

# Davy Crockett "An American Hero"

retold by Gina D. B. Clemen



Illustrated by Alfredo Belli

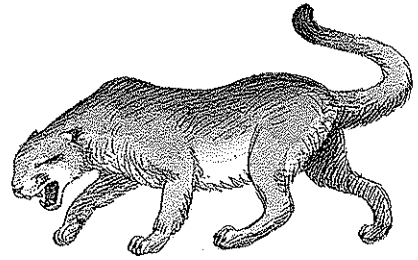
BLACK CAT

## BEFORE YOU READ

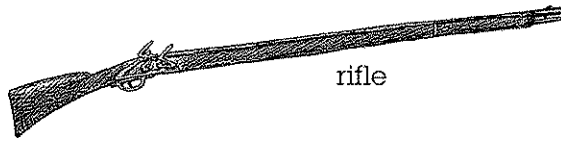
1 Do you know these words?



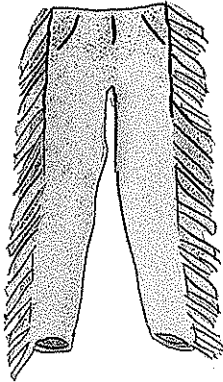
coonskin cap



wild cat



rifle



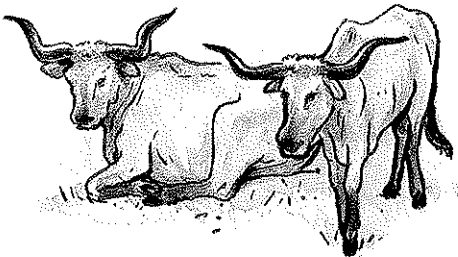
buckskin  
trousers



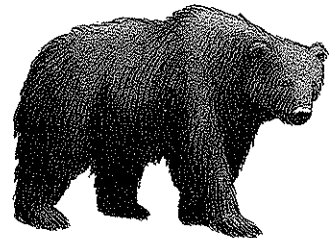
buckskin jacket



racoon



cattle



bear



## Young Davy



**D**avy Crockett was born on August 17, 1787, in Greene County, Tennessee. In 1787 America was a new nation. Most of the territory was a wilderness.<sup>1</sup>

Davy Crockett was born in the wilderness. His father, John Crockett, was an Irish immigrant. He fought in the American Revolution. He was a very courageous man.

Davy had a difficult childhood.<sup>2</sup> His family was poor. When he was twelve years old, his father said, "Davy, our family doesn't have any money. You must go to work as a cattle herder."<sup>3</sup>

"All right, father," said Davy. "I'm happy to help the family!"

Davy traveled four hundred miles on foot. He took cattle from

1. **wilderness** : land that is not cultivated, only wild animals live here.
2. **childhood** : infancy, time when you are a child.
3. **cattle herder** : cowboy, this person looks after the animals.



# Davy Crockett

“AN AMERICAN HERO”

Tennessee to other places. When he finished his work, he was far from home. He was lost! Davy walked 400 miles. When he returned home, he was very tired.

Davy gave his father the money he made. His father was happy and said, “Thank you, Davy! Now we have some money for the winter months.”

“I can do it again to help the family,” Davy answered.

The years passed. Davy went to school when he had time. He spent most of his time hunting in the forest. He was the best shooter <sup>1</sup> and hunter <sup>2</sup> in Tennessee. He entered many shooting competitions and won them all. He called his rifle “Old Betsy”.

For years Davy hunted bears and other wild animals. He was a trapper. <sup>3</sup> Once he hunted one hundred bears in six months!

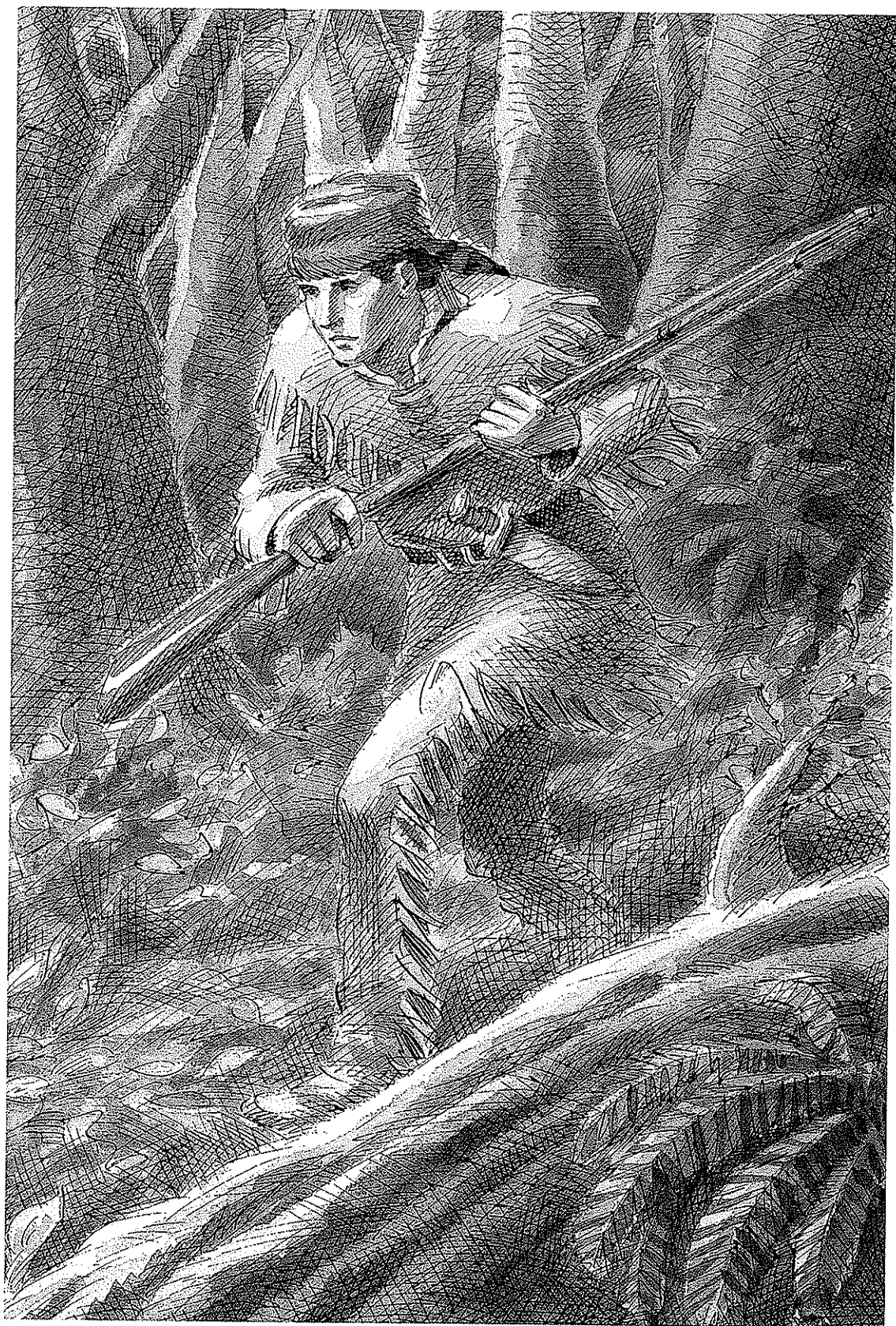
It was dangerous to hunt bears but Davy was very courageous and strong. He knew the forest well. The Indians were his good friends. He ran fast and was a strong fighter. He fought with the wild cats of the mountains.

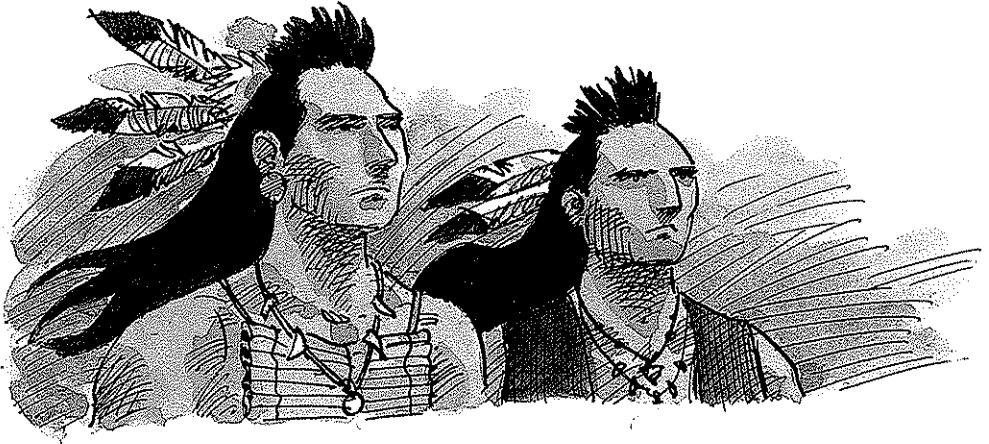
Some people said that one day Davy saw a racoon in a tree. He wanted to shoot it but the racoon saw him and said, “Wait a minute! Are you Davy Crockett?”

Davy answered, “Yes, I am!”

The racoon answered, “Then don’t shoot! I’ll come down from the tree.” And the racoon came down from the tree!

1. **shooter** : this person shoots with a rifle or gun.
2. **hunter** : this person goes after animals to catch and kill them for food.
3. **trapper** : this person catches wild animals for their furs; a trapper then sells the furs.





## The Creek Wars



**E**veryone liked Davy Crockett. He was always happy, with a big smile. He was honest and always helped others. Davy was a tall man. He wore a coonskin cap, buckskin trousers and a buckskin jacket. He always carried his long rifle, "Old Betsy".

In 1806 Davy married Polly Finley. She was a school teacher. They had two sons and a daughter: John, Joseph and Judith. After a few years, the Crockett family moved into the Tennessee hills. The Tennessee hills were near hostile Indian country.

In 1812 the war between the United States and Britain began. The Mohawk and Creek Indians fought with the British against the Americans. The American General, Andrew Jackson, organized a small army. He wanted to fight the Creek Indians and the British.

## The Creek Wars

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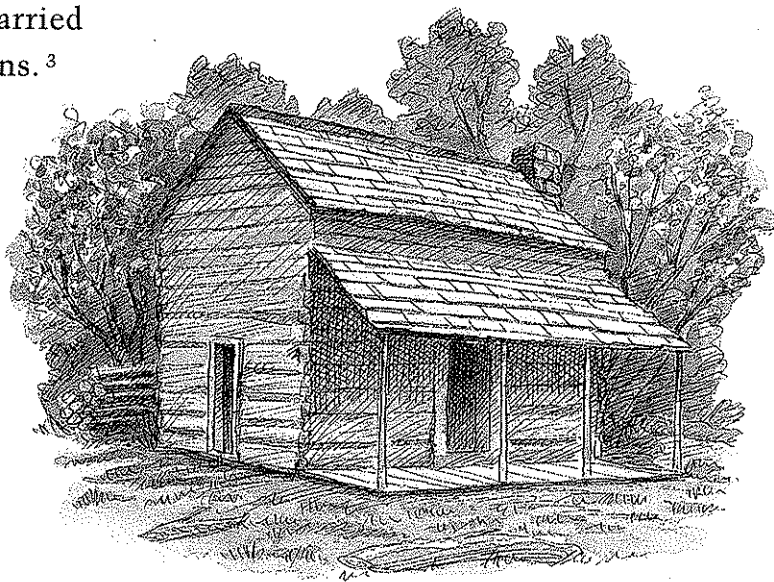
Davy fought with this army. He was a scout<sup>1</sup> because he knew the territory well. His work as a scout was very important. Davy traveled across Tennessee, the Mississippi Territory, Florida and Louisiana with General Jackson's army. The Battle of New Orleans was a big victory for General Jackson and the Americans. The war ended in 1814.

The British lost the war. The Indians lost their territories and went away. New American families settled<sup>2</sup> in the Tennessee hills.

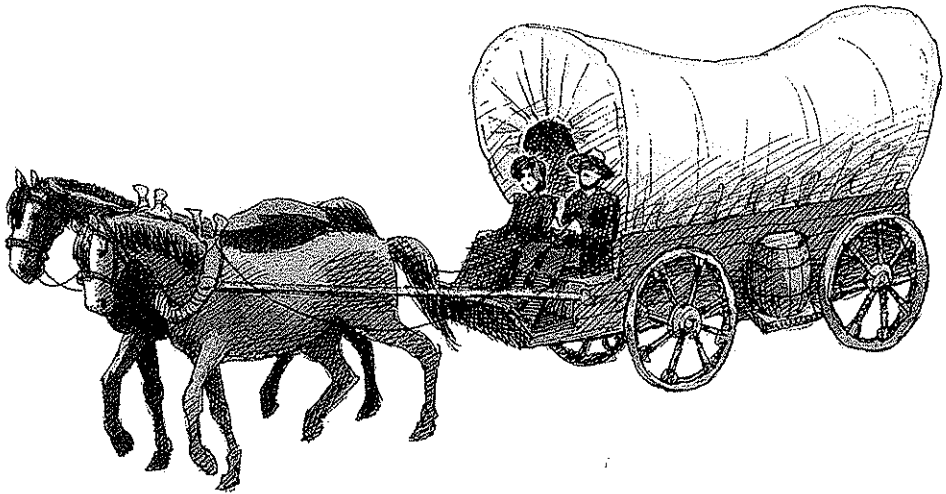
At the end of the war Davy returned home to his family. Unfortunately, his wife Polly died. Life was again difficult for Davy. He worked as a trapper and took care of his three children.

After some time, Davy met Meg Mackinack. Meg's father was an American trapper. Her mother was a Cherokee Indian. Davy fell in love and married her. They had twins.<sup>3</sup>

Davy named the twins George and Washington, in honor of America's first president. There were now five children in the Crockett family!



1. **scout** : this soldier goes ahead of an army to explore the land, to look for danger.
2. **settled** : went to a place to live for a long time.
3. **twins** : two children born of the same mother at the same time.



## Davy Enters Politics



**D**avy and his big family wanted to live in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee. Davy bought a covered wagon.<sup>1</sup> He and his family put all of their things inside the wagon: chairs, tables, beds, clothing and many other things. Four strong horses pulled the big wagon. Davy and his wife sat in the front. The five children were inside the wagon.

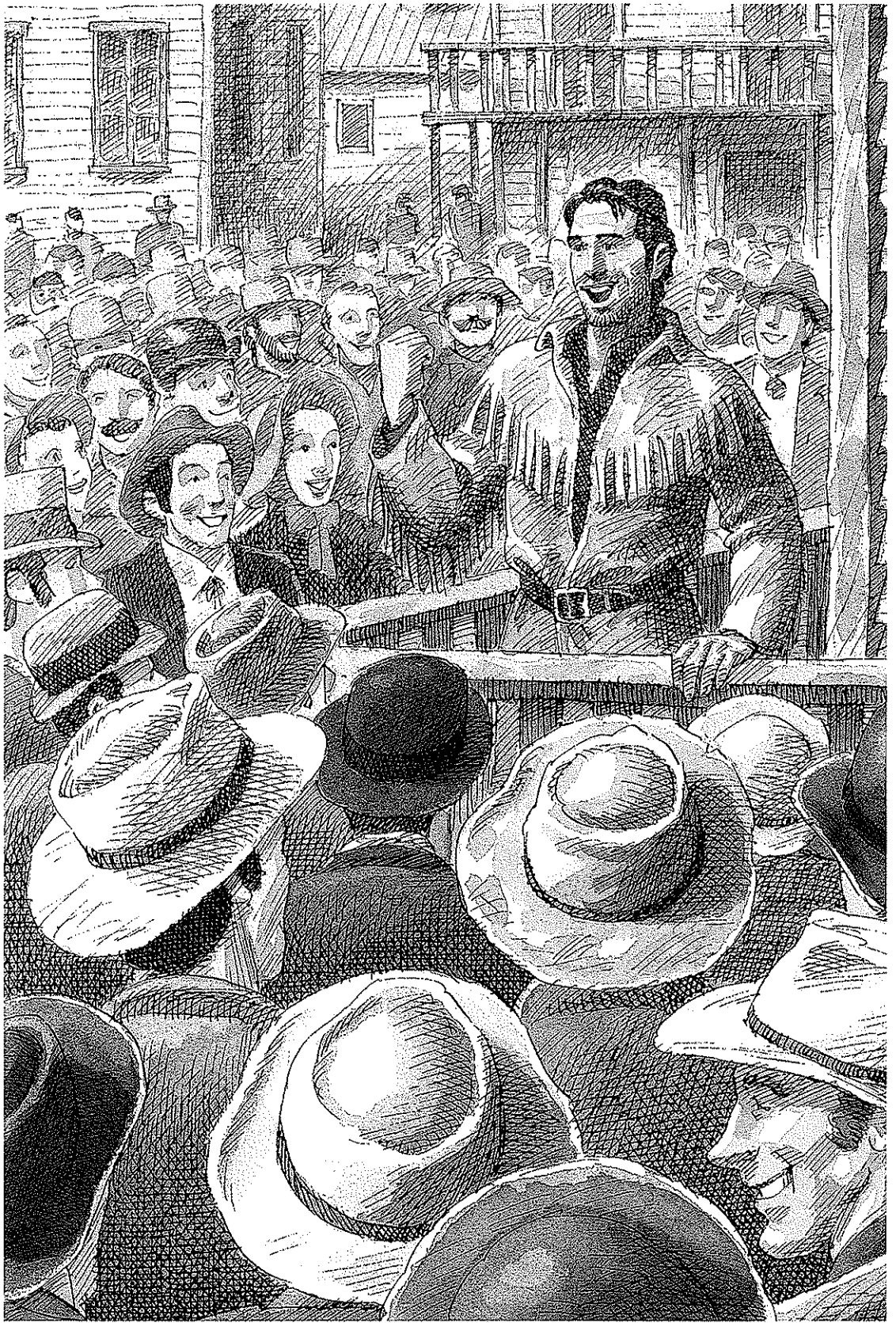
After traveling in the forests and mountains, they arrived in Lawrenceburg. This was their new home. Davy opened a mill.<sup>2</sup> He was a hard worker. His neighbors liked him. Everybody in Lawrenceburg liked him.

1. covered wagon :



2. mill : place where the grain is made into flour.







## Davy Crockett

"AN AMERICAN HERO"

He became a representative of the town government. He was very popular. People liked listening to his stories about hunting bears and about the War of 1812. They admired his honesty and courage.

Davy was different from other politicians. His speeches were never boring. His message was clear. He spoke to the people in simple language. He dressed like them too. He always wore his coonskin cap and his buckskin trousers and jacket.

One day at an important meeting he didn't know what to say. So he looked at the people and said, "Today, I am like a man trying to drink water from an empty barrel! <sup>1</sup> I'll tell you a funny story and then we can go home!"

Davy soon became a representative of the government of Tennessee. Now he was in politics. He helped his people in many ways.

At first, many politicians laughed at Davy because he never wore a suit. <sup>2</sup> After some time, these politicians admired and respected him. Davy was an honest man. Everyone believed what he said.

His buckskin jacket had two big pockets. In his right pocket Davy had a bottle of whisky. When he met his friends, he gave them some whisky! In those days, it was common to give some whisky to friends.

1. barrel :




2. suit : jacket and trousers.



## Congressman<sup>1</sup> Crockett

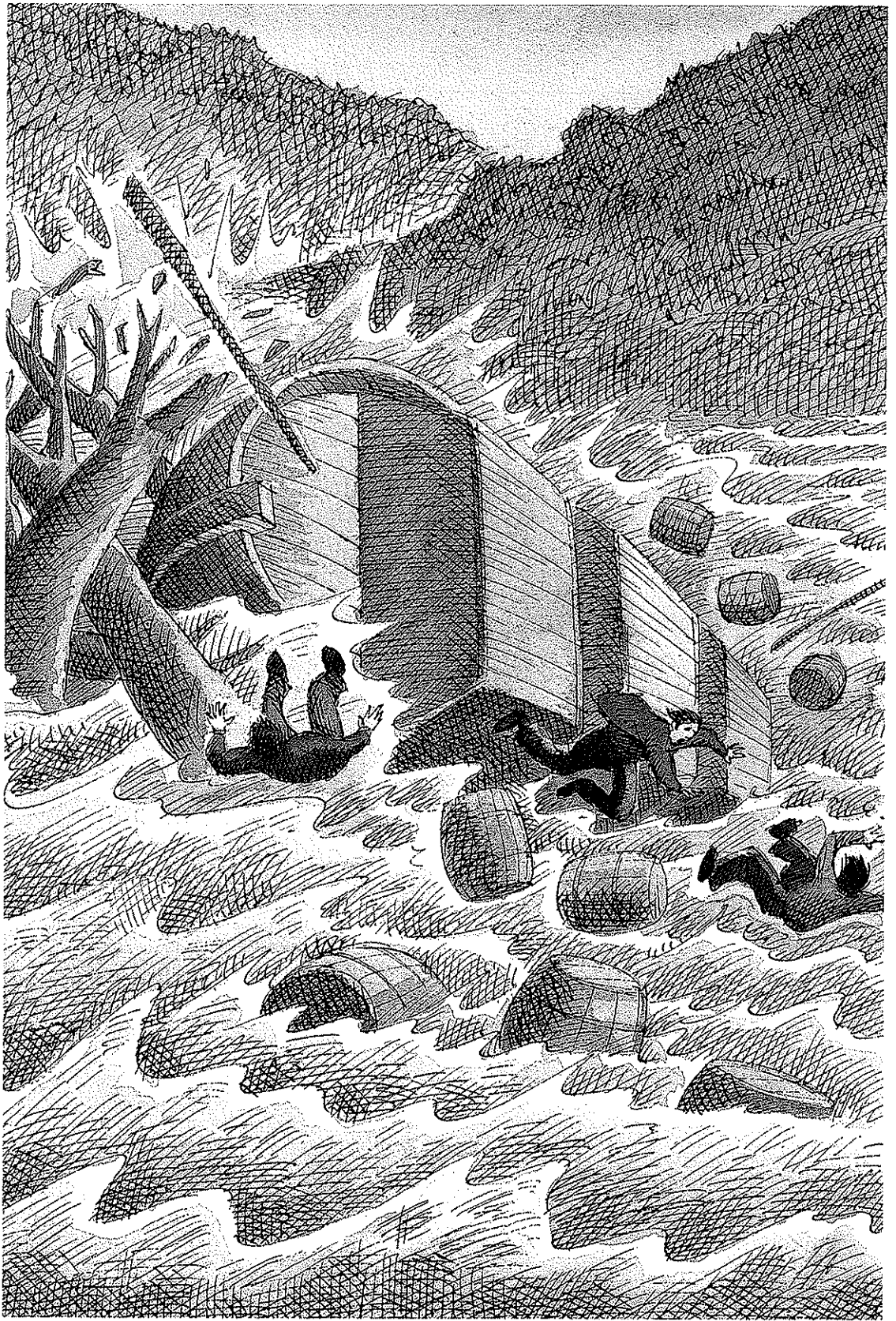


 **D**avy often went to Nashville, the capital of Tennessee. In Nashville, he worked for the Tennessee Government. One day, while Davy was working for the Tennessee Government, a big flood<sup>2</sup> destroyed his mill. This was terrible! He was very unhappy because he lost a lot of money.

When he returned to Lawrenceburg, he started a new type of work. This time he made barrels! He sold these barrels in New Orleans, Louisiana. New Orleans was about 400 miles away.

To go to New Orleans, he traveled on the Mississippi River. He had a big boat to carry the barrels. It was difficult to travel on the Mississippi River. There were many dangers.

1. **Congressman** : a member of Congress, the United States government.
2. **flood** : when water covers a place that is usually dry.





# Davy Crockett

“AN AMERICAN HERO”

One day his boat had a bad accident. It began to sink.<sup>1</sup> Davy almost drowned.<sup>2</sup> He lost his boat and his barrels but he didn't lose his life!

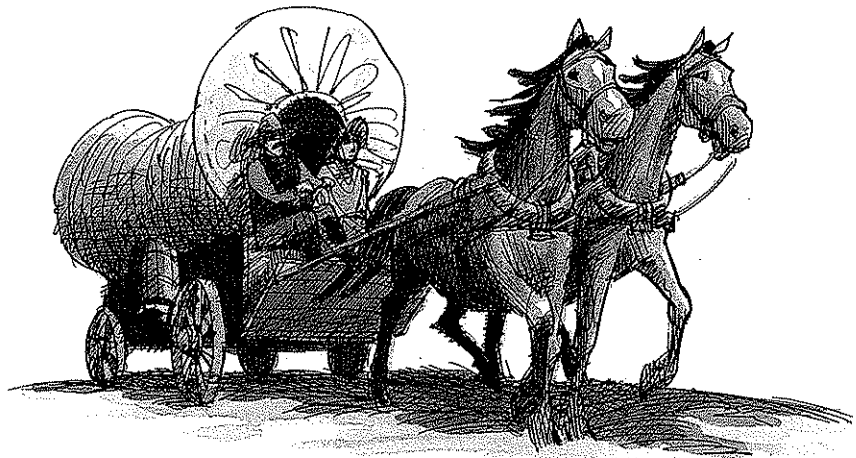
In 1827 there was a big election in Tennessee. Davy Crockett became a United States Congressman! This was a great honor for him. In the United States Congress, he represented the people of Tennessee. He traveled to Washington D.C., the capital of the United States.



Davy was very happy to be a Congressman. He wanted to help his people. There were Congressmen who wanted to take land away from the Fox Indians of Tennessee. Davy protected these Indians. He fought against dishonest Congressmen.

“The Fox Indians cannot live without their land!” Davy shouted. “I must defend all the American people of Tennessee: the whites and the Indians!” After months of hard work, Davy was not able to help the Fox Indians. The U.S. Congress made a law that took away land from the Indians. Davy was very angry. He hated injustice. In 1835 he left the U.S. Congress!

1. **sink** : go under water, to the bottom.
2. **drowned** : died by being under water for a long time.



## Texas!



In 1835 the Crockett family left Tennessee. They put all their things in a big covered wagon and they traveled for many days. They finally arrived in Texas.

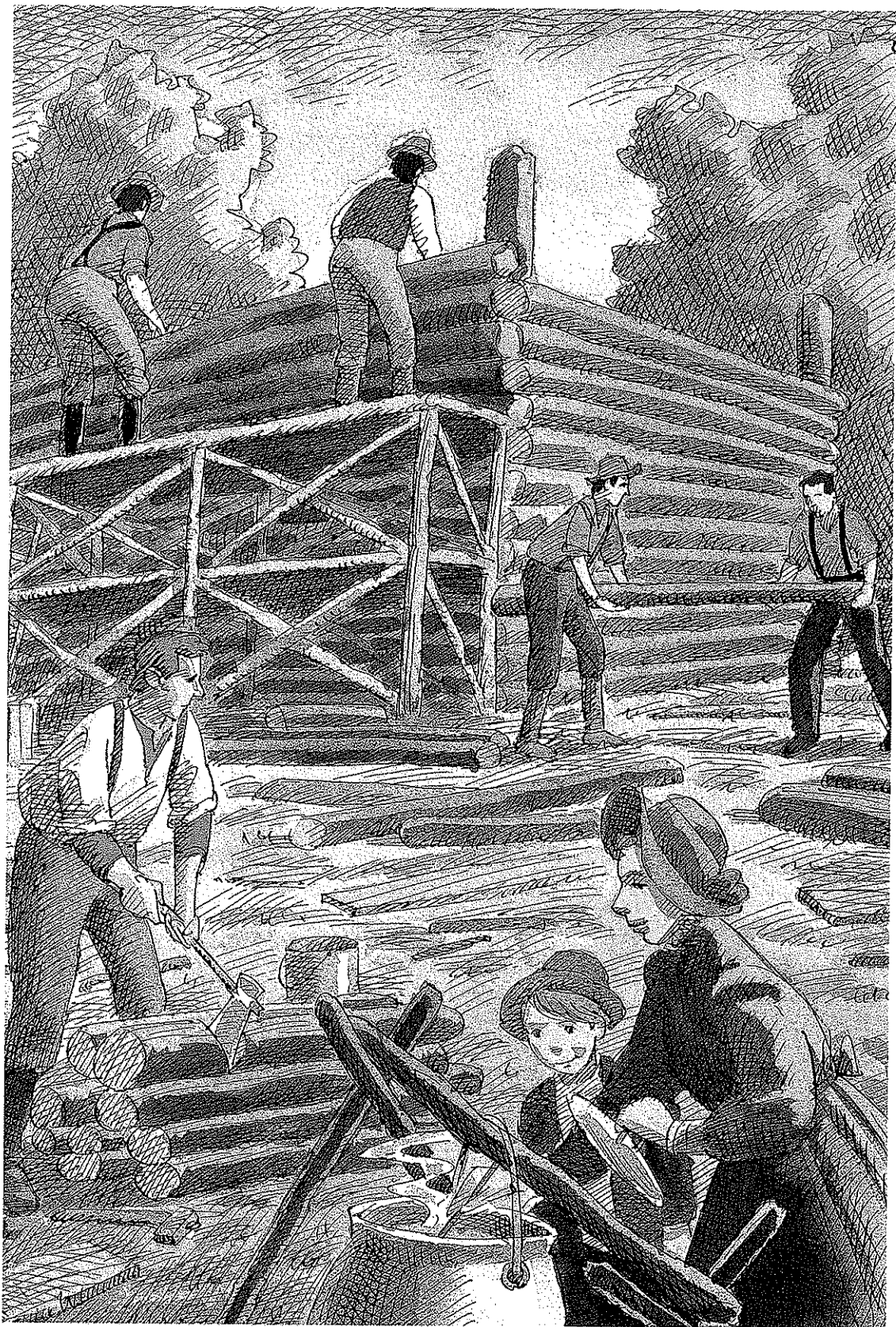
At that time, Texas belonged to Mexico. At first, the Mexican Government was happy with the American settlers. They cultivated the land.

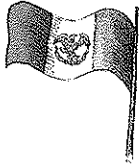
Many settlers went to Texas because land was very cheap. With a little money, a settler bought a lot of land. More and more Americans went to Texas. There were about 20,000 American settlers in eastern Texas. There were only 5,000 Mexicans! The Mexican Government did not like this. There were too many Americans!

Mexico decided to close its borders.<sup>1</sup> The American settlers were very angry.

1. borders : dividing lines between countries.

END





## Davy Crockett

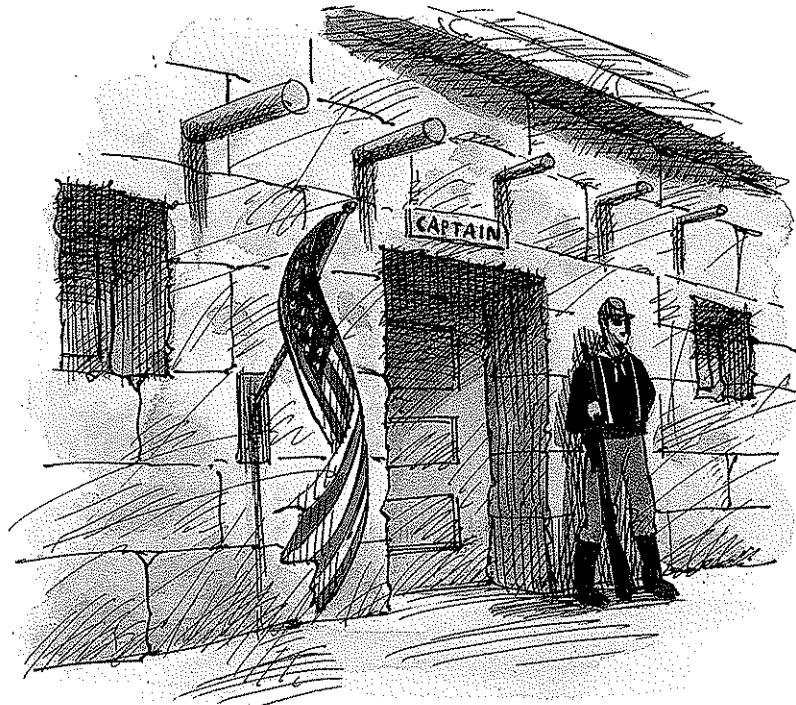
"AN AMERICAN HERO"

In 1834, the Mexican General Santa Anna became the dictator of Mexico. He was a cruel man. He sent his soldiers to the Mexican border. He did not want American settlers to enter Mexico.

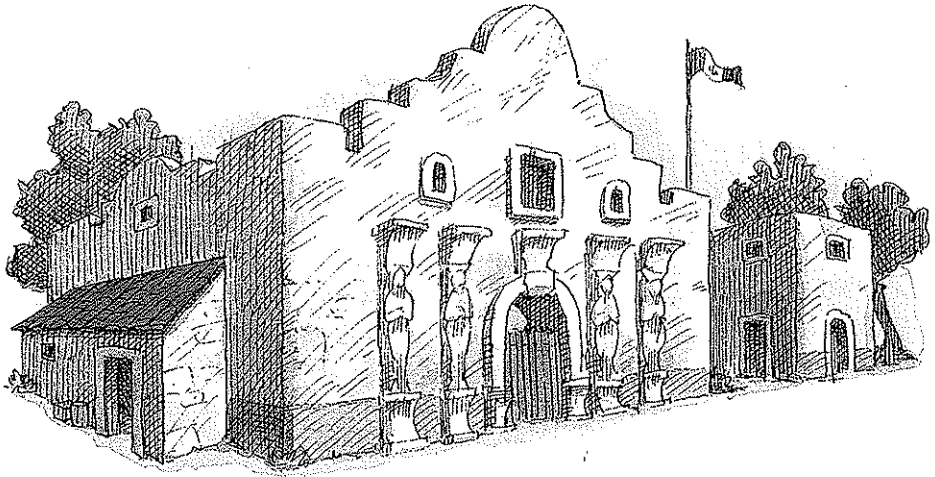
By 1834, there were more than 30,000 Americans living in Texas. They wanted Texas to be an independent American state! They did not want to live under a cruel Mexican dictator.

Davy and his family now lived in Texas. They were happy in their new home. They wanted the independence of Texas too.

One day Davy heard that the Mexicans wanted to attack Fort Alamo. The Alamo was a Spanish church and fort near San Antonio, in western Texas. There were Texans and American soldiers at Fort Alamo. There were also women and children at the fort. War was in the air! Davy knew he must fight for the independence of Texas.







## Fort Alamo



**D**avy asked other American settlers to go to the Alamo with him. Few men wanted to fight. But this did not stop Davy! He and 15 men decided to go to the Alamo. They were ready to fight the Mexicans.

There were 112 men at the Alamo. Colonel William Travis of the U.S. Army was the commander. William Travis was a young colonel.<sup>1</sup> He was only 27 years old. He was a lawyer.<sup>2</sup> He entered the U.S. Army to fight for the independence of Texas. One day, Colonel Jim Bowie and 30 men arrived at the fort. Jim Bowie was a tall, strong man. He was a hunter and trapper.

"Good evening, Colonel Travis," said Colonel Bowie. "I have a message for you from General Sam Houston. Here is the letter."

1. colonel : [kɜːnl].

2. lawyer : this person advises others about the law.

## Fort Alamo

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Colonel Travis opened it. He read it aloud:

*You must destroy the Alamo and come with my army!  
General Santa Anna will attack the Alamo soon.*

*Gen. Sam Houston*

"What!" said Colonel Travis. "I don't want to destroy the Alamo. I want to defend it."

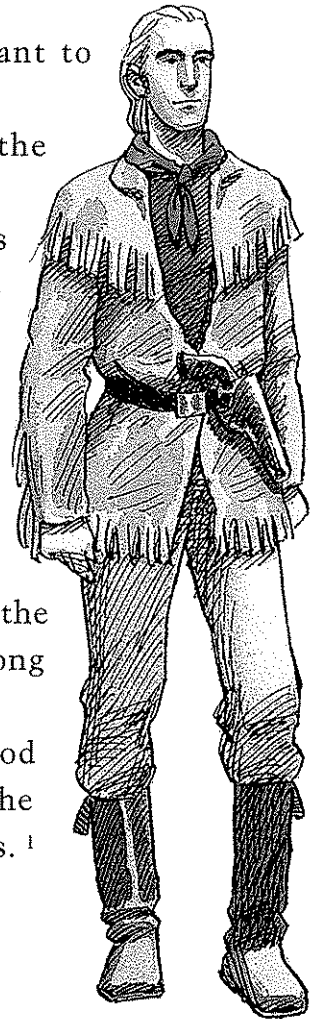
Colonel Bowie said, "We cannot defend the Alamo. We must have more men."


In February 1836, Davy Crockett and his men arrived at the fort. Colonel Travis was happy to see them. He asked Davy and his men to defend the Alamo.

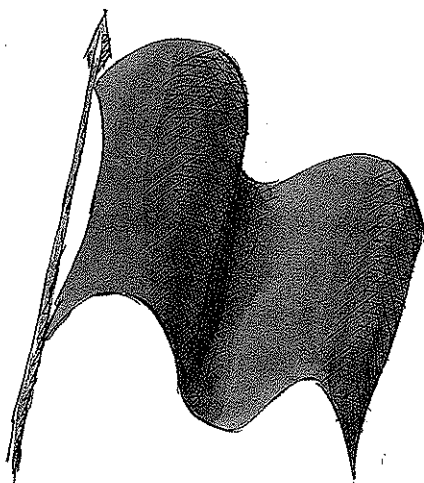
"We don't have many men," said Colonel Travis. "We must ask for more soldiers. I am sending a messenger to General Fannin. He can send us more soldiers."

Davy said, "My men and I want to defend the Alamo. We are hunters and trappers. Our long rifles can shoot at a great distance."

Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie became good friends. Together they repaired the walls of the fort. They cleaned the rifles and the cannons. <sup>1</sup> They were ready for the battle.



1. cannons: 



# The Red Flag<sup>1</sup>



**O**ne morning a messenger arrived. "I have a message from General Fannin: He is very sorry. He cannot send any soldiers. You must leave the Alamo now. General Santa Anna is near. You are all in danger."

"We don't want to leave the Alamo," said Jim Bowie. "We want to fight for the independence of Texas. How many soldiers has General Santa Anna got?"

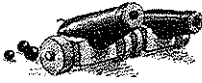
"He's got about 4,000 soldiers!" said the messenger.

Colonel Bowie looked at Colonel Travis. "We must speak to our men," said Colonel Travis. "Yes," said Bowie, "we must speak to them."

Colonel Travis called his 187 men. He said sadly, "General Santa Anna is coming to attack us. He has about 4,000 soldiers

1. flag :





# Davy Crockett

"AN AMERICAN HERO"

and lots of ammunition. We have only 187 men and little ammunition. We have little food and water. Remember, there are women and children in the fort."

Then he marked a line on the ground with his sword. <sup>1</sup> "Those who want to fight for the independence of Texas, cross this line! The others can leave the fort and go home."

There was a very long silence. Davy thought about his wife

1. sword :



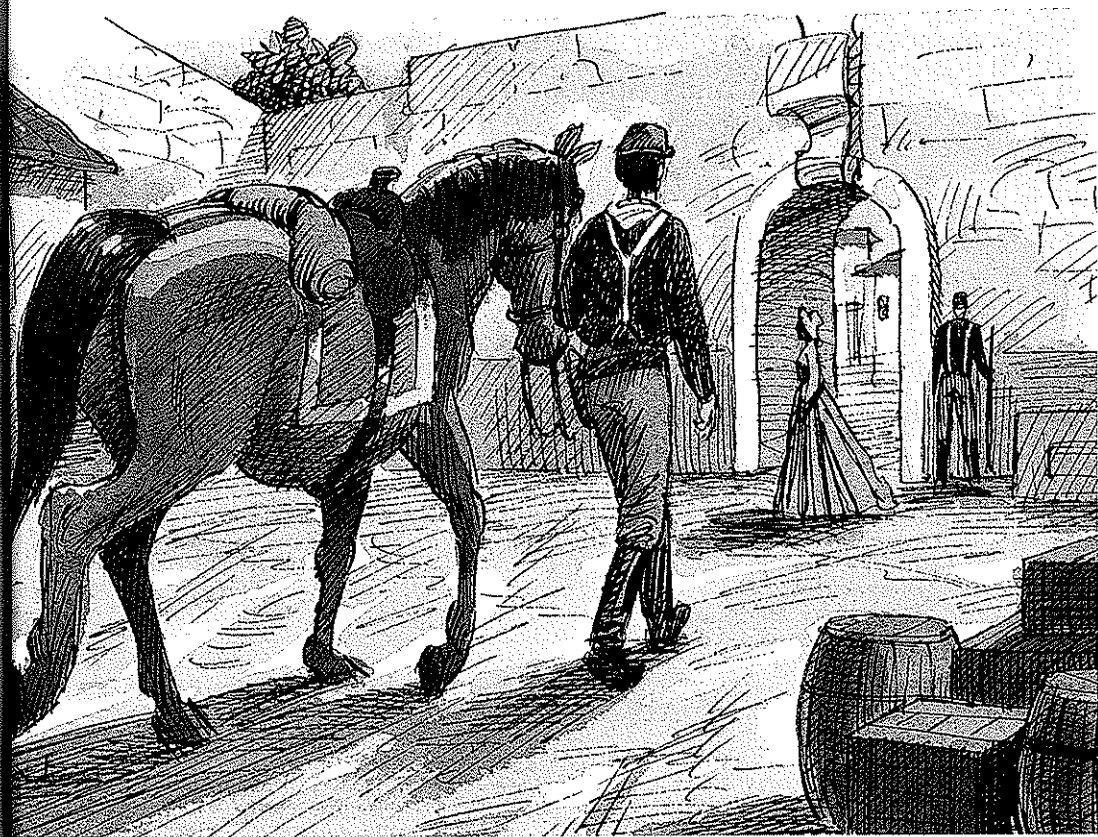
## The Red Flag

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and his five children. Then he thought about the independence of Texas and the American settlers. He thought about a new American state: Texas!

All the men crossed the line. These men wanted to defend the Alamo. These men wanted an independent Texas.

On February 23, 1836, General Santa Anna and his army arrived. He sent a messenger to the Alamo. He wanted the people in the Alamo to leave. The men in the Alamo answered with a





# Davy Crockett

“AN AMERICAN HERO”

cannon shot! They did not want to leave. They did not want to return to the United States. General Santa Anna was furious. He showed a red flag. The red flag meant: No Prisoners! He wanted to kill everyone in the fort!

On February 24, 1836, General Santa Anna's army attacked the Alamo. The Mexicans had an enormous cannon. It shot a cannon ball that damaged a wall of the fort.


Davy said, “We must destroy that cannon. It can destroy the walls of our fort.”

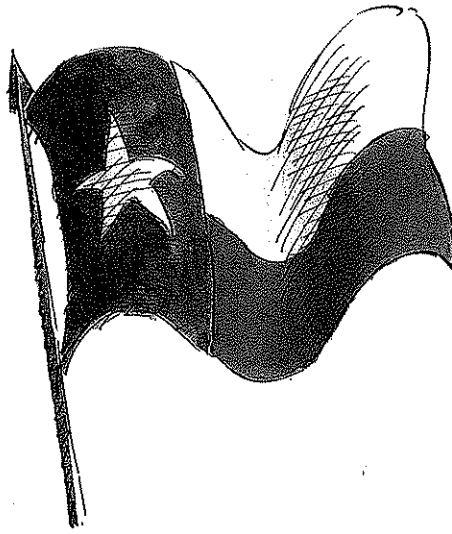
That night, Davy and Jim Bowie left the fort. They went to the Mexican camp. Everyone in the camp was sleeping. Davy and Jim silently passed behind the two Mexican guards. They put mud<sup>1</sup> and stones<sup>2</sup> in the enormous cannon. Then they returned to the Alamo.

The next morning, the Mexican army used the cannon. It exploded! The Mexicans were very surprised. Their enormous cannon was destroyed.

The men in the Alamo killed many Mexican soldiers. The Mexican army attacked many times during the day. But the Texans and the American army defended the Alamo.

1. mud : mixture of earth and water.

2. stones : 




## The Massacre



**T**he days passed. The battle continued. There was little food and ammunition. The men in the Alamo fought courageously. Nothing stopped them!

After twelve days of fighting, General Santa Anna sent all of his army to attack the fort. On March 6, at 5 a.m., the Mexican bugles<sup>1</sup> played the "Deguello."<sup>2</sup> The "Deguello" was a war song. It meant "Death for everyone." The women and children at the fort were tired and afraid. The situation was desperate.

The men at the Alamo heard the "Deguello". They understood the message. General Santa Anna's army attacked the fort from all sides. It was a terrible battle. Everyone was shooting. Cannon

1. bugles : 

2. "Deguello" : [dà-gày-yò]

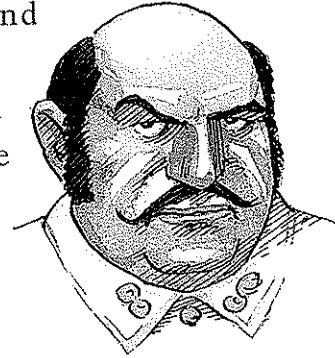
# The Massacre

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balls were flying. A lot of men were injured. Some men were killed. Davy and the other men defended the fort. They sent back the Mexicans twice.

The third time, the Mexicans entered the fort. They killed many people: men, women and children. It was a massacre!

Jim Bowie was a great fighter. He was a strong man and he was never afraid. He fought with his famous Bowie knife. He killed many Mexican soldiers. At the end of the day, three Mexican soldiers killed Jim Bowie.



Davy and the other men fought until the end. They killed many enemy soldiers. It was a desperate battle. Four Mexican soldiers killed Davy with a long knife. The tall, courageous trapper fell to the ground!

Only two women and two children were alive after the massacre. But General Santa Anna did not kill them. These women and children returned home.

The Mexicans burnt the bodies of the dead people. It was a big victory for General Santa Anna. He lost 1,544 men at the Alamo.

On April 21, 1836, General Sam Houston and his army attacked General Santa Anna. General Houston made General Santa Anna prisoner. Santa Anna then signed a treaty.<sup>1</sup> This treaty said that Texas was independent! Everyone remembered Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, Colonel Travis and the other men.

1. treaty : document that promised something.



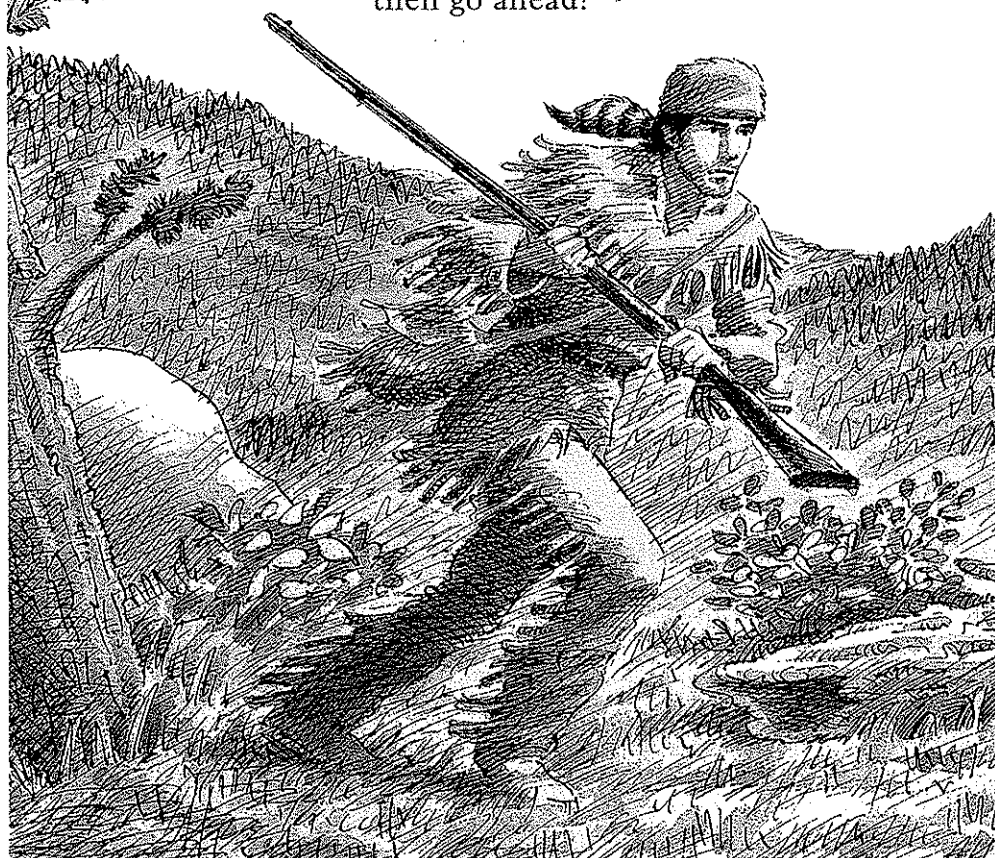


# Davy Crockett

“AN AMERICAN HERO”


They died for the independence of Texas. Texas became a state of the United States in 1845.

All through his life, Davy Crockett did what he believed was right. With his honesty and determination, he became a national hero. Davy Crockett was the perfect example of the American free spirit. In his life story Davy wrote, “I leave this rule for others when I’m dead: Always be sure you’re right—then go ahead!”<sup>1</sup>



1. go ahead! : do it!

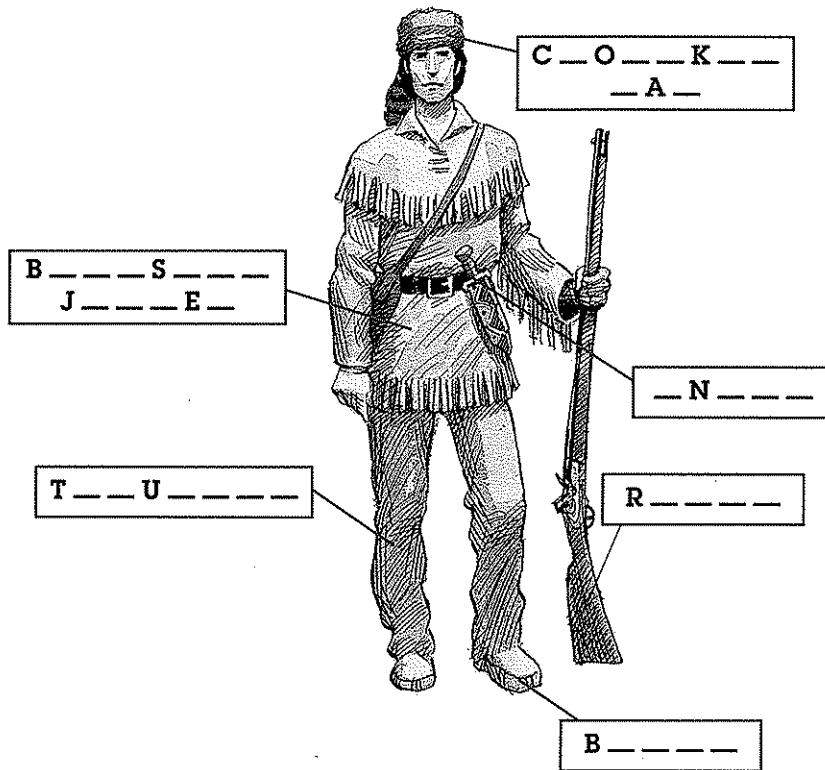
# DAVY CROCKETT STATE PARK

 **N**ear the city of Lawrenceburg in Tennessee, there is a big State Park called Davy Crockett State Park. It was created in 1959 in honor of America's great hero.

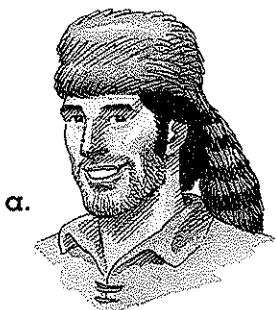
There is an interesting museum about Davy Crockett, his life and his times.

In this State Park there is a beautiful lake, a big park, an enormous sports area and there are camping grounds.

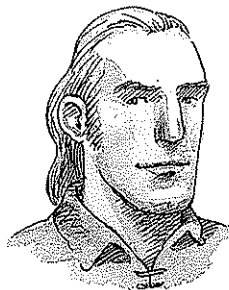
 **1** Let's complete Davy!



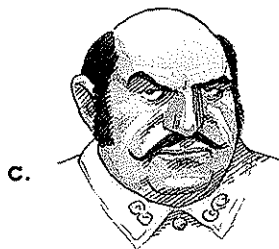
2 Write the names of the characters under the pictures. Then choose the words from the coonskin cap to describe these characters. Some words can be used twice.



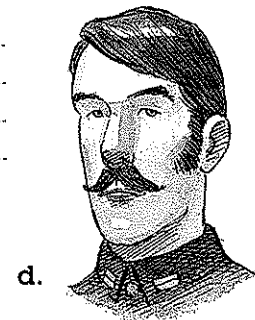
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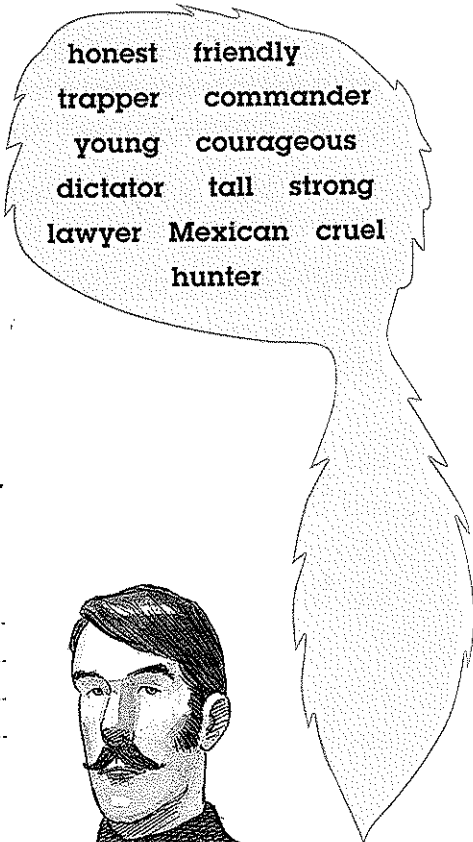
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Now write a sentence describing each character.

- a. Davy was .....
- b. Jim .....
- c. General Santa Anna .....
- d. Colonel Travis .....

# HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS

**L**ife in the American wilderness was exciting but it was not easy. There were wild animals, hostile Indians, no roads and no good maps. Only strong, courageous men and women lived in the wilderness. These people were very independent. They were free spirits. Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie (who you will read about later in the story) were hunters and trappers. They hunted wild animals for food and for their furs. Davy hunted bears and wild cats. Both were very dangerous animals.

Hunters and trappers had a difficult life. They lived alone in the high mountains for many months. Often it snowed and it was very cold. They did not have a home. They lived in a cave or in a small hut.<sup>1</sup>



*Hunters in their camp (1909).*

1. hut : very small house made of wood.

They hunted many animals: bears, wild cats, alligators, buffalo, beavers and others. Then they sold the furs at a trading post.<sup>1</sup> Trappers made good money by selling furs. Indians often worked as trappers too.

## ANIMALS THAT TRAPPERS HUNTED



bobcat



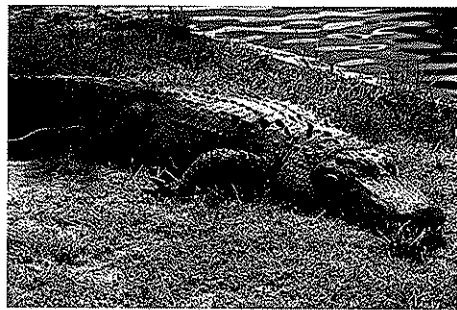
beaver



raccoon



grizzly bear



alligator

1. trading post : place in a town where you buy and sell things.

# THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

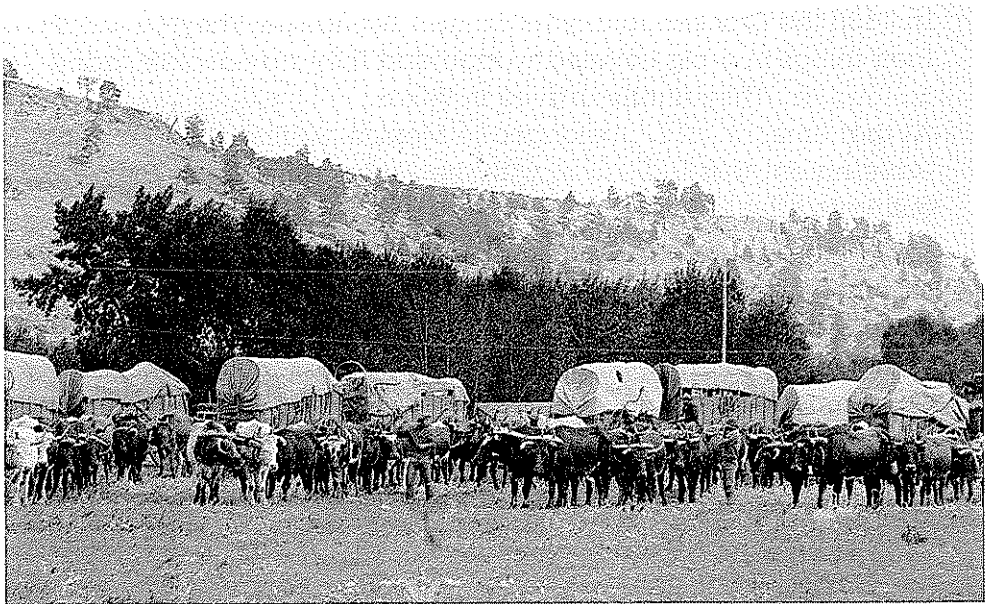
**I**n the 18th century America was a very young nation. Only small parts of the East were settled by white people.

On the American continent *there were forests, lakes, rivers, valleys, tall mountains and deserts. But there were very few people.* American Indians lived on this enormous continent.

Every year thousands of white settlers explored the American frontier. These *settlers moved from the East to the West* in their covered wagons. Some settled near the rivers, others in the valleys.

Most of them were farmers. Some were cowboys with their cattle. *Towns and cities grew quickly.*

In our story, American settlers moved to Texas. Texas was a Mexican territory. The settlers fought for the independence of Texas, which soon became an American state!



*View of a covered wagon train (1891).*

This is how America grew. Year after year, new states became part of America. Today there are 50 states in the United States.

- 1 It's the summer of 1835. You are a journalist in Washington D.C. You work for the *Washington Pioneer*. Your friend in New York must write a short article about the American frontier but he doesn't have any information! Send him a telegram and give him some information—remember, make it short!

Look at the highlighted sections of *The American Frontier* and prepare the telegram.

## Western Union Telegram

## EXIT TEST



### Who are they?

Match the correct number with the letter.

#### WHO...

1. was a school teacher?
2. fought in the American Revolution?
3. invented the Bowie knife?
4. was lost and walked 400 miles to get home?
5. was the cruel Mexican dictator?
6. was Davy's second wife?
7. commanded the Alamo?
8. organized an army and fought in the War of 1812?
9. won the battle of the Alamo?
10. was an Irish immigrant?
11. made General Santa Anna a prisoner?
12. was an honest Congressman?

- A Meg Mackinack
- B Davy Crockett
- C General Sam Houston
- D Polly Finley
- E General Andrew Jackson
- F Colonel William Travis
- G John Crockett
- H Jim Bowie
- I The Mexicans
- J General Santa Anna

1.     2.     3.     4.     5.     6.     7.   
8.     9.     10.     11.     12.

Score



Are sentences 1-12 "Right" (A) or "Wrong" (B)?

If there is not enough information to answer "Right" (A) or "Wrong" (B), choose "Doesn't say" (C).

0. When Davy was born his father built a new house.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
1. Davy and Polly had three children.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
2. Davy was a scout for General Jackson's army.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
3. He opened a mill in New Orleans.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
4. He almost drowned on the Mississippi River.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
5. When he became a Congressman, Davy had an office in Washington D.C.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
6. In 1835 Texas belonged to the British.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
7. Settlers went to Texas because the land was cheap.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
8. General Santa Anna did not want American settlers to enter Mexico.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
9. General Fannin sent many soldiers to the Alamo.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
10. All 187 men decided to stay and defend the Alamo.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
11. Davy and Jim Bowie took away an enormous cannon from the Mexicans.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say
12. In 1836 Texas became independent.  
A Right                      B Wrong                      C Doesn't say

Score