

# THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

"I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man."—Thomas Jefferson.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY H. WEBB.

Volume II.

BLOOMSBURG, COLUMBIA COUNTY, PA. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1838.

Number 29.

OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRAT,  
NEXT DOOR TO ROBISON'S STAGE OFFICE.

## TERMS:

The COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT will be published every Saturday morning, at TWO DOLLARS per annum, payable half yearly in advance, or Two Dollars Fifty Cents, if not paid within the year. No subscription will be taken for a shorter period than six months; nor any discontinuance permitted, until all arrearages are discharged.

ADVERTISEMENTS not exceeding a square will be conspicuously inserted at One Dollar for the first three insertions, and Twenty-five cents for every subsequent insertion. A liberal discount made to those who advertise by the year. LETTERS addressed on business, must be post paid.

## A NARRATIVE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA FRONTIER.

The following narrative, sent last winter to Congress, accompanied by a petition for a pension, has been kindly sent us for publication by a distinguished member of the house of representatives.

That an old soldier who remembers when the Susquehanna was the western frontier of our country should be still living, and able to write so stirring and account of his remarkable adventures, is matter for curious reflection. We are assured that he is entirely worthy of credence, and that the whole story is true. The language we have merely altered a little in its grammar and spelling. It is with pleasure we record that the old veteran's application for a pension was successful.—*Wal. Library.*

Narrative of Lieutenant Moses Van Campen during the war of the Revolution.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

My first service was in the year 1777, when I served three months under Col. John Kelly, who stationed us at Big Isle, on the west branch of the Susquehanna.—Nothing particular transpired during that time, and in March, 1778, I was appointed lieutenant of a company of six-months men. Shortly afterwards, I was ordered by Col. Samuel Hunter to proceed with about twenty men to Fishing Creek, (which empties into the north branch of the Susquehanna about twenty miles from Northumberland,) and to build a fort about three miles from its mouth, for the reception of the inhabitants in case of an alarm from the Indians. In May, my fort being nearly completed our spies discovered a large party of Indians making their way towards the fort. The neighboring residents had barely time to fly to the fort for protection, leaving their goods behind. The Indians soon made their appearance, and having plundered and burnt the houses, attacked the fort, keeping a steady fire upon us during the day. At night they withdrew, burning and destroying every thing in their route. What loss they sustained we could not ascertain, as they carried off all the dead and wounded, though, from the marks of blood on the ground it must have been considerable.—The inhabitants that took shelter in the fort had built a yard for their cattle at the head of a small flat at a short distance from the fort, and one evening in the month of June, just as they were milking them, my sentinel called my attention to some movement in the brush, which I soon discovered to be Indians, making their way to the cattle yard. There was no time to be lost; I immediately selected ten of my sharpshooters, and under cover of a rise of land, got between them and the milkers. On ascending the ridge we found ourselves within pistol-shot of them; I fired first, and killed the leader, but a volley from my men did no further execution, the Indians running off at once. In the mean time the milk pails flew in every direction, and the best runner got to the fort first. As the season advanced, Indian hostilities increased, and notwithstanding the vigilance of our scouts, which were constantly out, houses were burnt and families murdered. In the summer of 1778 occurred the great massacre of Wyoming, after which the governors of Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania petitioned congress to adopt speedy measures for the protection of the western frontier, which subject was referred to a committee of congress and General Washington. The committee recommended that the war should be carried into the enemy's country and a company of rangers raised for the defence of the frontier. In 1779 Gen. Sullivan was sent with an army into their country. The provisions for the supply of the army were purchased in the settlements along the waters of the Susquehanna, and deposited in store-houses. I was appointed under the title of quarter-master, to superintend this business, and about the middle of July, by

means of boats, had collected all the provisions at Wyoming, where Gen. Sullivan with his army lay waiting for them. About the last of July our army moved for Tioga Point, while a fleet of boats ascended the river parallel with the army. We reached there early in August, where we halted for Gen. Clinton to join us with his brigade, which came by the way of the Mohawk river, and so into Lake Otsego. During this time the Indians were collecting in considerable force at an Indian village about 11 miles distant. As they became very troublesome neighbours, Gen. Sullivan contemplated an attack upon them, but wished to ascertain their numbers and situation, and selected me for that dangerous enterprise. I prepared myself an Indian dress, breech-cloth, leggings, and moccasins. My cap had a good supply of feathers, and being painted in style. I set off with one man, dressed in the same manner. We left the camp after dark, and proceeded with much caution until we came to the Chemung, which we supposed would be strongly guarded. We ascending the mountain, crossed over it, and came in view of their fires, when having descended the hill, we waited quietly until they lay down and got to sleep.—We then walked round their camp, counted the fires and the number of Indians at some of the fires, thus formed an estimate of their number, which I took to be about six or seven hundred. I returned, and having made my report to the general early next morning, I went to my tent, spread down my blanket, and had a refreshing sleep.—In the afternoon Major Adam Hooper, one of the general's aids, requested me to wait upon the general, which I obeyed. The latter requested, as I had learnt the way to Chemung, that I would lead the advance, he having selected Gen. Samuel Hand, of the Pennsylvania line, to make them a visit with eleven hundred men. I accepted the service, and we took up our line of march after sundown. When we came to the Narrows I halted, according to order, until the main body came up, when the general ordered us to enter the Narrows, observing, "Soldiers, cut your way through." We did so, and entered the Indian village and camp at day-break, but found that the birds had flown. We halted a few minutes for our men to refresh, set fire to their village, and having discovered from their trail that they had gone up the river, followed it about two miles. Here our path lay up a narrow ridge, called Hogback Hill, which we remarked seemed formed by nature for an Indian ambushade. Accordingly, every eye was fixed on the hill, and as we began to ascend, we saw the bushes tremble, and immediately rifles were presented and we received a deadly fire, by which sixteen or seventeen of the advance were killed or wounded. We that stood sprang under cover of the bank, and for a moment reserved our fire. Six or seven stout fellows rushed out with tomahawk and knife to kill and scalp our comrades. It was now our turn to fire: every shot counted one; they fell. Gen. Hand now came on at quick step, advanced within a few rods of them, and ordered his men to fire and then charge them at the point of the bayonet; they were soon routed and put to flight. We returned with our dead and wounded the same night to our former camp. We had no further opportunity of coming to a brush with them; until we were joined by our whole force under Gen. Clinton. We were opposed by the enemy's whole force, consisting of Indians, British, and Tories, to whom we gave battle a little below Newtown Point. Our loss was trifling.

On the return of the army I was taken with the camp fever, and was removed to the fort which I had built in '78, where my father was still living. In the course of the winter I recovered my health, and my father's house having been burnt in '78 by the party which attacked the before-mentioned fort, my father requested me to go with him and a younger brother to our farm, about four miles distant, to make preparations for building another, and raising some grain. But little apprehension was entertained of molestations from the Indians this season, as they had been so completely routed the year before. We left the fort about the last of March, accompanied by my uncle and his son, about twelve years old, and one Peter Pence. We had been on our farms about four or five days, when on the morning of the 30th of March we were surprised by a party of ten Indians.—My father was lunged through with a war-spear; his throat was cut and he was scalped, while my brother was tomahawked, scalped, and thrown into the fire before my eyes. While I was struggling with a warrior, the fellow who had killed my father, drew his spear from his body and made a violent thrust at me. I shrunk from the spear, and the savage who had hold of me turned it with his hand so that it only penetrated my vest and shirt. They were then satisfied with taking me prisoner, as they

had the same morning taken my uncle's little son and Pence, though they killed my uncle. The same party, before they reached us, had touched on the lower settlements of Wyoming, and killed a Mr. Upson, and took a boy prisoner of the name of Rogers. We were now marched off up Fishing Creek, and in the afternoon of the same day we came to Huntington, where the Indians found four white men at sugar camp, who fortunately discovered the Indians and fled to a house; the Indians only fired on them and wounded a Capt. Ransom, when they continued their course till night. Having encamped and made their fire, we, the prisoners, were tied and well secured, five Indians lying on one side of us and five on the other; in the morning they pursued their course, and, leaving the waters of Fishing Creek, touched the head quarters of Hemlock Creek, where they found one Abraham Pike, his wife and child. Pike was made prisoner, but his wife and child they painted and told *Jogo, square*, go home. They continued their course that day, and encamped the same night in the same manner as the previous. It came into my mind that sometimes individuals performed wonderful actions, and surmounted the greatest dangers. I then decided these fellows must die; and thought of the plan to despatch them.

The next day I had an opportunity to communicate my plan to my fellow-prisoners; they treated it as a visionary scheme for three men to attempt to despatch ten Indians. I spread before them the advantages that three men would have over ten when asleep; & that we would be the first prisoners that would be taken into their towns and villages after our army had destroyed their corn, that we should be tied to the stake and suffer a cruel death; we had now an inch of ground to fight on, and if we failed it would only be death, and we might as well die one way as another. That day passed away, and having encamped for the night, we lay as before. In the morning we came to the river, and saw their canoes; they had descended the river and run their canoes up Little Tunkanock Creek, so called; they crossed the river and set their canoes adrift. I renewed my suggestions to my companions to despatch them that night, and urged that they must decide the question. They agreed to make the trial; but how shall we do it was the question. Disarm them and each take a tomahawk and come to close work at once. There are three of us; plant our blows with judgment and three times three will make nine, and the tenth one we can kill at our leisure. They agreed to disarm them and after that one take possession of the guns and fire at the one side of the four, and the other two take tomahawks on the other side and despatch them. I observed that would be an uncertain way; the first shot fired would discover it to be the prisoners, and might defeat us. I had to yield to their plan. Peter Pence was chosen to fire the guns, Pike and myself to tomahawk; we cut and carried plenty of wood to give them a good fire; the prisoners were tied and laid in their places after I was laid down, one of them had occasion to use his knife; he dropped it at my feet; I turned my foot over it, and concealed it they lay down and fell asleep. About midnight I got up and found them in sound sleep. I slipped to Pence who rose; I cut him loose, and handed him the knife; he did the same for me, and I in turn took the knife and cut Pike loose; in a minute we disarmed them. Pence took his station at the guns. Pike and myself with our tomahawks took our stations; I was to kill three on the right wing, and Pike two on the left. That moment Pike's two awoke, and were getting up; here Pike proved a coward, and laid down. It was a critical moment. I saw their was no time to be lost; their heads turned fair; I despatched them in a moment, and turned to my lot as per agreement, and as I was about to despatch the last on my side of the fire, Pence he shot, and did good execution; there was only one at the off wing that his ball did not reach; his name was Mohawke, a stout, bold daring fellow. In the alarm he jumped off about three rods from the fire; he saw it was the prisoners that made the attack, and giving the war-whoop, he darted to take possession of the guns; I was as quick to prevent him; the contest was then between him and myself, as I raised my tomahawk, he turned quick to jump from me; I followed him struck at him, but missing his head, my tomahawk stuck in his shoulder, or rather the back of his neck; he pitched forward and fell, at the same time my foot slipped, and I fell by his side, we clinched; his arm was naked; he caught me around my neck, at the same time I caught him with my left arm around the body, and gave him a close hug, at the same time feeling for his knife, but could not reach it.

In our scuffle my tomahawk dropped out. My hand was under the wounded shoulder, and almost suffocated me with his blood. I

made a violent spring, and broke from his hold; we both rose at the same time, and he ran; it took me some time to clear the blood from my eyes; my tomahawk got covered up and I could not find it in time to overtake him; he was the only one of the party that escaped. Pike was powerless. I always have had a deference for Christian devotion. Pike was trying to pray, and Pence swearing at him, charging him with cowardice, and saying it was no time to pray—he ought to fight; we were masters of the ground, and in possession of all their guns, blankets, match coats, &c. I then turned my attention to scalping them, and recovering the scalps of my father, brother, and others. I strung them all on my belt for safe keeping. We kept our ground till morning, and built a raft, it being near the bank of the river where they had encamped, about fifteen miles below Tioga Point; we got all our plunder on it, and set sail for Wyoming, the nearest settlement. Our raft gave way, when we made for land, but we lost considerable property, though we saved our guns and ammunition, and took to land; we reached Wyalusing late in the afternoon. Came to the narrows; discovered a smoke below, and a raft lying at the shore, by which we were certain that a party of Indians had passed us in the course of the day, and halted for the night. There was no alternative for us but to rout them or go over the mountain; the snow on the north side of the hill was deep; we knew from the appearance of the raft that the party must be small; we had two rifles each; my only fear was of Pike's cowardice. To know the worst of it we agreed that I should ascertain their number and give the signal for the attack; I crept down the side of the hill, so near as to see their fires and back, but saw no Indians. I concluded they had gone hunting for meat, and that this was a good opportunity for us to make off with their raft, to the opposite side of the river. I gave the signal; they came and threw their packs on to the raft, which was made of small, dry pine timber; with poles and paddles we drove her briskly across the river, and had got nearly out of reach of shot, when two of them came in, they fired, their shots did no injury; we soon got under cover of an island, and went several miles; we had waded deep creeks through the day, the night was cold; we landed on an island and found a sink hole in which we made our fire; after warming we were alarmed by a cracking in the crust; Pike supposed the Indians had got on to the island, and was for calling for quarters; to keep him quiet we threatened him with his life; the stepping grew plainer, and seemed coming directly to the fire; I kept a watch, and soon a noble racoon came under the light, I shot the racoon, when Pike jumped up and called out, "Quarters, gentlemen." "I took my game by the leg and threw it down to the fire. "Here, you cowardly rascal," I cried, "skin that and give us a roast for supper." The next night we reached Wyoming, and there was much joy to see us; we rested one day, and it being not safe to go to Northumberland, by land, we procured a canoe, and with Pence and my little cousin, we descended the river by night we came to Fort Jenkins before day, where I found Col. Kelly and about one hundred men encamped west of the fort, he came across from the west branch by the heads of Chilisquaque to Fishing Creek, the end of the Nob Mountain, so called at that day, where my father and brother were killed; he had buried my father and uncle; my brother was burnt a small part of him only was to be found. Col. Kelly informed me that my mother and her children were in the fort, and it was thought that I was killed likewise. Col. Kelly went into the fort to prepare her mind to see me; I took off my belt of scalps and handed them to an officer to keep. Human nature was not sufficient to stand the interview. She had just lost a husband and a son, and one had returned to take her by the hand, and one, too, that she supposed was killed.

The day after, I went to Sunbury, where I was received with joy; my scalps were exhibited, the cannon were fired, &c. Before my return a commission had been sent me as ensign of a company to be commanded by Capt. Thomas Robinson; this was, as I understood, a part of the quota which Pennsylvania had to raise for the continental line. One Joseph Alexander was commissioned as lieutenant, but did not accept his commission. The summer of 1780 was spent in the recruiting service our company was organized, and was retained for the defence of the frontier service. In February 1781, I was promoted to a lieutenantcy, and entered upon the active duty of an officer by heading scouts and as Capt. Robinson was no woodsman nor marksman, he preferred that I should encounter the danger and head the scouts we kept up a constant chain of scouts around the frontier settlements, from the north to the west branch of the Susquehanna, by the way of the

head waters of Little Fishing Creek, Chilisquaque, & Muncy, &c. In the spring of 1781 we built a fort on the widow McClure's plantation, called McClure's fort where our provisions were stored. In the summer of 1781 a man was taken prisoner in Buffalo Valley, but made his escape; he came in and reported there were about three hundred Indians on Sinnemahoning, hunting and laying in a store of provisions, and would make a descent on the frontiers; that they would divide into small parties, and attack the whole chain of the frontiers at the same time on the same day. Col. Samuel Hunter selected a company of five to reconnoitre; viz: Capt. Campbell, Peter and Michael Groves, Lieut. Gramer and myself; the party was called the Grove party. We carried with us three week's provisions, and proceeded up the west branch with much caution and care; we reached the Sinnemahoning, but made no discovery except old tracks; we marched up the Sinnemahoning so far that we were satisfied it was a false report. We returned, and a little below the Sinnemahoning, near night, we discovered a smoke; we were confident it was a party of Indians, which we must have passed by or they got there some other way; we discovered there was a large party, how many we could not tell, but prepared for the attack. As soon as it was dark we new primed our rifles, sharpened our flints, examined our tomahawk handles, and all being ready we waited with great impatience, and till they all lay down; the time came, and with the utmost silence we advanced, trailed our rifles in one hand and the tomahawk in the other.

The night was warm, we found some of them rolled in their blankets a rod or two from the fires. Having got amongst them, we first handled our tomahawk; they rose like a dark cloud; we now tried our shots, and raised the war-yell; they took to flight in the utmost confusion, but few taking time to pick up their rifles. We remained masters of the ground and of their plunder, and took several scalps. It was a party of twenty-five or thirty, which had been as low down as Pefus's Creek, and had killed and scalped two or three families; we found several scalps of different ages, which they had taken, and a large quantity of domestic cloth, which we carried to Northumberland and gave to the distressed who had escaped the tomahawk and knife. In December '81, our company was ordered to Lancaster; we descended the river in boats to Middletown, where our orders were countermanded, & we were ordered to Reading, Berks county, where we were joined by a part of the third and fifth Pennsylvania regiments, and a company of the Congress regiment. We took charge of the Hessians taken with Gen. Burgoyne. In the latter part of March, at the opening of the campaign of 1782, we were ordered by Congress to our respective stations. I marched Robison's company to Northumberland, where Mr. Thomas Chambers joined us, who had been recently commissioned as an ensign of our company. We halted at Northumberland two or three days for our men to wash and rest; from thence Entigo, Chambers and myself were ordered to Muncy, Samuel Willis's plantation, there to make a stand and rebuild Fort Muncy, which had been destroyed by the enemy. We reached that station and built a small block-house for the storage of our provisions; about the 10th or 11th of April, Capt. Robison came on with Esquire Culbertson, James Dougherty, William McGeady, and a Mr. Barkley; I was ordered to select twenty or twenty-five men with these gentlemen, and to proceed up the West Branch to the Big Island, and thence up the Bald Eagle Creek, to the place where a Mr. Culbertson had been killed. On the 12th of April, at night, we reached the place, and encamped for the night; on the morning of the 10th we were attacked by eighty-five Indians. It was a hard-fought battle; Esquire Culbertson and two others made their escape; I think we had nine killed, and the rest of us were made prisoners. We were all stripped of our clothing excepting our pantaloons.—When they took off my shirt they discovered my commission, was written on parchment, and carried in a silk case hung with a ribbon in my bosom; several got hold of it, and one fellow cut the ribbon with his knife, and succeeded in obtaining it. They took us a little distance from the battleground, made the prisoners sit down in a sprawling, the Indians forming another around us in close order, each with his rifle and tomahawk in his hand. They brought up five Indians we had killed, and laid them within their circle. Each one reflected for himself; our time would probably be short, and respecting myself, looking back to the year '80 and the party I had killed, if I was discovered to be that person my case would be a hard one. Their prophet or chief warrior made a speech; as I was informed afterwards by the British lieutenant who belonged to the party, he was consulting