

DAVY CROCKETT

Autobiography read by Bill Hayes

Folkways Records FC 7125



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DAVY CROCKETT

Early Childhood
The Creek Indian War
The Bear Incident
Pioneering

Congressman
Farewell
The Alamo

Folkways Records FC 7125

The Real Davy Crockett

read by Bill Hayes

from the frontier hero's authentic
autobiography "Davy Crockett's Own Story"

published by Citadel Press, New York 3



Side I - Band 1:

As the public seems to feel some interest in the history of an individual so humble as I am, and as that history can be so well known to no person living as to myself, I have put my own hand to it. Here is a narrative on which the world may at least rely as being true. This is truly the very thing itself - the exact image of myself, David Crockett.

But before I get on the subject of my own troubles, and a great many very funny things that have happened to me, I should inform the public that I was born, myself, as well as other folks, and that this important event took place, according to the best information I have received on the subject, on the 17th of August, in the year 1786.

As my father was very poor, and living as he did, far back in the back woods of Tennessee, he had neither the means nor the opportunity to give me, or any of the rest of his children, any learning.

Still I thought I would try to go to school some, and as a friend of ours had a married son who was living about a mile and a half from him, and keeping a school, I proposed to him that I would go to school four days in the week, and work for him the other two, to pay my board and schooling. He agreed I might come on these

terms; and so at it I went, learning and working, backwards and forwards, until I had been with him nigh on to six months. In this time, I learned to read a little in my primer, to write my own name, and to cypher some in the first three rules in figures. And this was all the schooling I ever had in my life, up to this day. I should have continued longer, if it hadn't been that I concluded I couldn't go any longer without a wife; and so I cut out to hunt me one.

As luck would have it, at reaping time I went to a dance, and seeing a pretty little girl I asked her to join me in a reel. She very readily consented to do so; and after we had finished our dance, I took a seat alongside of her, and entered into a talk. I found her very interesting; while I was sitting by her, making as good a use of my time as I could, her mother came to us, and very jocularly called me her son-in-law. This rather confused me, but I looked on it as a joke of the old lady, and tried to turn it off as well as I could; but I took care to pay as much attention to her through the evening as I could. I went on the old saying, of salting the cow to catch the calf.

We got married in a short time, and having gotten my wife, I thought I was completely made up, and needed nothing more in the whole world. But I soon found this was all a mistake - for now having

a wife, I wanted everything else; and, worse than all, I had nothing to give for it.

In due time we had two sons, and I found I was better at increasing my family than my fortune.

Side I - Band 2:

September, 1813. We were living ten miles below Winchester when the Creek Indian war commenced: and as military men are making so much fuss in the world at this time, I must give an account of the part I took in the defence of the country. If it should make me President, why I can't help it; such things will sometimes happen, and my pluck is, never to "seek nor decline office."

A general meeting of the militia was called, for the purpose of raising volunteers; and when the day arrived for that meeting, my wife, who had heard me say I meant to go to the war, began to beg me not to turn out. I reasoned the case with her as well as I could, and told her that if every man would wait till his wife got willing for him to go to war, there would be no fighting done, until we would all be killed in our own houses; that I was as able to go as any man in the world, and that I believed it was a duty I owed to my country. I took a parting farewell of my wife and my little boys, mounted my horse, and set sail to join my company.

When I reached the company, a major came and wanted some volunteers to go with him across the Tennessee river and into the Creek nation, to find out the movements of the Indians. He asked for two of the best woodsmen, and such as were best with a rifle. I willingly engaged to go with him, and asked him to let me choose my own mate to go with me, which he said I might do. I chose a young man by the name of George Russel but Major Gibson said he thought he hadn't beard enough to please him - he wanted men, and not boys. I must confess I was a little nettled at this; for I know'd George Russel, and I didn't think that courage ought to be measured by the beard, for fear a goat would have the preference over a man. We took our camp equipage, mounted our horses, and thirteen in number, including the major, we cut out.

Our scouting trip took longer than we expected and soon we were in extreme suffering for want of something to eat; exhausted with our exposure and the fatigues of our journey. I remember well that I had not myself tasted bread but twice in nineteen days. I turned aside to hunt, and had not gone far when I come upon a deer. I shot it, took up the deer on my horse before me, and carried it on till night. I could have sold it for almost any price I would have asked; but this wasn't my rule, neither in peace nor war. Whenever I had anything, and

saw a fellow-being suffering, I was more anxious to relieve him than to benefit myself.

I gave all my deer away, except a small part I kept for myself, and just sufficient to make a good supper for my mess.

We then marched to the Ten Islands, on the Coosa river and rejoined the main army. After many adventures in the war, I was safely landed at home once more with my wife and children. I found them all well and doing well; and though I was only a rough sort of backwoodsman, they seemed mighty glad to see me, however little the quality folks might suppose it. For I do reckon we love as hard in the backwood country, as any people in the whole creation.

Side I - Band 3:

1815. I determined to make another move and selected a new spot where we determined to settle. The nearest house to it was seven miles, the next nearest was fifteen, and so on to twenty. It was a complete wilderness, and full of Indians who were hunting. Game was plenty of almost every kind, which suited me exactly, as I was always fond of hunting.

I had two pretty good dogs, and an old hound which I took along with me one day on a bear hunt. I came to the edge of an open prairie, and looking on before my dogs, I saw in and about the biggest bear that ever was in America. He looked, at the distance he was from me, like a large black bull. My dogs were afraid to attack him, and I broke like a quarter horse after my bear, for the sight of him had put springs in me.

I saw the bear climbing up a large black oak tree, and I crawled on until I got within about eighty yards of him. He was setting with his breast to me: and so I put fresh priming in my gun, and fired at him. At this he raised one of his paws and snorted loudly. I loaded again as quick as I could, and fired as near the same place in his breast as possible. At the crack of my gun he came tumbling down; and the moment he touched the ground, I heard one of my best dogs cry out. I took my tomahawk in one hand, and my big butcher-knife in the other, and run up within four or five paces of him, at which he let my dog go, and fixed his eyes on me. I got back in all sorts of a hurry, for I knowed if he got hold of me, he would hug me altogether too close for comfort. I went to my gun and hastily loaded her again, and shot him the third time, which killed him good.

I can assert, on my honor, that I believed he would have weighed six hundred pounds. We

got our meat home, and I had the pleasure to know that we now had plenty, and that of the best; and I continued through the winter to supply my family abundantly with bear meat and venison from the woods.

As soon as the time come for us to quit our houses and come out again in the Spring, I took a notion to hunt a little more. And in about one month I killed forty-seven bears which made one hundred and five bears which I had killed in less than one year.

Side I - Band 4: 1827

A man came to my house, and told me I was a candidate. I told him not so. But he took out a newspaper from his pocket, and showed me where I was announced. I said to my wife that this was all a burlesque on me, but I was determined to make it cost the man who had put it there at least the value of the printing, and of the fun he wanted at my expense. So I hired a young man to work in my place on my farm, and turned out myself electioneering.

I started off to the Cross Roads, dressed in my hunting shirt, and my rifle on my shoulder. Many of our constituents had assembled there to get a taste of the quality of the candidates at orating. A large posse of the voters had assembled before I arrived, and my opponent had already made considerable headway with his speechifying and his treating, when they spied me about a rifle shot from the camp, sauntering along as if I was not a party in business.

"There comes Crockett", they cried, and so I mounted the stump that had been cut down for the occasion, and began to bushwhack in the most approved style.

I had not been up long before there was such an uproar in the crowd that I could not hear my own voice, and some of my constituents let me know, that they could not listen to me on such a dry subject as the welfare of the nation, until they had something to drink, and that I must treat them. Accordingly I jumped down from the rostrum, and led the way to Job Snelling's tavern, followed by my constituents, shouting, "Huzza for Crockett", "Crockett for ever!"

When we entered the tavern, Job was busy dealing out his rum in a style that showed he was making a good day's work of it, and I called for a quart of the best, but the crooked critur returned no other answer than by pointing to a board over the bar, on which he had chalked in large letters, "Pay to-day and trust to-morrow." Now that idea brought me up all standing; it was a sort of cornering in which there was no back out, for ready money in the west, in those times,

was the shyest thing in all natur, and it was most particularly shy with me on that occasion.

The voters seeing my predicament, fell off to the other side, and I was left deserted and alone. I saw, as plain as day, that the tide of popular opinion was against me, and that, unless I got some rum speedily, I should lose my election as sure as there are snakes in Virginny - and it must be done soon, or even burnt brandy wouldn't save me. So I walked away from the tavern, but in another sort from the way I entered it, for on this occasion not a voice shouted, "Huzza for Crockett." Popularity sometimes depends on a very small matter indeed; in this particular it was worth a quart of New England rum, and no more.

Well, knowing that a crisis was at hand, I struck into the woods with my rifle on my shoulder, my best friend in time of need, and as good fortune would have it, I had not been out more than a quarter of an hour before I treed a fat coon, and in the pulling of a trigger, he lay dead at the root of the tree. I soon whipped his hairy jacket off his back, and again bent my steps towards the shantee, and walked up to the bar, but not alone, for this time I had half a dozen of my constituents at my heels. I threw down the coon skin upon the counter, and called for a quart, and Job, though busy in dealing out rum, forgot to point at his chalked rules and regulations, for he knew that a coon was as good a legal tender for a quart, in the west, as a New York shilling, any day in the year.

My constituents now flocked about me, and cried, "Huzza for Crockett," "Crockett for ever," and finding the tide had taken a turn, I told them several yarns, to get them in a good humor, and having soon dispatched the value of the coon, I went out and mounted the stump, without opposition, and a clear majority of the voters followed me to hear what I had to offer for the good of the nation. Before I was half through, one of my constituents moved that they would hear the balance of my speech, after they had washed down the first part with some more of Job Snelling's extract of cornstalk and molassess, and the question being put, it was carried unanimously. It wasn't considered necessary to tell the yeas and the nays, so we adjourned to the shantee, and on the way I began to reckon that the fate of the nation pretty much depended upon my shooting another coon.

While standing at the bar, feeling sort of bashful while Job's rules and regulations stared me in the face, I cast down my eyes, and discovered one end of the coon skin sticking out between the logs that supported the bar. Job had slung it there in the hurry of business. I gave it a sort of quick jerk, and it followed my hand as natural as if I had been the rightful owner. I slapped it up on the counter, and Job, little dreaming that he was barking up the wrong tree, shoved along another bottle, which my constituents quickly disposed of with great good

numor, for some of them saw the trick, and then we withdrew to the rostrum to discuss the affairs of the nation.

I don't know how it was, but the voters soon became dry again, and nothing would do, but we must adjourn to the shantee, and as luck would have it, the coon skin was still sticking between the logs, as if Job had flung it there on purpose to tempt me. I was not slow in raising it to the counter, the rum followed of course, and 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.

This joke secured me my election, for it soon circulated like smoke among my constituents, and they allowed, with one accord, that the man who could get the whip hand of Job Snelling in fair trade, could outwit Old Nick himself, and was the real grit for them in Congress.



Side II - Band 1: 1828

The election was won, and I can say, on my conscience, that I was without disguise, the friend and supporter of General Jackson, upon his principles as he had laid them down, and as "I understood them," before his election as President. During my first two sessions in Congress I supported Jackson when he stood up for giving every citizen a portion of the public lands who would settle upon it. And when they tried to take away the land from the settlers in Tennessee, whom they called squatters, I spoke out against this move.

The persons in whose behalf I plead, I said in Congress, are the hardy sons of the soil; men who had broken the cane and opened in the wilderness a home for their wives and children. Is it fair for the Government to take away their humble cottages from them? Sir, these people, though poor, are of inestimable value in a free republic. They are the bone and sinew of the land; they are its strength and its bulwark; and they are its main reliance in the hour of danger, and

the first to breast the onset of an enemy. Will you take away their little all and give it to the Legislature to speculate upon? Or will you make to each of these meritorious citizens the donation of his humble piece of land, where he has at last found refuge from the pursuit of speculators.

Some of them are widows, whose husbands fell while fighting your battles on the frontiers. None of them are rich, but they are an honest, industrious, hardy, persevering, kind-hearted people. I know them -- I know their situation. I have shared the hospitality of their cottages, and been honored by their confidence with a seat in this assembly; and base and ungrateful, indeed, must I be, when I cease to remember it. No, sir, I cannot forget it; and if their little all is to be wrested from them, for the purposes of State speculation; if a swindling machine is to be set up to strip them of what little the speculators have left them, it shall never be said that I sat by in silence, and refused, however humbly, to advocate their cause.

I was re-elected to Congress in 1829, by an overwhelming majority; and soon after the commencement of this second term, I saw, or thought I did, that it was expected of me that I would bow to the name of Andrew Jackson, and follow him in all his motions, and windings, and turnings, even at the expense of my conscience and judgment. Such a thing was new to me, and a total stranger to my principles. I know'd well enough, though, that if I didn't "hurra" for his name, the hue and cry was to be raised against me, and I was to be sacrificed, if possible.

His famous, or rather I should say infamous, Indian bill, which pushed Indians off land rightfully belonging to them, I opposed from the purest motives in the world. Several of my colleagues got around me, and told me how well they loved me, and that I was ruining myself. They said this was a favorite measure of the president, and I ought to go for it. I told them I believed it was a wicked, unjust measure, and that I should go against it, let the cost to myself be what it might; that I was willing to go with General Jackson in everything that I believed was honest and right; but, further than this, I wouldn't go for him, or any other man in the whole creation; that I would sooner be honestly and politically d--nd, than hypocritically immortalized. I had been elected by a majority of three thousand five hundred and eighty-five votes, and I believed they were honest men, and wouldn't want me to vote for any unjust notion, to please Jackson or any one else; at any rate, I was of age, and determined to trust them. I voted against this Indian bill, and my conscience yet tells me that I gave a good honest vote, and one that I believe will not make me ashamed in the day of judgment.

The time come during a later session of Congress when I thought I'd take a travel through the Northern States. I had braved the lonely forests of the West, I had shouldered the warrior's rifle in the far South; but the North and East I had never seen.

I left Washington on the 25th day of April, 1834 and steered for the North.

When I got to Boston, there were some gentlemen that invited me to go to Cambridge, where the big college or university is, where they keep ready-made titles or nicknames to give people. I would not go, for I did not know but they might an LL.D. on me before they let me go; and I had no idea of changing "Member of the House of Representatives of the United States," for what stands for "lazy lounging dunce," which I am sure my constituents would have translated my new title to be, knowing that I had never taken any degree, and did not own to any except a small degree of good sense not to pass for what I was not - I would not go it.

I suppose I disappointed some those Cambridge people who expected to see a half horse half alligator sort of fellow.

In a short time my trip through the North and East was over and I set out for my own home: yes, my own home, my own soil, my own humble dwelling, my own family, my own hearts, my ocean of love and affection which neither circumstances nor time can dry up. Here, like the wearied bird, let me settle down for awhile, and shut out the world.

Side II, Band 2:

August 11, 1835. I am now at home in Weakley County. The congressional canvass is over, and the result is known. Contrary to all expectation, I am beaten two hundred and thirty votes. I went to a meeting of my neighbors, I told them, of my services, pretty straight up and down, for a man may be allowed to speak on such subjects when others are about to forget them; and I also told them of the manner in which I had been knocked down and dragged out, and that I did not consider it a fair fight any how they could fix it.

I concluded my speech by telling them that I was done with politics for the present, and they might all go to the devil, and I would go to Texas. September, 1835. I determined to cut and quit the States until such time as honest and independent men should again work their way to the head of the heap; and as I should probably have some idle time on hand before that state of affairs shall be brought about, I promised to give the Texians a helping hand on the high road to freedom. Well, I was always fond of having my spoon in a mess of that kind, for if there is anything in this world

particularly worth living for, it is freedom; anything that would render death to a brave man particularly pleasant, it is freedom.

I felt a sort of cast down at the change that had taken place in my fortunes, and sorrow, it is said, will make even an oyster feel poetical. I never tried my hand at that sort of writing, but on this particular occasion such was my state of feeling, that I began to fancy myself inspired, so I took pen in hand and as usual I went ahead.

It being my first, and, no doubt, last piece of poetry, I will print it in this place, as it will serve to express my feelings on leaving my home, my neighbors, and friends and country, for a strange land, as fully as I could in plain prose.

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 thanked the Great Giver, and worshiped his plan.

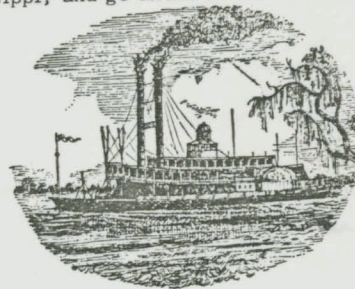
The home I forsake where my offspring arose;
The graves I forsake where my children repose.
The home I redeemed from the savage and wild:
The home I have loved as a father his child;
The corn that I planted, the fields that I cleared,
The flocks that I raised, and the cabin I reared;
The wife of my bosom - 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 rushed 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!

I dressed myself in a clean hunting shirt, put on a new fox-skin cap with the tail hanging behind, took hold of my rifle Betsey, and thus equipped, I started off with a heavy heart to take steamboat down the Mississippi, and go ahead in a new world.



I write this on the nineteenth of February, 1836 at San Antonio, Texas. The gallant young Colonel Travis, who commands the Texian forces in our fortress of Alamo, received me like a man; and though he can barely muster one hundred and fifty efficient men, one spirit appears to animate this little band of patriots -- and that is liberty, or death. To worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, and govern themselves as freemen should be governed.

I found Colonel Bowie, of Louisiana, in the fortress, a man celebrated for having been in more desperate personal conflicts than any other in the country, and whose name has been given to a knife of a peculiar construction, which is now in general use in the south-west. He gave me a friendly welcome, and appeared to be mightily pleased that I had arrived safe.

February 27. The cannonading began early this morning. Provisions are becoming scarce, and the Mexicans are endeavoring to cut off our water.

March 1. The enemy's forces have been increasing in numbers daily, notwithstanding they have already lost about three hundred men in the several assaults they have made upon us. Colonel Bowie's illness still continues, but he manages to crawl from his bed every day, that his comrades may see him. His presence alone is a tower of strength. The enemy becomes more daring as his numbers increase.

March 3. We have given over all hopes of receiving assistance from Goliad or Refugio. Colonel Travis harangued the garrison, and concluded by exhorting them, in case the enemy should carry the fort, to fight to the last gasp, and render their victory even more serious to them than to us.

March 5. Pop, pop, pop! Bom, bom, bom! throughout the day. No time for memorandums now. Go ahead! Liberty and independence forever!

On March sixth, 1836, Davie Crockett, frontiersman, Indian fighter, soldiers, coonskin congressman, gave his life fighting for freedom in the Alamo.

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Side III - Band 3:

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We got married in a short time, and having gotten my wife, I thought I was completely satisfied, and needed nothing more in the whole world. I soon found this was all a mistake - for now having

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