

DAVID CROCKETT IN LANCASTER

By William Frederic Worner

During the two centuries and more that have elapsed since Lancaster county, Pa., was first settled by white men, the old shire town of Lancaster has been visited by many eminent and distinguished persons. Among these were George Washington, John Adams, the two Bonapartes (Jerome, and Joseph, Ex-King of Spain), the Marquis de La Fayette, General William Henry Harrison, President Zachary Taylor, Abraham Lincoln, Horace Greeley, U. S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

Another widely-known visitor was that sturdy American frontiersman, Colonel David Crockett, Democratic representative in the Congress of the United States from Tennessee. It is said that he won the election, not by making political speeches but by telling stories. The story of his dauntless courage and intrepidity of spirit, is known to every well-informed school boy in the land; and this remarkable bravery was never more signally displayed than in the futile attempt (in which he lost his life, March 6, 1836, as a defender of the Alamo, at San Antonio) to wrest the territory now embraced in the state of Texas from Mexico.

Crockett had been a scout under General Andrew Jackson during the Creek Indian war, and was with him at the famous battle of Horseshoe Bend, March 27, 1814, when "Old Hickory" defeated the great half-breed Indian chief, Weatherford, and ended the war. In some way Crockett incurred the antagonism of Jackson when in Congress, and it was through the latter's influence that he was defeated in his efforts to secure a fourth term in that body.

The story of the heroic defense of the Alamo, when less than 200 Americans withstood for a time Santa Anna's Mexican army of 5,000, is one of the most thrilling among our country's annals. More than 1,600 Mexicans were killed before the little fort was captured, and not one of its brave defenders was taken alive. Among the most heroic of these noble men who willingly gave their lives for their country was Col. David Crockett, who has left to us one of our most helpful rules of conduct: "Be sure you are right, then go ahead."

It may interest the members of this honorable Society to learn that David Crockett once paid a very brief visit to Lancaster city. He left Washington, D. C., in April, 1834, for a tour of the New England states, but was again in the capital of the United States in time for the closing session of Congress. When on his return journey to his home in Tennessee, he passed through Lancaster, Pa., on Sunday evening, July 6, 1834.

The Examiner and Herald for Thursday, July 10, 1834, has this to say concerning the distinguished frontiersman's brief visit to our city:

"The Hon. David Crockett arrived in this city on Sunday evening last. He tarried but a short time, and departed before his arrival became generally known to our citizens. He was very communicative whilst here, conversed freely with those around him, and expressed much surprise at the sight of the Jackson pole, lately erected at the corner of North Queen and Chestnut streets, declaring that he would not reside here three days without making an attempt to cut it down, though it should be at the risk of his life. We know of several other individuals, who though warm friends of Gen. Jackson, would be glad to get rid of such an encumbrance."

In referring to his being in Lancaster, the Lancaster Journal for Friday, July 11, 1834, says:

"Col. Crockett, we are informed, passed through this city on Saturday afternoon; and at the stopping place, at the intersection of the railroad and North Queen street, he took notice of the hickory Jackson pole, which bears the Democratic motto, 'Jackson and no Bank,' and it is stated in one of the bank's papers published in this place 'that he would not reside here three

days without making an attempt to cut it down though it should be at the risk of his life.' Davy may have said so, but we rather think the enemy has added a little, because they would take pride in the folly that would attempt it. He, however, said something about cutting it down, while he sat safe and snug in his car, to which a boy replied that 'he must grin the bark off it first.' We are informed there was considerable shouting, and whistling and yelling, when this distinguished statesman was recognized. Col. Pluck himself could not have created more curiosity."

The Lancaster Journal erred in stating that David Crockett passed through Lancaster on Saturday afternoon. In a book which David Crockett is said to have written describing his tour of the North and East, he states that he made two speeches in Philadelphia on Friday, July 4, 1834. The day following the Fourth of July, he was introduced to the great powder manufacturer, Mr. Du Pont; and, in the book referred to, he further describes his movements in Philadelphia on the 5th of July. He then states: "Early next morning, [Sunday, July 6, 1834], I set out for Pittsburgh, by the fast line, and had a very pleasant trip over the mountains." Therefore, he could not possibly have passed through Lancaster before the afternoon of Sunday, July 6, 1834. In all probability the fast line to which he refers was the Columbia and Philadelphia railroad. A single track had recently been laid from Philadelphia to Columbia. The first train made the trip over the road in the latter part of April, 1834. The road was not formally opened until the following October, though passengers were carried from Philadelphia to Columbia during the summer of that year. Colonel Crockett was undoubtedly one of the very first, if not the first distinguished person to employ that means of transportation to visit Lancaster city, if a stop-over such as his may be termed a visit.