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*Different accounts suggest one answer*

# Davy Crockett's legend: myth or fact?

Facts seem to be catching up with the legend of Davy Crockett.

The Tennessean-Texan's life — and particularly his death at the Alamo — were apparently less heroic than popularly believed.

The diary of Jose Enrique de la Pena, a lieutenant on Gen. Santa Anna's staff during the siege of the Alamo, first suggested Crockett

might have been captured instead of dying in battle.

The book, "With Santa Anna in Texas: A Personal Narrative of the Revolution," included a paragraph which indicated that Crockett was captured and executed when the Alamo was seized on March 6, 1836.

Dan Kilgore, a past president of the Texas State Historical Association, delved into the subject in a book entitled, "How Did Davy Die?"

"Crockett's heroism seemed to expand in direct proportion to the distance news had to travel about him," Kilgore says.

Not only does the book substantiate the de la Pena notation, but it also indicates Crockett had a dismal career in Congress, failed financially and was motivated to go to Texas by less than liberty-loving reasons.

While acknowledging that Crockett was a skilled backwoodsman, Kilgore contends that his death at the Alamo "came as a tragic finale to a life that was essentially a failure in achievement of worldly goals" and that "he died a poor man with an undistinguished record as a congressman."

"Throughout Crockett's rise to prominence as a national figure, political enemies defeated him at every turn, although both major parties used him as a symbol at various times and employed the national press to establish that symbol," he adds.

Kilgore says Crockett actually came to Texas because he was ashamed he lost his 1835 re-election bid to Congress.

The chief factor in Crockett's defeat was his "passionate opposition" to Andrew Jackson, Kilgore said. He points out that James Shackford, Crockett's biographer, believed that hatred may well have had a bearing on his decision to go to the Alamo.

Crockett was politically opposed

to Sam Houston, commander-in-chief of the dominant Texas force and Jackson's personal representative, Kilgore said. Houston, however, was said to have little control over the command at the Alamo.

"Shackford believed that Crockett joined the Alamo defenders to demonstrate further opposition to the Jackson force that had defeated him in Tennessee, and not with any idea of dying for the liberty of Texas," he said.

About the only thing certain is that Crockett did die at the Alamo — although one tale says he later was in forced labor in Mexico.

Kilgore notes that evidence indicates Crockett surrendered or was taken prisoner and quickly shot. He says six other Mexican soldiers at Santa Anna's personal secretary support de la Pena's testimony that Crockett was one of several Texans paraded before Santa Anna.

"Statements from these seven Mexican soldiers were mutually corroborative and were recorded independently under widely differing circumstances," the author emphasizes. "Their accounts have come to light over a long period of time, several having surfaced only recently. Any one of them, standing alone, could be subject to question, but considered as a whole, the statements provide stronger documentation than can be claimed for any other incident during the battle."

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