An Account of Col. Crockett’s Tour to the North and Down East
By David Crockett
Published: 1835

Lowell 1834

Note:
May 7, 1834
David Crockett, while on tour of the New England states in support of the Whig party and its opposition to President Andrew Jackson, was invited to visit the Lowell textile mills. While in Lowell, Samuel Lawrence, agent of the Middlesex Mills, presented Crockett with a fine suit of domestic broadcloth [wool].

Excerpt

Next morning I rose early, and started for Lowell in a fine carriage, with three gentlemen who had agreed to accompany me. I had heard so much of this place that I longed to see it; not because I had heard of the “mile of gals;” no, I left that for the gallantry of the president, who is admitted, on that score, to be abler than myself; but I wanted to see the power of machinery, wielded by the keenest calculations of human skill; I wanted to see how it was that these northerners could buy our cotton, and carry it home, manufacture it, bring it back, and sell it for half nothing; and, in the mean time, be well to live; and make money besides.

We stopped at the large stone house at the head of the falls of the Merrimack river, and having taken a little refreshments; went down among the factories. The dinner bells were ringing, and the folks pouring out of the houses like bees out of a gum. I looked at them as they passed; all well dressed, lively, and genteel in their appearance; indeed, the girls looked as if they were coming from a quilting frolic. We took a turn round, and after dining on a fine salmon, again returned, and entered the factories.

The out-door appearance was fully sustained by the whole of the persons employed in the different rooms. I went in among the young girls, and talked with many of them. Not one expressed herself as tired of her employment, or oppressed with work; all talked well, and looked healthy. Some of them were very handsome; and I could not help observing that they kept the prettiest inside, and out the homely ones on the outside rows.

I could not help reflecting on the difference of condition between these females, thus employed, and those of other populous countries, where female character is degraded to abject slavery. Here were thousands, useful to others, and enjoying all the blessings of freedom, with the prospect before them of future comfort and respectability: and however we, who only hear of them, may call their houses workshops and prisons, I assure my neighbours there is every enjoyment of life realized by these persons, and there can be but few who are not happy. It cannot be otherwise: respectability depends upon being neighbour-like: here everybody works, and therefore no one is degraded by it; on the contrary, those who don’t work are not estimated.
There are more than five thousand females employed in Lowell; and when you come to see the amount of labour performed by them in superintending the different machinery, you will be astonished.

Twelve years ago, the place where Lowell now rises in all its pride was a sheep-pasture. It took its name from Francis C. Lowell, the projector of its manufactories, and was incorporated in 1826—then a mere village. The fall, obtained by a canal from the Merrimac river, is thirty-two feet, affording two levels for mills, of thirteen and seventeen feet, and the whole water of the river can be used.

There are about fourteen thousand inhabitants. It contains nine meeting-houses; appropriates seven thousand and five hundred dollars for free schools; provides instruction for twelve hundred scholars, daily; and about three thousand annually partake of its benefits. It communicates with Boston by the Middlesex canal (the first ever made in the United States); and in a short time the rail-road to Boston will be completed; affording every facility of intercourse to the seaboard.

This place has grown by, and must depend on, its manufactures. Its location renders it important, not only to the owners, but to the nation. Its consumption not only employs the thousands of its own population, but many thousands far away from them. It is calculated not only to give the individual happiness and prosperity, but to add to our national wealth and independence; and instead of depending on foreign countries, to have our own material worked up in our own country.

Some of the girls attended three looms; and they make one dollar and seventy-five cents to three dollars per week, after paying their board. These looms weave fifty-five yards per day; so that one person makes one hundred and sixty-five yards per day. Every thing moves on like clockwork, in all the variety of employments; and the whole manufacture appears to be of the very best. . . .

Nothing could be more agreeable than the attention that is paid by every one connected with these establishments. Nothing appears to be kept secret; every process is shown, and with great cheerfulness. I regret that more of our southern and western men do not go there, as it would help much to do away with their prejudices against these manufactories.

**Davy Crockett: His Life and Adventures**
By John S.C. Abbott
Published: 1874

Lowell 1834

From New York he went to Boston. There, as the opponent of some of President Jackson's measures which were most offensive to the New England people, he was feted with extraordinary enthusiasm. He dined and supped, made speeches, which generally consisted of but one short anecdote, and visited nearly all the public institution. . . .
From Boston, he went to Lowell. The hospitality he had enjoyed in Boston won his warmest commendation. At Lowell, he was quite charmed by the aspect of wealth, industry, and comfort which met his eye. Upon his return to Boston, he spent the evening, with several gentlemen and ladies at the pleasant residence of Lieutenant-Governor Armstrong.

In reference to this visit, he writes:

"This was my last night in Boston, and I am sure, if I never see the place again, I never can forget the kind and friendly manner in which I was treated by them. It appeared to me that everybody was anxious to serve me, and make my time agreeable. And as a proof that comes home—when I called for my bill next morning, I was told there was no charge to be paid by me, and that he was very much delighted that I had made his house my home. I forgot to mention that they treated me so in Lowell—but it is true. This was, to me, at all events, proof enough of Yankee liberality; and more than they generally get credit for. In fact, from the time I entered New England, I was treated with the greatest friendship; and, I hope, never shall forget it; and I wish all who read this book, and who never were there, would take a trip among them. If they don't learn how to make money, they will know how to use it; and if they don't learn industry, they will see how comfortable everybody can be that turns his hands to some employment."

The following extract also shows the candor of his mind, his anxiety to learn, and the progress his mind was making in the science of political economy:

"I come to your country to get a knowledge of things, which I could get in no other way but by seeing with my own eyes, and hearing with my awful ears—information I can't get, and nobody else, from book knowledge. I come, fellow-citizens, to get a knowledge of the manufacturing interest of New England. I was over-persuaded to come by a gentleman who had been to Lowell and seen the manufactories of your State—by General Thomas, of Louisiana. He persuaded me to come and see.

"When I was first chose to Congress, I was opposed to the protecting system. They told me it would help the rich, and hurt the poor; and that we in the West was to be taxed by it for the benefit of New England. I supposed it was so; but when I come to hear it argued in the Congress of the nation, I begun to have a different opinion of it. I saw I was opposing the best interest of the country: especially for the industrious poor man. I told my people who sent me to Congress, that I should oppose it no longer: that without it, we should be obliged to pay a tax to the British Government, and support them, instead of our own labor. And I am satisfied of it the more since I have visited New England. Only let the Southern gentlemen come here and examine the manufactories, and see how it is, and it would make more peace than all the legislation in Congress can do. It would give different ideas to them who have been deluded, and spoke in strong terms of dissolving the Union."