being denied them by Mexico's President, Santa Anna. Conditions for the Americans in Texas had changed since the arrival of Stephen F. Austin with the first group of American immigrants in 1821 and that of Sam Houston in 1832. Texas had been added to the adjoining state of Coahuila and a ban had been placed on further immigration from the United States. In 1834 Santa Anna abolished Mexico's constitution, which provided for a

¹Crockett, Autobiography, 226-227. For references to Crockett's presidential aspirations see ibid., 83, 87, 239, and supra, 103.

²Taylor, op. cit., 58.

federal system of government like that of the United States, and made himself autocrat of a centralized system. In 1835 Texas revolted in defense of the federal constitution.³

Others had preceded Crockett to Texas. Some of the immigrants were debtors fleeing from their creditors in the States; others were bankrupt shopkeepers, who closed their places of business and wrote on the doors, "G.T.T." (Gone to Texas). According to Brady, Crockett hoped first to assist the Texans in reclaiming their freedoms and preserving a democratic government and then to make a fortune for himself and his family in this new country.⁴

At Memphis Crockett spent some time as the guest of some personal friends⁵ at the City Hotel. The story is told that the last evening Crockett spent in Memphis some of his associates suggested a liquor party, which developed into a very hilarious affair. Crockett participated amply but did, it seems, temper the occasion in some degree with numerous speeches designed to keep the revelry within moderation.⁶

³Bassett, United States, 419-420; Hockett, op. cit., 523-524; William C. Binkley, ed., Official Correspondence of the Texan Revolution, 1835-1836, 2 vols. (D. Appleton-Century Company, New York [c 1936]), I, xxiii-xxiv.

⁴Cyrus Townsend Brady, "David Crockett," McClure's Magazine, XVIII (January, 1902), 254.

⁵Edwin Hickman, C. D. McClean, M. B. Winchester, Robert Lawrence, Gus Young, and others. James D. Davis, History of Memphis (Hite, Crumpton & Kelly, 1873), 139.

⁶Ibid., 140-146.

When the Mediterranean reached Helena in Arkansas, Crockett was surrounded by bankers, soldiers, gamblers, and speculators, who were interested in the future of Texas. On board the boat they raised \$80,000 to help the Texans in their campaign for freedom. The subscription, entrusted to David Crockett, James Bowie, Colonel Joseph M. Hawkins, Captain William B. Travis, and Captain James W. Fannin, was later put in charge of John Slidell, Governor White, and S. S. Prentiss, and used to free Texas from Mexico.⁷

Did Crockett, a soldier and ex-Congressman, go to the Alamo accompanied by a gambler, a bee-hunter, a pirate, and an Indian, each of whom he picked up at various places along the route, as his Autobiography relates? Or did he go with a company

⁷Charles Fletcher Allen, David Crockett, Scout (J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia [c 1911]), 271-272. Fannin is identified in Binkley, op. cit., I, 19. The paper bearing the names of the subscribers to the fund, which Ellis shows was \$90,000, and was also called the "Crockett Fund," read as follows:

We men, whose names are here set down, obligate our willingness to pay the amount opposite to any person who shall be vouched for by a majority of this committee--Colonel David Crockett, James Bowie, Colonel Hawkins, Captain Fannin, and Captain Travers [Travis]--this money to be used for the purpose of aiding our countrymen now in the field, and to be further used in recruiting five companies of two hundred and fifty men each. And it is understood and agreed upon that these men will immediately march south to Red River, and enter into Texas, and there await orders to join such forces as may be present to cooperate with the United States army, and they are to serve under such officers as may be assigned to their command. Ellis, op. cit., 202-203.

of men, as reliable sources indicate? In the following pages the writer is presenting material pertaining to each account.

Encouraged with the financial aid of a several thousand dollars' subscription donated by responsible citizens of Helena, Crockett and others whom he met on the Mediterranean on their way to aid the Texans, began their journey across Arkansas. They arrived at Little Rock on the Arkansas River on November 12, 1835.⁸ According to his Autobiography, Crockett went immediately to Little Rock's principal tavern where a large crowd was already assembled. True to form he spoke to them on his perennial topic, the Jackson Administration and Martin Van Buren, the "Little Flying Dutchman." Before attending a public dinner that evening he participated in a shooting match using "Betsy," the rifle presented to him at Philadelphia by the Whigs. In his after-dinner speech he again attacked Jackson and his supporters.⁹ He devoted a portion of his speech to advising ironically those aspiring for success in politics. He told them how to be winning candidates and how to proceed when in office for their own benefits even if it required double-crossing the constituency. Passages from this part of his speech are quoted below:

Attend all public meetings . . . get some friends
to move that you take the chair; if you fail in this

⁸John Gould Fletcher, Arkansas (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1947), 104.

⁹Crockett, op. cit., 229-240.

attempt, make a push to be appointed secretary, the proceedings of course will be published, and your name is introduced to the public. But should you fail in both undertakings, get two or three acquaintances, over a bottle of whiskey, to pass some resolutions, . . . publish them even if you pay the printer--it will answer the purpose of breaking the ice which is the main point in these matters. Intrigue until you are elected an officer of the militia; this is the second step towards promotion, . . . do not be discouraged--Rome wasn't built in a day.

If your ambitions or circumstances compel you to serve your country, and earn three dollars a day, by becoming a member of the legislature, you must first publicly avow that the constitution of the state is a shackle upon free and liberal legislation; . . . as little use . . . as an old almanac.

. . . visit your constituents far and wide. Treat liberally, and drink freely, in order to rise in their estimation, though you fall in your own. True, you may be called a drunken dog by some of the clean shirt and silk stocking gentry, but the real rough necks will style you a jovial fellow, their votes are certain, and frequently count double. Do all you can to appear to advantage in the eyes of the women. . . kiss and slabber their children, wipe their noses, and pat them on the head; . . .

Promise all that is asked, . . . and more if you can think of anything. Offer to build a bridge or a church, to divide a county, create a batch of new offices, make a turnpike, or anything they like. Promises cost nothing, . . .

Get up on all occasions, . . . and make long-winded speeches, . . . Rail against taxes, . . . wind up with a flourish about the heroes who fought and bled for our liberties in the times that tried men's souls.

If any charity be going forward, be at the top of it provided it is to be advertised publicly; .

. . . when once elected, why a fig for the dirty children, the promises, the bridges, the churches, the taxes, the offices, and the subscriptions, for it is absolutely necessary to forget all these before you can become a through-going politician, and a patriot of the first water.¹⁰

¹⁰Ibid., 240-242.

From Little Rock Crockett traveled horseback a distance of one hundred and twenty miles to Fulton on the Red River. Friends at Little Rock had given him a horse for the trip to Fulton and Crockett, accompanied by four or five friends, rode away amid the blare of drum and fife. When they reached the Washita (Ouachita) River about fifty miles beyond Little Rock, Crockett's companions returned home. In crossing this river, Crockett met a frontier missionary with whom he traveled for some distance across Arkansas. Riding along together, he and his missionary companion talked of religion as well as politics. Crockett experienced a new faith, and pent-up prejudice and bitterness seemed to give place to a feeling of remorse and gratitude. Arriving at Fulton Crockett left his horse to be returned to its owner, and then took a boat down the Red River on his way to Natchitoches, Louisiana.¹¹ On the boat, according to his Autobiography, Crockett met an interesting, but dejected character, whom he called Thimblorig because he was amusing his fellow passengers in a game of gambling with thimbles, which had become Thimblorig's occupation. Crockett was able to persuade Thimblorig to give up a career of gambling and accompany him on the journey to Texas. When they reached Natchitoches, they met a bee-hunter, whom Crockett says he also persuaded to go with him to Texas.¹²

¹¹Ibid., 243 et seq.

¹²Ibid., 253 et seq.

After a short stay in Natchitoches, they procured horses and set out for Nacogdoches in the present state of Texas. At Nacogdoches Crockett's horse became lame and he traded it for a wild mustang at a cheap price. Being in Texas and getting closer to the scene of battle revived Crockett's fighting spirit. Before leaving a tavern at Nacogdoches he made a brief address to a crowd gathered there and concluded with this remark: "I will die, with my Betsey [sic] in my arms. No, I will not die--I'll grin down the walls of the Alamo, and the Americans will lick up the Mexicans like fine salt."¹³

At San Augustine on January 9, 1836, Crockett wrote a letter to his daughter, Margaret Flowers at Gibson City, Tennessee, in which he spoke with pride of the hospitality he had received at Nacogdoches and elsewhere. He also mentioned that he had taken the oath of allegiance to the government of Texas, had enrolled as a volunteer from the United States, and expressed confidence of being elected a delegate to a convention that would declare the independence of Texas. He assured

¹³Sprague, op. cit., 156-157. A resident of Nacogdoches, when reading a paper at a meeting of the town's Concilium Club on May 18, 1899, mentioned a number of men who had added something to the town's history. In the list she included David Crockett, who, she stated, was given public recognition when he stopped at Nacogdoches on his way to the Alamo. Emma B. Shindler, "San Augustine," Texas Historical Association Quarterly, III (July, 1899), 42.

his daughter that he was favorably impressed with Texas and added: "I had rather be here in my present situation than to be elected to a seat in Congress for life."¹⁴

Through prairies and canebrakes, Crockett's party proceeded in the direction of San Antonio, three hundred miles away. When they reached Trinity River near the present town of Crockett, they procured a night's lodging in the cabin of a poor white woman.¹⁵ Here, according to Crockett's Autobiography, he added two recruits to his group, a pirate and an Indian, who said they were on their way to Texas.¹⁶ The next day they encountered a group of about fifty Comanches, who, however, proved to be friendly. Their chief's offer to escort Crockett over the San Antonio trail to the Colorado River was wisely accepted, and rewarded with a Bowie knife as a gift from Crockett.¹⁷

¹⁴Williams, Historic Madison, 427-428. J. D. Pate of Martin, Tennessee, has the original letter. Ibid. See Appendix. Crockett refused to take the prescribed oath of allegiance to the government of Texas until the word "republican" was added after "future" in the phrase to "any future government of Texas." Brady, loc. cit., 258. In a letter to James W. Robinson, Lieut. Governor of the Provisional Government of Texas, James Gaines stated that Crockett made a speech at San Augustine on January 8, and was to be a delegate to the Convention on March 1. Gaines to Robinson, January 9, 1836, Binkley, op. cit., I, 282-284. As history shows, Crockett did not go to the Convention, but was fighting at the Alamo at that time.

¹⁵Allen, op. cit., 282.

¹⁶Crockett, op. cit., 290-291.

¹⁷Allen, op. cit., 285-286.

At Bastrop, Texas, Crockett stopped to have his gun repaired by a gunsmith by the name of John Berry, who had gone to Texas in 1826 as a member of a group of colonists led by Sterling C. Robertson. Berry welded a silver band across a break in Crockett's gun.¹⁸

When Crockett was within twenty miles of San Antonio, he saw a group of mounted Mexicans approaching. When they demanded surrender, Crockett and his companions answered with gunfire. Shots were exchanged, and the Mexicans broke ranks in wild confusion. As Crockett, in pursuit of the fleeing Mexicans, entered San Antonio, he got a glimpse of the flag of Texas flying above the Alamo.¹⁹

The foregoing discussion has related the account of Crockett's tour to Texas, as given in his Autobiography. There are discrepancies between this account and the events which were recorded in contemporary newspapers and documentary sources. In November, 1835, two Little Rock newspapers reported that Colonel Crockett and a party of six or eight men, all completely armed and well-mounted, left Little Rock on a date early in November en route to Texas.²⁰

And, according to Amelia Williams, a historian of Texas, there is conclusive evidence, substantiated by reliable

¹⁸H. Bailey Carroll, "Texas Collection," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LIV (October, 1950), 229.

¹⁹Allen, op. cit., 286.

²⁰Sketch of David Crockett, prepared by The Haskin Service, Washington, D. C.

documents and military service records, that Crockett reached San Antonio by way of Washington-on-the-Brazos with a company of "Tennessee Mounted Volunteers" over whom he had nominal command.²¹

Crockett entered San Antonio on February 8, 1836. Perhaps all of the "Tennessee Mounted Volunteers" did not accompany Crockett on that day. However, it is certain, according to Amelia Williams, that most of them joined him in San Antonio before the Mexicans arrived on February 23.²²

Below is a list of men who were members of the "Tennessee Mounted Volunteers." Military service records give evidence that they either accompanied Crockett to the Alamo or followed in a short time.

	<u>Age</u>	<u>State</u>
David Crockett	50	Tennessee
Joseph G. Washington	28	Tennessee
Micajah Autry	43	Tennessee
B. Archer M. Thomas	18	Tennessee
John Prudy Reynolds	27	Tennessee
John W. Thomson	27	Tennessee
William McDowell	40	Tennessee

²¹Amelia Williams, loc. cit., 165. Military service records contain seven documents, requisitioning the Provisional Government of Texas for board for a company of "Tennessee Mounted Volunteers" while they were resting at Washington and while they were on their way to Bexar. These documents, signed by Crockett and others of his band, show that there were eighteen or more men in the company, including Crockett and Captain William B. Harrison, and that they went by way of Gonzales to San Antonio. Ibid., 165-167.

²²Ibid., 167.

	<u>Age</u>	<u>State</u>
Joseph Bayless	28	Tennessee
William B. Harrison	26	Tennessee
William H. Smith	24	Tennessee
Robert Campbell	25	Tennessee
John Harris	23	Kentucky-Tennessee
Peter James Bailey	24	Kentucky
Daniel William Cloud	21	Kentucky
William H. Furtleroy	22	Kentucky
Richard L. Stockton	18	Virginia
William Irvine Lewis	28	Pennsylvania ²³

Whether Crockett arrived at the Alamo, accompanied by four men of distinctive temperaments gathered casually along the route, or supported by a group of mounted volunteers from Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, it is certain that his arrival was welcomed by Lieutenant-Colonel William B. Travis, commander of the fort. Travis, assisted by Colonel James Bowie, was endeavoring to hold the Alamo, once a Spanish mission, with the inadequate force of less than two hundred men, about one-fifth of the number needed.²⁴

²³Ibid. The foregoing list shows that a substantial majority were from Tennessee. They ranged in age from 18 to 50, Crockett being the senior member. Most of these men were privates, but Crockett and Washington held courtesy titles of "colonel." Records also show that the heirs of all except Campbell and Furtleroy received land for their relatives' services at the Alamo. The heirs of Campbell and Furtleroy did not apply for land. Ibid., 167, 168n. In a letter to his wife written from Nacogdoches on January 13, 1836, Micajah Autry added a postscript stating that Crockett had just joined his company. Adele B. Looscan, "Micajah Autry, A Soldier of the Alamo," Texas Historical Association Quarterly, XIV (April, 1911), 320. It is possible, of course, that included in this group of volunteers were the three "characters" described by Crockett in his Autobiography, and they may have secured the services of an Indian guide.

²⁴Brady, loc. cit., 257-258.

When the Mexicans advanced across the Rio Grande, General Sam Houston fell back for the purpose of concentrating his forces for future attack. For this retreat Houston was severely criticized by Crockett, who was even bold enough to ask for a more competent leader. In a letter to a friend at Louisville, he revealed his lack of confidence in Houston with this remark: "We want no more bell sheep to lead us."²⁵

San Antonio had fallen to the Mexicans on February 23, after which Travis gave orders to his soldiers to retire to the Alamo. Travis had been advised to withdraw his forces from Bexar, join Houston, and make a stand at Gonzales, but refused to do so. General Martin Cos had been defeated at the Alamo about three months previous. Travis did not think that the Mexicans would return to the Alamo so soon after Cos' defeat. He declared that he and his men would die at the Alamo, if necessary, for the freedom of Texas. Amid great confusion within the fort, the men were placing cannon for defense and were eager to fight. One of the first things Travis did was to send a messenger to Andrew Ponton at Gonzales asking for immediate aid. Ponton responded by sending 32 men to aid in the defense of the Alamo. Crockett, standing close by, remarked to Travis: "And here am I, Colonel, assign me to

²⁵ Richard M. Titherington, "Dramatic Scenes in American History," Munsey's Magazine, VIII (January, 1893), 381.

some place, and I and my Tennessee boys will defend it all right." Accordingly, Travis assigned Crockett the task of defending the picket wall on the south side of the fort. In a letter to Sam Houston, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Texas, Travis stated that Crockett was seen at all points, animating the men to courage and duty.²⁶

Travis, unable to recruit any volunteers from San Antonio's twelve hundred settlers, was forced to depend on the brave, but inadequate force, within the fort. On the morning of February 29 these heroic men found themselves engaged in a desperate struggle to hold the fort against a cannon which the Mexicans had set up at close range. Moreover, they did not have the assistance of Colonel James Bowie, for he had contracted a fever.²⁷ According to his Autobiography, Crockett with his rifle "Betsy" picked off five gunners attending the cannon successively before breakfast that morning.²⁸

Probably the majority of the Tennessee volunteers were not aware that after March 2 they were fighting for more than

²⁶ Amelia Williams, loc. cit., 11n, 12-13, 20-21, 29n. To cheer and encourage the soldiers, Crockett is said to have played tunes on his fiddle when the fighting was not brisk during the battle at the Alamo. Ibid., 109. According to Amelia Williams, the flag of the Alamo was the Mexican tri-color with the numerals 1824 in black figures on the white bar. This seems plausible since this was the banner of the Federalist Party in Mexico at the beginning of the Texan revolution. Ibid., 27n.

²⁷ Titherington, loc. cit., 382.

²⁸ Crockett, op. cit., 324-325.

the Texans' political and economic rights, for on that day Texas declared its independence from Mexico.²⁹ Travis had hoped to get help from Colonel Fannin at Goliad, but on March 3 General Houston retreated beyond the Colorado River with orders to Fannin to follow. Travis had failed to get reinforcements from San Antonio and from Fannin at Goliad. Knowing the nature and character of the Mexicans, he told his garrison they would be dealt with as rebels if they surrendered. With this knowledge, the brave defenders rose to the occasion when the fort was attacked on the north side on a Sunday morning, March 6, 1836.

As the Mexicans advanced on every side, their bands played the Dequelo (deguello), the Mexican bugle call, to signify that no quarter was to be given. Forcing an entrance and twice repelled, they resorted to scaling the walls by means of ladders. They swarmed in overwhelming numbers into the rooms of the mission-fort and a hand-to-hand combat followed.³⁰ When Colonel Travis was killed, the command fell to John J. Baugh. After the death of Baugh, Crockett was the commander

²⁹ Binkley, op. cit., I, 465-467. On March 17, David G. Burnet was elected President of an interim government. Ibid., 505, 507.

³⁰ Titherington, loc. cit., 382-384. The meaning in English of "deguello" is destruction or ruin. Emilio M. Martinez Amador, Shorter Spanish Dictionary (D. C. Heath and Company, Boston [c 1953]), 189. The correct form and significance of this word is given in Amelia Williams, loc. cit., 182-183.

of the Alamo, but for less than an hour, for in that short time the remaining defenders of the fort were killed.³¹

In the last moments of this battle, according to one account, General Castrillon asked Crockett to surrender, with promise of his life. Before Crockett replied to the offer, Castrillon asked Santa Anna to give quarter to the few remaining survivors. But Santa Anna's answer was that they must all be shot. At once the enraged Crockett, with knife in hand, rushed toward Santa Anna, but in a few seconds he and his comrades fell riddled with bullets.³²

According to one Texas historian, Colonel William Travis, James Bowie, David Crockett, and their brave companions from February 23 to March 6 had, in his opinion, performed the most successful delaying action in American military history.³³ By engaging Santa Anna's army for two weeks, they made it possible for General Sam Houston to collect his

³¹Amelia Williams, loc. cit., 168. A statement published in the Nashville Banner and signed by its editor, George C. Childress, said that Travis committed suicide because he knew he was proscribed by the Mexican government. Columbia Observer, April 24, 1836. Two Mexican messengers also reported that Travis shot himself. Some of Travis' closest friends believed these reports. Amelia Williams, loc. cit., 41n. In a letter smuggled from the fort Travis wrote: "I am besieged I have sustained a continual bombardment for 24 hours. . . . I shall never surrender nor retreat." Mason Sutherland, "Carnival in San Antonio," National Geographic Magazine, XCII (December, 1947), 815.

³²Titherington, loc. cit., 385.

³³Jim Dan Hill, The Texas Navy (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1937), 47.

forces on the San Jacinto River, and later to inspire his soldiers with the battle cry, "Remember the Alamo," to almost annihilate Santa Anna's army on April 21, 1836, and to get Santa Anna's signature to a treaty recognizing the independence of Texas.³⁴ In front of the Capitol at Austin, Texas, is a monument erected to the defenders of the Alamo. On the base the names of Crockett, Travis, and Bowie, among others, are inscribed. On the east side is the inscription: "Thermopylae had her messenger of defeat, the Alamo had none."³⁵

Not long after the fall of the Alamo George C. Childress, at that time editor of the Nashville Banner, was in Washington with Robert Hamilton from Texas to negotiate with the United States in regard to recognizing the independence of Texas. At that time the widow of Lieutenant Dickinson, who also lost his life at the Alamo, and a Negro servant of Colonel Travis were in Washington. The three survivors of the fort, Mrs. Dickinson, her small daughter, and the servant, for whom Santa Anna seems to have had a measure of sympathy and concern, had been sent safely to the vicinity of Washington. In Mr. Childress' presence the Negro servant, described as intelligent and reliable, gave some information about the final battle at

³⁴Wirth, op. cit., 313-314; Harlow, op. cit., 428-429.

³⁵Foster, loc. cit., 177.

the Alamo. The Negro stated that Colonel James Bowie was murdered in bed and that David Crockett fought desperately to the end.³⁶

That Crockett died at the Alamo on March 6, 1836, is certain. But there are conflicting accounts concerning the manner in which he met death at the hands of the Mexicans. One version, found in various sources, says that after the defenders had exhausted their supply of ammunition, they resisted with clubbed muskets until all but six, including Crockett, were killed. These survivors, having surrendered, were put to death immediately by Santa Anna's order.³⁷

A second version, given by McCaleb, states that Crockett's body, with that of Bowie, Travis, James B. Bonham, and the other heroes who had given their lives for the Texan cause, was found within the walls of the Alamo. But, according to the same historian, Ramon Martinez Caro, secretary to Santa Anna, declared that five Texans surrendered and were summarily shot.³⁸

³⁶Columbia Observer, April 24, 1836. A. N. Lawson, Knoxville, has a copy of this newspaper.

³⁷Michael V. O'Shea, ed., The World Encyclopedia, 18 vols. (The Quarrie Corporation, Chicago [c 1942]), I, 165. Crockett's rifle "Betsy" is in custody of Mrs. J. W. Crockett of Little Rock and is kept in the vault of the state treasurer's office. The Haskin Service, Washington, D. C.

³⁸Walter F. McCaleb, The Conquest of the West (Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York [c 1947]), 107-108.

A third version, and one given in part by the Negro servant of Travis, supports a final hand-to-hand combat which lasted until only six men, including Crockett, remained. They surrendered to General Castrillon under promise of protection. But Santa Anna ordered that they be shot, and Crockett fell riddled with bullets.³⁹ Hamlin Garland in the preface to the Autobiography gives a similar version. He states that Crockett and five companions were captured by General Castrillon. This Mexican general, admiring their bravery, took them before Santa Anna, who he hoped would be merciful to them. But Santa Anna had no mercy for the six survivors. Whereupon the Mexican officers plunged their swords into the bodies of the captured men. Crockett sprang like a tiger at Santa Anna but fell with a dozen swords piercing his heart before he could reach his captor.⁴⁰ Because of these conflicting accounts, it is difficult to arrive at a definite conclusion as to the manner in which Crockett met death at the Alamo.

Whether David Crockett went to Texas because of a political defeat, or because of a patriotic urge to help the Texans, his death at the Alamo was a climax to a remarkable career. All historians agree that he was an eccentric

³⁹Columbia Observer, cited supra; Titherington, cited supra; "David Crockett," Encyclopedia Americana, edited by A. H. McDannald, 30 vols. (American Corporation, Chicago, 1829-1950), VIII, 218.

⁴⁰Crockett, op. cit., 9-10.

individual. A few berate him both as a legislator and as a soldier. But many, although they admit that his methods were singular and awkward, do not doubt his courage, honesty, and integrity of purpose as a public servant.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

David Crockett was a typical frontiersman, a soldier, and a legislator whose life span of almost fifty years is roughly contemporaneous with Tennessee's first fifty years of statehood.

In boyhood he knew the meaning of poverty and hard work, for his improvident father moved often, was usually in difficult financial circumstances, and often in debt to his neighbors. David was a dutiful son and exceptionally mature. When he was twelve years old, he left home as an employee of a drover to earn money for the family; and at the age of fifteen he hired out at meager wages for one year to pay off two notes owed by his father.

At the age of twenty he married and established a home. But, like his father, he was of a roving nature and a poor farmer. Therefore, he soon became dissatisfied with his frontier home and surroundings, and moved his family father west into the forests where game was plentiful, but Indians hostile. Within five years after his first marriage in 1806, he had moved his family twice--over the mountains and to a point about two hundred miles farther westward across Tennessee. After the Creek War and his second marriage, Crockett made two other treks to the west--across Middle Tennessee and to a point

about 150 miles distant and less than forty miles from the Mississippi River. But wherever Crockett stopped his cabin was a center of hospitality for strangers in the wilderness country. He was a benevolent neighbor, often spending weeks in the fall and winter months killing game for some unfortunate pioneer family.

When the Creek War broke out in 1813, he showed his patriotism by volunteering to fight far from home in a campaign to save, as Crockett thought, Tennessee's frontier settlements from merciless attacks by the savage Indian. However, his role in this war was not a significant one. Historians of the conflict seldom mention Crockett and then only casually. Although he was a private, he performed his duties as a scout with valor and trustworthiness. Crockett participated in a mutiny early in the war. According to a reliable historian, and as one would suspect, General Jackson handled the situation with characteristic vigor and determination. Some historians conclude that Crockett's break with the General in later years stemmed from experiences he had with Jackson during the Creek War.

He went to the Tennessee Legislature in 1821 with little formal education, with little knowledge of law, and with meager equipment as a solon. In successive sessions his colleagues, at first curious about the eccentric manner and dress of "the member from the Cane," developed an admiration for this frontier

representative. They noted that he consistently worked for the welfare of the common man of his constituency and for the progress of his district as well. This is evidenced by his vote in favor of the banks' paying specie, by his efforts to procure preemption rights for squatters on lands belonging to the state, and by his introduction of measures to provide appropriations for building a road in his district and improving the navigation of its rivers. They admired his moral courage in voting for Colonel John Williams for United States Senator against General Andrew Jackson in the Assembly in 1823, although it was certainly neither popular nor politically expedient at this time, but honest and right, as Crockett saw it.

In the period between 1825-1835, Crockett served three terms in Congress and was defeated in three Congressional races. During Crockett's public career in Washington, Andrew Jackson was an outstanding political figure, whose general popularity as a statesman stemmed not only from military achievements but also from personal traits of character that captivated the people. Crockett was popular with his constituents, not because of military accomplishments, for in this respect his record was only average. But to the common people, most of them poor and uneducated like himself, he was a hero and a favorite because of his humorous anecdotes, his candid statements about political affairs, and his promises of good government.

In Congress he was an individualist, unconventional in demeanor and speech, but not to the point of being uncouth. His political integrity as a national solon is revealed by his independent spirit in thinking and voting, even when it meant the jeopardizing of his political career and ambitions.

He showed concern for the progress of his district and the welfare of its citizens by repeated attempts to get federal aid for establishing mail routes and public roads and by his efforts to protect the rights of squatters living on public lands. He also showed an interest in the advancement of Tennessee in general and of the nation as a whole in his support of resolutions to improve the navigation of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and to build a national road from Buffalo to Washington and extending through East Tennessee to New Orleans.

His political career is notable chiefly because of his early opposition to Andrew Jackson. He was one of the first Tennessee leaders to break definitely with the popular Tennessee President, at a time when it was politically unwise to do so. In Congress, he opposed the Jackson Administration's policies regarding Indians, internal improvements, and the United States Bank, and also Jackson's personal choice of Martin Van Buren as his presidential successor. Thus, he became a leader in the revolt against Jackson in Tennessee and was one of the organizers of the faction which later became

identified with the Whig Party. His tour to the North and East undoubtedly added to Crockett's prominence as a national figure but it also tended to add strength to the political feeling already in evidence against the Administration. Accordingly, the pro-Jackson forces determined to defeat Crockett. In the election of 1835 this was accomplished but by a small margin which indicated that his popularity in the Western District had not been appreciably reduced.

Chagrined by his recent defeat, he despaired of further political attainments. Leaving his family and homeland, Crockett started westward to Texas where he hoped to assist his heroic countrymen in their struggle for freedom. Arriving in Texas in time to assist Colonel Travis in defense of the Alamo, he proved himself a brave defender of the fort. Travis revealed this in a letter to Houston. Whether Crockett surrendered to be summarily executed or whether he died in a final hand-to-hand combat, his death at the Alamo has perpetuated his memory.

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On the other hand, more ambitious writers, in order to find new material about Crockett, have done extensive research, making use of state libraries, archives, county records, military records, official correspondence, and private letters. James A. Shackford, professor of English at North Carolina State College, in preparation of an article about Crockett, made use of many public records, holographs, and personal letters. He has annotated the original Autobiography for the purpose of making it available to the public soon. Shackford is also writing a biography of Crockett, entitled Gentleman From the Cane. Amelia Williams' article, which has been used in this study, is based on authentic material found in official

military correspondence, military service records, state papers, and also private and personal letters. Marion Michael Null in writing a brief biography of David Crockett made use of a lengthy bibliography which includes Crockett's circular to his constituency in 1831, Congressional records, and many other primary as well as secondary sources.

As a result of the current interest in David Crockett, Congressman Clyde Doyle of California asked the Library of Congress, Legislative Reference Service, to prepare a report on the facts concerning Crockett's public life. This report, published in the Congressional Record, July 27, 1955, contains summaries of the resolutions and bills which Crockett introduced while in Congress (and which the present writer also found in the National Archives). It is concluded with a brief sketch of his life taken from the Dictionary of American Biography.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Crockett's Speech in Congress, 1828, Concerning an Appropriation for the Widow of an Ex-Soldier¹

Mr. Speaker: I have as much respect for the memory of the deceased, and as much sympathy for the sufferings of the living, if suffering there be, as any man in this House; but we must not permit our respect for the dead or our sympathy for a part of the living to lead us into an injustice to the balance of the living. I will not go into an argument to prove that Congress now has power to appropriate this money as an act of charity. Every member upon this floor know it. We have the right, as individuals, to give away as much of our own money as we please in charity; but as members of Congress we have no right so to appropriate a dollar of the public money. Some eloquent appeals have been made to us upon the ground that it is a debt due the deceased.

Mr. Speaker: The deceased lived long after the close of the war; he was in office to the day of his death, and I have never heard that the Government was in arrears to him. This Government can owe no debts but for services rendered, and at a stipulated price. If it is a debt, we owe more than we can ever hope to pay, for we owe the widow of every soldier who fought in the war of 1812 precisely the same amount. There is a woman in my neighborhood, the widow of as gallant a man as ever shouldered a musket. He fell in battle. She is as good in every respect as this lady, and is as poor. She is earning her daily bread by her daily labor, and if I were to introduce a bill to appropriate five or ten thousand dollars for her benefit, I should be laughed at, and my bill would not get five votes in this house. There are thousands of widows in the country just such as the one I have spoken of; but we never hear of any of these large debts to them.

Sir: This is no debt. The Government did not owe it to the deceased when he was alive; it could not contract it after he died. I do not wish to be rude, but I must be plain. Every man in this House knows it is not a debt. We cannot, without the grossest corruption, appropriate this money as the payment of a debt. We have not the semblance of authority to appropriate it as a charity.

¹Marion Michael Null, The Forgotten Pioneer: The Life of Davy Crockett (Vantage Press, Inc., New York [c 1954]), 96-97.

Mr. Speaker: I have said we have the right to give as much of our own as we please. I am the poorest man on this floor. I cannot vote for this bill, but I will give one week's pay to the object, and if every member of Congress will do the same, it will amount to more than the bill asks.

APPENDIX B

Adam Huntsman's Burlesque of Crockett's Break
with President Jackson, 1831¹

GOING! GOING! GONE!

Strayed or stolen from the Jackson ranks a certain member of Congress from the Western District, named David Crockett. Davy is upwards of six feet high, erect in his position, and has a nose extraordinarily red after taking some spirits. He possesses vast bodily powers, great activity and can leap the Ohio, wade the Mississippi and carry one steam- and two flat-boats upon his back. . . . He can whip his weight in wild-cats and panthers. Davy took the county in the Western District, enlisted in the Jackson ranks and performed prodigies of valor in divers engagements between the Jacksonites and the Adams boys. . . . The last that has been heard of him he was riding towards Yankee-land upon a broken-down pony which he called Occupant. Occupant is a noble little fellow; he has made some daring plunges and would (if he had been well kept) perform several journies to Congress; but this daring animal has been fed upon hopes and promises until he is getting lean and gaunt for want of more substantial food, for it seems he can get nothing out of Uncle Sam's crib.

¹Williams, West Tennessee, 267. Null, op. cit., 165-169, gives an anonymous burlesque of David Crockett, which includes travesties of Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, and William Fitzgerald.

APPENDIX C

Crookett's Resolution to Abolish West Point Academy¹

¹RG 233.

1. Resolved that if the bounty of the Government is to be at all bestowed the destitute poor and not the rich & influential are the objects who most claim it and to whom the voice of Humanity most loudly calls the attention of Congress,

2. Resolved that no one Class of the Citizens of these united States has an exclusive right to demand or receive for purposes of education or for other purposes more than an equal & ratable proportion of the funds of the national treasury which is replenished by a common contribution and in some instances more at the cost of the poor man who has but little to defend than that of the rich man who seldom fights to defend himself or his property.

3. Resolved that each and every institution calculated at public expense and under the patronage and sanction of the Government to grant exclusive privileges except in consideration of public services is not only aristocratic but a down right invasion of the rights of the Citizens and a violation of the Civil Compact called the Constitution.

4. Resolved further that the Military Academy at West Point is subject to the foregoing objections - in as much as those who are educated there receive their instruction at the public expense and are generally the sons of the rich and influential who are able to educate their own children while the sons of the poor for want of active friends are often neglected - or if educated even at the -

expense of Their parents or by the liberality
of Their friends, are superseded in the Service
by Cadets educated at the West Point
Academy

Resolved Therefore, and for the foregoing
reasons, that said institution should
be abolished, and the appropriations
annually made for its support, be
discontinued

no 7.

W. Crockett

Abolish West Point Academy

February 25. 1830

Car on the table.

(630)

Crockett 33. to be
630

APPENDIX D

CONTESTED ELECTION

CROCKETT vs. FITZGERALD

TESTIMONY¹

Sept. 27, 1831.

Depositions taken from George Rogers and Frederick Miller in the presence of Crockett and Fitzgerald's agent as to whether they heard Col. Jarret say that any one who would vote for Col. Crockett was not a friend of his country. Both said they did hear him say it.

James Freeman, one of the judges of the election, testified that he thought that the votes were counted correctly. Crockett asked him who kept the ballot box on the first night after the election. Freeman said Col. Jarret kept it, for he [Freeman] thought he could trust him to keep it. Crockett asked him if it could have been opened without breaking the seal as by breaking a lock. Answer indicated that it was securely fastened, but it might have been opened without breaking the seal

Questions by Fitzgerald's agent:

1. Were the judges and clerks sworn in? Yes.
2. When the box was returned the next day by Jarrett did it have the appearance of being opened? No.
3. Was the return made to Jackson of the result of the election at Denmark in pursuance of the count made out of the ballot box at that place? Yes.
4. Do you think the box could have been opened without some evidence being on it of having been opened. It might have been.

Questions by Crockett

¹RG 233. A true copy.

1. Did not Col. Jarret in receiving the ballot tell the persons when voting for Crockett--say to them they were voting against Jackson? Answer. Yes, sometimes in a jocular way.
2. Did or did not Col. Jarret open the tickets when handed to him before putting them in the box. Answer. Most of the tickets were handed in open. I do not know that he opened any without permission.
3. Who do you believe the officers holding the election voted for? All for Fitzgerald except Wm. Jackson.

Questions by Fitzgerald's agent:

1. Did you see any attempt by Jarret to improperly influence any person to vote in the election. Answer. I did not or any others of the officers holding the election--and further this deposits sayeth not

Jas. Freeman

William Jackson then called and sworn de posetts [sic]

Questions by Crockett:

1. Were you a judge at the Congressional election at Denmark? Yes (Wm. Jackson).
2. Did you frequently hear Col. Jarret say--when persons were voting for me--tell them they were voting against Genl. Jackson--I did.
3. Who kept the ballot box after the close of the box on the first evening of the election? Ans. Col. Jarret.
4. When the ballot box was delivered to Col. Jarret will you state the situation of the box and the situation when delivered next morning by him. Ans. The box was in the situation described by James Freeman and when returned having the same appearance.
5. Do you believe the box could have been opened without being discovered or breaking the seal. Ans. I think it could.
6. Did or did not Col. Jarret open most of the tickets handed him? Ans. The greater part were handed open, but some he opened but whether by consent or not I cannot tell.

Questions by Fitzgerald's agent: to Wm. Jackson

1. Did you see Jarret openly influence any person in that election. I did not.
2. Were you present when the votes were counted out. I was. I saw them when counted out and believe them counted out correctly.
3. Was the return made to Jackson in persuance [sic] of the count from the ballot box. It was.

Question by Crocket[t]

1. Did Jarret hand the tickets to the judges--or did he throw them down--after calling them out. Ans. He commonly dropt them down but I saw them before he did so.

Question by Fitzgerald's agent.

1. Did Col. Jarret ever attempt to conceal the tickets? He did not.
2. Who did you vote for in that election. Ans. Col. Crockett further this depossith [sic] sayeth not

William Jackson

Further taking of depositions postponed until tomorrow--Tuesday 12 October--Present the agent of Mr. Fitzgerald--John T. Bryan being called and after being sworn deposeth [sic] and sayeth--

Question by Fitzgerald's agent

1. Were you one of the clerks of the election held at this place on the first Thurs. and Friday in August last? I was.
2. In whose possession was the ballot box placed for safe keeping at the close of the election of the first day. Ans. In the hands of Col. Jarret. The Col. placed the box on the table and asked who was to keep it. I replied it was the duty of the judges. Mr. Freeman, one of the judges, said it was inconvenient for the judges to take it as they lived out of town and that they place confidence in Col. Jarret to keep it.
3. Will you state the situation of the box when it was delivered to Col. Jarret and the situation when it was returned in the morning the next day. It was a cigar box. Lid fastened on with wire hinges, closed with wire twisted together. Hole

in the box that admitted the tickets was sealed. Returned in the same situation the next morning.

4. Did you observe the box at the time it was delivered to Col. Jarret or during that day and if so do you believe it had been opened? I observed it during the first and second day and I saw no difference in the situation of the wires--but it might have been opened without breaking the seal.
5. Do you see any influence by the officers holding the election. I did not--and further this depossith [sic] sayeth not.

John T. Bryan

Col. David Jarret called and duly sworn in.

Question by Fitzgerald's agent

1. Were you before and at the last Aug. election Deputy Shff of this county. I was.
2. As such deputy--did you hold the precinct election in the town of Denmark in August last by authority from the high-- I did.
3. At the close of the election of the first day of election who had charge of the ballot box--and if you had for what reason. Ans. I had by request of the judges.
4. When the ballot box was received by you in the evening and returned the next day what was the situation of it? Ans. The box was sealed and fastened up when I received it and returned in the same situation without alteration of itself or contents.
5. Do you know or believe the ballot box was interfered with or altered or opened by yourself or anybody else. I do not. I locked it up in my secretary myself and it remained there till I took it out myself next morning.
6. Did you not call the votes when counting from the ballot box the second day in the evening. I did.
7. Did you call the name from each ticket as the same written on it. Ans. I think I did.

8. Did you make the return to Jackson in persuanee [sic] to that. I did--the return made out by the clerks--and I believe it was the same that I called.

Further this depossith [sic] sayeth not--

David Jarret

The foregoing depositions of James Freeman, William Jackson, John T. Bryan, and David Jarret were taken by me at the time and for the purpose and in the presence of the parties in the caption mentioned reduced to writing by me in the presence of the deponants [sic] and by them signed in my presence, the said David Crockett objecting to the taking of the deposition of David Jarret--in testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name the 27--Sept. 1831.

A. Deberry, J. P.
Justice of the Peace in
Madison County

APPENDIX E

Letter from Crockett to Hack¹

Washington City, 9th June 1834

Dear Sir

Your favour of the 28th may was recd by this mornings mail and I will hasten to answer its contents--

In the first place I will give you my reason for voting against the Bank Committee being raised I give the vote and have never regreted it in the first place if you will examin the proceedings you will See that a large majority had voted the Bank to death that it never was to be rechartered this was desided well the President had drawn all the governmint money out of it now I would like to know what right Congress had to Sind a Committee to examin it in fact It looked to me Just like taking a man up and hanging him and the Sumining a Jury to try whether he was guilty or not So with the Bank they thought they had killed it and they Concluded that if Sent their Committee it would raise an exitemint in the Country and prop up Jacksons Sinking popularity Who was this Committee that was Sent on to investigate the Bank You know in our Country whin a juror once Sets and gives his opinion on a Case he is never more a Competent Juror in the Same Case

There is Francis Thomas from Maryland that was one of the Clamorous members of the Bank Committee at the last Congress and Said all he Could against it and he is now made Chairman of their fameouz Committee of which I have Sent you one of their reports and you will See our partial Speaker made five Jackson men & two antiJackson men Serve on the Committee you will get Both the reports and you can Judge for your Self

As for retrenchment I have always went for that I voted for it in the Committee of the whole but when the final vote was taken I was not there I had been for Some time labouring under a Complaint with a pain in my breast and I Concluded to take a travel a couple of weeks for my health--I knew they

¹"Some Pioneer Letters," American Historical Magazine, II (April, 1897), 179-180.

would do nothing more than to pass the appropriation Bill that was all the vote I regretted not being there at But if you will examin you will See the whole delegation voted against it however I have not examined their votes on the ays and nays but they all voted against me on Committee

We will adjourn if the Senate agree to our Resolution on the 30 of June So I fear I will have a Bad Chance to get up my land Bill I have Been trying for some time and if I Could get it up I have no doubt of its passage [illegible] know of no opposition to it [illegible] whole delegation will go for it [illegible] are to Close this Congress and [illegible] more than to establish An [illegible] Jackson the governmint of [illegible] Great not--he now holds [illegible] Sword & purs and Claims it B[illegible] Constitution a power never [illegible] of by any other presedent

I must close in hast and rimain your friend & obt
 Servt David Crockett

Wm Haek ESQ.
 Denmark
 Madison City
 Tennessee.

APPENDIX F

Letter from Crockett to His Daughter¹

Saint Agusteen, Texas.

9th January, 1836.

Mr. Wiley Flowers,
Crockett P. O.,
Gibson County, Tennessee.

My Dear Sone and daughter:

This is the first I have had an opertunity to write you with convenience. I am now blessed with excellent health and am in high spirits, although I have had many difficulties to encounter. I have got through safe and have been received by everyone with the open cerimony of friendship. I am hailed with a hearty welcome to this country. A dinner and a party of ladys have honored me with an invitation to partisapate both at Naching docher [Nacogdoches] and at this place. The cannon was fired here on my arrival and I must say as to what I have seen of Texas it is the garden spot of the world. The best land and the best prospects for health I ever saw, and I do believe it is a fortune to any man to come here. There is a world of country here to settle.

It's not required here to pay down for your League of land. Every man is entitled to his head right of 400-428 acres. They may make the money to pay for it on the land. I expect in all probability to settle on the Border or Chactaw Bro- of Red River that I have no doubt is the richest country in the world. Good land and plenty of timber and the best springs and will [sic] mill streams, good range, clear water and every appearance of good health and game aplenty. It is the pass where the buffalo passes from north to south and back twice a year, and bees and honey plenty. I have a great hope of getting the agency to settle that country and I would be glad to see every friend I have settled thare. I would be a fortune to them all. I have taken the oath of government and have enroled my name as a volunteer and will set out for

¹Williams, Historic Madison, 427-428. J. D. Pate, Martin, Tennessee, has the original letter.

the Rio Grand[e] in a few days with the volunteers from the United States. But all volunteers is entitled to a vote for a member of the convention or to be voted for, and I have but little doubt of being elected a member to form a constitution for this province. I am rejoiced at my fate. I had rather be in my present situation than to be elected to a seat in Congress for life. I am in hopes of making a fortune yet for myself and family, bad as my prospect has been.

I have not written to William but have requested John to direct him what to do. I hope you will show him this letter and also Brother John as it is not convenient at this time for me to write to them. I hope you will all do the best you can and I will do the same. Do not be uneasy about me. I am among my friends. I will close with great respects. Your affectionate father. Farewell.

DAVID CROCKETT.

To Wily and Margaret Flowers.