

Availability in History



Ka-boom! An explosion shattered the stillness of the Tennessee forest. Davy Crockett ran to see where his shot had landed. The tail of his coonskin cap bounced wildly as he eagerly searched for the bullet hole. It was nowhere to be found.

His first shot had landed smack dab in the bulls-eye. How could his second shot have been so far off? Not only had he missed the target, he had missed the tree altogether!

Davy let out a long sigh of disappointment. "I'll never get it right!" he cried. "Take another look," said his father. There, buried behind the first shot, was Davy's second. He had put *two* round rifle balls in the same hole!

As Davy grew, he quickly gained fame as one of the best shots in Tennessee. His motto was "Be sure you're right, and then go ahead." When Davy Crockett got something in his sights and he was sure he was right, he rarely missed. Whether it was with a rifle, his family, business, or politics, Davy Crockett became known as a man who was available to champion the cause of right.

People liked him, especially when he told stories about his childhood and

his years as a colonel in the Tennessee militia. In fact, the legends of Davy Crockett are still told to this day.

Davy's description of himself made people laugh. "I'm Davy Crockett," he would announce, "Fresh from the backwoods. I'm half horse, half alligator, and a touch of snappin' turtle. I've got the fastest horse, the prettiest sister, the surest rifle, and the ugliest dog in the state of Tennessee."

In 1827 Davy's neighbors elected him to Congress for his first of three terms. They knew that whenever he found a good cause, he would throw his whole heart into it.

In 1835 Davy Crockett found a new cause. He had completed his third term as a congressman and was ready for a new adventure. Davy polished up his gun and packed his bags once more. "Elizabeth," Davy told his wife, "I'm going to Texas. Land is plentiful, and a man can claim as much as he can use. There's too many people crowding into Tennessee. They say that in Texas, as far as the eye can see, the fields are open and the sky is blue."

He rode horseback part of the way and then took a steamship down the

Mississippi River. The trip took many weeks, and by the time Davy arrived, there was trouble brewing in Texas. Mexico had declared that she owned Texas and refused to allow any more Americans, such as Davy, to claim land.

Davy faced a choice to either give up and return to Tennessee, or stay and help the Texans fight for their land and freedom. Even though it would have been very easy to turn around and head back to Tennessee, he decided to put the Texans ahead of himself.

Did you spot the "I Will"? Davy put others ahead of himself.

Davy talked with those in charge before he made a final commitment. He wanted to know what he was getting into. After talking it over, Davy decided not only to stay, but also to join the Texas army.

Did you spot the "I Will"? Davy checked with the right people before making commitments.

Davy raised his right hand and took the oath of allegiance to the Republic of Texas. From there, he prepared himself as much as he could. He gathered supplies, polished his gun, and trained other soldiers.

Davy Crockett soon became a leader of other volunteers, most of them men from his home state of Tennessee. Like Davy, they had come to settle land and build new homes, but they also saw the need to fight for Texas' freedom.

Some of the Texans had taken refuge in an old Spanish mission called the Alamo. The place needed a lot of



repairs. The buildings and doors all lacked reinforcement, and parts of the walls were crumbling. But Davy was determined to be ready for battle.

"Men," he stated, "There's many a need here. Every last one of us can make a difference." Davy looked around. "I hear there are some cannons that need to be placed around the walls for defense. Who would like to help?"

The men joined Davy in repairing the old mission. They set up cannons along the Alamo walls, rebuilt the broken parts, and did whatever Davy found to make themselves ready for the call of battle.

Did you spot the "I Will"? Davy made himself and others ready to be called for battle.

On the morning of February 23, 1836, Davy heard a faint bugle call. He squinted into the distance. From far away he could see sunlight glinting off something bright. It was the Mexican army, under the command of General Santa Anna, arrayed in battle attire: blue and white uniforms decorated all around with gold tassels.

The early morning sun reflected off the bright gold cording, and the army surged forward in glowing array to set up a siege around the Alamo.

As the days passed, things looked hopeless. There were 187 Texans against 5,000 well-equipped Mexican soldiers. Inside the Alamo's courtyard, Colonel Travis met with his soldiers. "Men," he began, "It is very likely that we shall all die here. If any of you want to leave, I give you permission to do so right now."

With those words, he took out his sword and drew a deep line across the dirt. "Those who will remain and fight until we die . . . step across this line."



Davy Crockett, 1786–1836

Everyone was silent. They knew the seriousness of their choice. The Mexican army would attack at any time, and who could withstand such a force? "I will stay!" Davy declared as the first to step across the line. "I'll remain and fight to the very end." One after another, the other men followed Davy's example and stepped across the line. They were determined to stay and help instead of retreat and hide.

Did you spot the "I Will"? Davy found a way to help, not a way to hide.

For ten days, the valiant men of the Alamo held back the Mexican Army. But, by March 5th they could no longer return fire because their ammunition and supplies of gun powder were so low.

Davy sensed the men growing weary and tired. To cheer them up, he found an old violin and began to play. Davy's strong voice rang out in a happy song, and soon the other soldiers joined in.

When most men wished they were somewhere else, Davy was glad for the chance to serve his fellow Texans.

Did you spot the "I Will"? Davy was glad for the chance to serve.

The next morning, Davy and the men spread out to defend their positions against the final charge. The Mexican Army rushed toward the Alamo like a flood. Within seconds, they had surrounded the outer walls of the mission and began to climb them with makeshift ladders.

Davy and the Texans fought courageously. The air was so thick with gunpowder that the men could taste it. "Don't give up!" shouted Davy to his men. His voice rose above the chaos. "Keep fighting with all your strength!"

But the Mexicans broke through the mission walls and swarmed the courtyard. Davy Crockett was among the last to fall. A woman and two servants were the only Texans to survive.

Texas lost the Alamo, but Davy and the other defenders could not be forgotten. Six weeks later, General Sam Houston and his men attacked the Mexican army at San Jacinto. "Remember the Alamo!" they shouted as they charged. "Remember the Alamo!" The Mexican army was defeated in just 20 minutes, and Texas won its independence.

Davy Crockett and his comrades became national heroes. Years later, their story of availability lives on . . . and the cry "Remember the Alamo!" still rings out to those who would follow their example.