

## BOOK REVIEW SECTION

### Journey Into the Land of Trials:

#### The Story of Davy Crockett's

#### Expedition to the Alamo

Manley F. Cobia, Jr.

Hillsboro Press, Franklin, TN

288 pages

2003 (Providence Publishing)

Here is an extensive study of the last few months in the life of David Crockett, his reasons for leaving his home in Northwest Tennessee, and many details of his long ride to Texas. There is mention, of course, of the fame and tall tales that led to the mythical "Davy" of the "Crockett Almanacs" but in the main this volume deals with the historical facts which led to his death at the Alamo.

Col. Crockett had talked of moving to Texas long before his defeat for re-election to Congress in 1835. He had found himself in disagreement with President Jackson on several issues and he had nothing but contempt for the Vice President, Martin Van Buren, whom he thought had too much influence on Jackson. It is known that he had socialized with Sam Houston (Apr., 1834), who had lived in Texas for two years, and who believed that Texas would be an independent republic within three years. Texas was being touted as "bigger, richer, and more beautiful than any other place on earth", where large acreages of land could be acquired on very favorable terms.

There is some doubt that when he left, Crockett intended to join the Texan army. (His family was surprised and shocked when they learned later that he had done so.) He wrote his brother-in-law, on the eve of his Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> departure: "I want to explore 'the Texas' well before I return."

When Crockett bid farewell to friends in Trenton, Jackson, Bolivar and Memphis, he was accompanied by a "hunting party." Dr. Calvin Jones of Bolivar likened Davy to "a passing comet, never to be seen again", as he saw his townspeople give the group of thirty armed and equipped men a heroes' sendoff.

Sixteen year old James D. David wrote in his eyewitness account that after Col. Crockett checked into the City Hotel in Memphis, he spent the day talking with old friends. At night they visited a few bars where he entertained with speeches and concluded with: "I told the voters that if they would elect me I would serve them to the best of my ability; but if they did not, they might go to hell and I would go to Texas. I am on my way now."

Crockett was greeted in Little Rock by crowds of curious folk, some of whom were surprised that he did not resemble the creature that they had seen in the Almanacs. He was lauded by the Whig newspapers and derided by those published by the Democrats. He visited with friends both old and new as he told stories and hunted in Arkansas and eastern Texas. Family members of homes where he stayed overnight remembered him as a courteous gentleman.

In his letter of January 9, 1836, David Crockett informed his daughter, Margaret Flowers and her husband that he had signed the oath of allegiance and would serve in the Texan army. He expected to have a part in the new government and planned to settle in the Red River country where he could obtain over 4,000 acres of land. He wished that all of his family and friends could re-settle in Texas, and he expressed the hope that he could finally make the fortune that had so far eluded him.

Crockett found that the Texans were slow to agree on leaders and on how to establish a new government. These decisions came too late for him and the other 180 ill-fated defenders of the Alamo. The author suggests (with some evidence) that Crockett may have left the mission on March 1<sup>st</sup> in an effort to bring help from volunteers located some 20 miles away. If this be true, he could have chosen not to return—but of course he was back in the fort no later than March 3<sup>rd</sup>, where he fought valiantly and was killed on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

Author Cobia, who has been persistent and thorough in his research, discusses several theories of Crockett's character, motivation, conduct and manner of death. (See his endnotes and bibliography.) He concludes that David Crockett was a natural leader with a strong touch of charisma, who most of the time put the good of the group ahead of his own welfare.

"Journey into the Land of Trials" is not an entertaining adventure story about a super hero. It is, rather, a serious study of a complex historical character who was caught up in a dream of new opportunities in a new



land, and who, to some extent, became the victim of his own fame. The volume will prove helpful to all who seek the truth about Col. David Crockett of Tennessee and Texas.

Reviewed by – Joe N. Bone

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### **History of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad**

Klein, Maury

Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky

572 pages

2003

Have you ever traveled down the interstate at 65 mph with several 18-wheel behemoths surrounding you about 6 feet away, wondering why their merchandise wasn't safely on a nearby railroad track which parallels so many of our interstate highways? Reading this book by Professor Klein will give you a glimpse at the answer(s) to such musings and contribute to an understanding of why most travel today is not by railroad.

At the apex in 1916 there were 1,243 rail companies of all classes owning some 254,000 miles of track throughout the country. Today there are only four main systems, two west of the Mississippi (Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe) and two east of the Mississippi (CSXT and Norfolk Southern). This book traces the glorious history of one component of the CSXT system, The Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company (L&N), from its beginnings in the 1850's until the present.

This book was first published in 1972 by the Macmillan Company. It offers the reader a detailed and descriptive story of this railroad's founding through the centennial year 1959 in twenty carefully researched chapters with ample documentation in the form of end notes. The "Epilogue into the Maw of Progress" offers a summary of major developments in the company from 1959 to 1972, the year the first edition was released. The author has provided a six-page "Introduction to the New Edition" to bring the reader up to the present.