

**Colonel David Crockett:
War of 1812 Veteran Visits Baltimore,
1833-1834**



**David Crockett (1786-1836)
(Library of Congress)**

Crockett's own service in the War of 1812 at age twenty-seven was with Colonel John Coffee's 2nd Regiment, Tennessee Volunteer Mounted Riflemen serving with General Andrew Jackson during the Creek Indian War (1813-1814). In 1818 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the 57th Tennessee, thus his title. Though his service was far from Maryland, his frontier and legislator notoriety accompanied him to Baltimore in 1835 where he gave praise to Baltimore's Old Defenders' of 1814.

Crockett first visited Baltimore in the Spring of 1800 at the age of fourteen as a "self made man" driving wagons of farm commodities from Tennessee. Here he was found "delighted to see the big ships, and their sails all flying..."

Crockett's backwoodsman notoriety gained him frontier recognition to be elected for two congressional tenures (1827-1835) in the U.S. House of Representatives representing Tennessee.

During one of his two pamphlet publicity stops in Baltimore, readers often asked "What kind of a man is colonel Crockett?" To this Hezekiah Niles' editor of *Nile's Weekly Register* "...just as such a one you would desire to meet with, if any accident or misfortune had happened to you on the highway."

On November 30, 1833 on a visit to Baltimore he attended the Holliday Street Theatre to view a performance of "King Richard the Third," where nineteen years earlier "The Star-Spangled Banner" was first sung.

On April 25, 1834, Crockett once more set out on a three week northern tour. At Baltimore, large crowds assembled at Fells' Point to await the arrival of the steamboat *Swan* with the famed frontiersman. That evening he attended a play entitled "Lion of the West" whose character "Nimrod Wildfire" was a caricature upon Crockett's frontier life. Here he promoted his own campaign autobiography entitled *An Narrative of the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee, By Himself* (1834).

LIFE OF COL. DAVID CROCKETT.
written by himself, lately published by
CAREY, HART & CO.
no 1 Corner Baltimore and Charles streets.
Baltimore Patriot, April 1, 1834

While lodging at Barnum's Hotel he visited the Washington Monument commenting.

"Stand your ground, my honest fellows. Your monuments mean something. Look at them inscriptions and memorials of your brothers who fell at North Point. It was not in man-worship they lost their lives. No, it was to defend our country

when in danger...Look at the immortal Washington on that lofty pillar; that comes home good..."

The next day he boarded the steamboat *Carroll- of- Carrolton* down the Patapsco River. On passing Fort McHenry, Crockett informed his fellow passengers of its celebrated defense in 1814:

"We immediately came past Fort McHenry, justly celebrated for its gallant defense under Armistead, Stewart, Nicholson, Newcomb, and others, during the last war; and shortly after we passed North Point, where the British landed to make, what they never dared, an attack on Baltimore."

On his return to Washington with a re-election defeat, Crockett presumably informed his fellow Congressmen: "I told the people of my district that I would serve them as faithfully as I had done; but if not ... you may all go to hell, and I will go to Texas."

Crockett had heard of the American southwest settlers who had decided to gain their own independence from the Mexican state of Coahuila (Texas) by organizing a government. With fellow frontiersmen he left Tennessee on November 1, 1835 toward a small old Spanish mission in San Antonio, Bexar, known as the Alamo.

On February 23, 1836 General Santa Anna's Mexican army arrived to put down the settler's rebellion; a thirteen day siege of the Alamo began, ending on March 6, 1836. with the lives of Crockett and his fellow defenders. News of the Alamo reached Baltimore on March 30th aboard the Schooner *William A. Turner* from New Orleans, when the *Baltimore Gazette* published the news.

Though his fame rests upon his legendary frontier life and now fallen defender for Texas independence, he was not forgotten in Baltimore where he passed through less than two years earlier on his way to Texas.

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Byline: Scott Sheads is a former 46 year ranger-historian- author with the National Park Service, now retired at Fort McHenry.