

Transcription of the Battle of Minisink Report by John Hathorn
as it appeared in the Weekly Register, Newburgh NY, July 23, 1879

Warwick, 27 July 1779

Sir,

In conformity to the Militia Law I embrace this first opportunity to Communicate to your Excellency my proceedings on a late tour of duty with my Regiment, on the Evening of the 21st of this instant I received an Order from his Excellency General Washington, together with a requisition of the Commissary of Prisoners to furnish one hundred men of my Regiment for to guard the British Prisoners on their way towards Easton, At the same time received an Express from Minisink that the Indians were ravaging and burning that place. I ordered Three Companies of my regiment Including the Exempt Company to Parade for the Purpose of the Guard, the Other Three Companies to March Immediately to Minisink on the 22nd. I arrived with a part of my people at Minisink, where I found Col. Tusten & Major Meeker of New Jersey with part of their Regiments who had marcht with about eighty men up the river a few miles. I joined this party with about Forty men, the whole amounting to one hundred and Twenty Men Officers Included, a Spy came in and Informed me the Enemy lay about four hours before and Mungaup Six Miles distant from us, our people appeared in high Spirits, we marched in pursuit with the Intention Either to fall on them by Surprize or to gain in front, and Ambush them. We was soon informed that, they were on their March up the River. I found it Impracticable to surprise them on the Grounds they now were and took my Rout along the Old Keshetton Path., the Indians Encamped at the Mouth of the halfway brook, we encamped at 12 o'Clock at Night, at Skinners Saw Mill three Miles and a half from the Enemy, where we lay the Remainder of the Night. The Mountains were so Exceedingly rugged and high we could not possibly get at them as they had passed the Grounds the most favorable for us to attack them on before we could possibly overtake them. Skinners is about eighteen miles from Minnisink. At day light on the morning of the 23 after leaving our horses and disengaging of every thing heavy we marched on with intention to make the attack the moment and opportunity offered.

The Indians probable from some discovery they had made of us marched with more alacrity than usual with an intention to get their Prisoners Cattle and plunder taken at Minnisink over the river. They had almost Effected getting their Cattle and baggage across when we discovered them at Lacawak, 27 miles from Minnisink some Indians in the river and some had got over. It was determined in council to make an attack at this place. I therefore disposed of the men into three Divisions, ordered Col. Tusten to Command the one on the Right and to take the one on the right and to take post about three hundred yards distance on an Eminence to secure our Right; sent Lt. Col. Wisner

with another Division to file out to the left and to dispose of himself in the like manner, In order to prevent the Enemy from gaining any Advantage on our flank, the other Division under my Command to attack them with that Vigour Necessary to Strike Terror in such a foe. Capt. Tyler with the Advance Guard unhappily discharged his piece before the Divisions could be properly posted which put me under the necessity of bringing on the Action. I ordered my Division to fix their Bayonets and push forcibly on them, which order being resolutely Executed put the Indians in the utmost confusion great numbers took into the River who fell from the well directed fire of our Rifle Men and incessant Blaze from our Musketry without returning any fire. The Divisions in the Rear not Subject to Order broke, some advanced down the hill toward me other fled into the Woods. I soon perceived the Enemy Rallying on our Right and Recrossing the river to gain the heights, I found myself under the necessity to Rally all my force which by this time was much less than I Expected, The Enemy by this time had Collected in force and from the best Accounts can be collected received a Reinforcement from Koshetton began to fire on our Left: We returned the fire and kept up a Constant Bush firing up the hill from the River in which the brave Capt. Tyler fell, Several were wounded.

The People being Exceedingly fatigued Obliged me to take post on a heighth which proved to be a Strong and Advantageous ground. The Enemy Repeatedly approached upon us within from 40 to 100 yards distance and were as repeatedly repulsed, I had now but about 45 men (Officers Included) who had lost their Command naturally drew towards me. The spirits of these few notwithstanding their fatigue, Cituation, and unallayed thirst, adding to that the Cruel Yellings of those bloody monsters, the seed of Anak in size, Exceed thought or description. We defended the Ground near three hours and a half during the whole time one blaze without Intermission was kept up on both Sides. Here we had three men killed and nine Wounded. Among the wounded was Lt. Col. Tusten, in the hand, Major Meeker in the shoulder, Adjutant Finch in the Leg., Capt Jones in the foot, and Ensign Wood in the Wrist. The Chief of our people was wounded by Angle shotts from the Indians behind Rocks and Trees. Our Rifles here were very Usefull. I found myself under the necessity of Ceasing the fire, our Ammunition from the Continued fire of more than five hours naturally Suggested that it must be Exhausted, ordered no person to Shoot without having his Object Sure that no Shot might be lost. This gave Spirit to the Enemy who formed their whole strength and forced the North East part of our Lines. Here we gave them severe Gaul, our people not being able to Support the lines retreated down the hill precipitately towards the River, the Enemy kept up a Constant fire on our Right, which was returned. The people by this time was so Scattered I found myself unequal to rally them again consequently every man made Choice of his own way.

Thus ended the Action.

The following are missing in the whole from the Last Accounts:

Col. Ellison's Regiment
Lieut. Col. Thurston
Capt. Jones
Capt. Wood
Capt. Little
Capt. Duncan; And Twelve privates
One private of New Jersey
Adjutant Finch
Ensign Wood and one private of my own regiment

In the whole twenty one men.

Several wounded men are come in. I hope numbers of Others will yet be found. I received a Wound on my head, one in my leg and one in my thigh, Slightly. The one on my thigh from Inattention is a little Troublesome, Several spies that lay near the Enemy the night following the Action inform us that they moved off their Wounded in Canoes in the day following; that on the Ground where they Lay there was great quantities of Blood, and the whole Encampment was marked with wounded men. Great Numbers of Plasters and Bloody Rags was found. Altho we Suffered by the Loss of so many brave men, the best, for the Number, without Sensible Error in the Precinct It's beyond doubt the Enemy Suffered much more. From the Various parts of the action can be collected a greater number of Indians Dead than we lost, besides their Wounded, the number of Indians and Tories is not ascertained. Some accounts say 90 other 120, others 160. Col. Seward of New Jersey, with 93 men, was within five or six miles of the action on the Pennsylvania Side, did not hear the firing, approached and Lay near the Indians all night following, and from their Conduct and Groanings of the Wounded gave rise to the belief that they had been in some action where they had suffered and would have attacked them round their fires but a mutiny arose among some of his People which prevented. A very unfavorable and to be Lamented Circumstance. If in their situation he had attacked them with the common Smiles of Providence he must have Succeeded and put them to Total rout.

Dear Governor it's not in my Power to point out to you the disagreeable Situation I was In, surrounded by a foe with a handful of valuable men not only as Soldiers but as fellow Citizens and members of Society, and nothing to be expected but the Hatchet, Spear, and Scalping knife. The Tremendous Yells and Whoops, all the fiends in the Confines of the Infernal Regions with one United Cry, could not Exceed it. Add to this the Cries the

Entreaties and feeling petitions of the Wounded around me not to leave them, was beyond parallel or Idea.

My heart Bleeds for the unfortunate wounded who fell wounded into their hands. However, one circumstance gives me a little consolation, Mr. Roger Townsend of Goshen received a Wound in his thigh; being Exceedingly Thirsty, making an attempt to go to some find some Water, was met by an Indian who very friendly took him by the hand and said he was his Prisoner and would not hurt him, a well directed Ball from one of our men put the Indian in a dose, and Mr. Townsend ran back into the Lines. I hope some Little humanity may Yet be found in the breasts of the Savages.

I should be at the Greatest Loss was I to attempt to point one Officer or Soldier that Exceeded another in bravery during the time of the general Action. Too much praise cant be given to them for their attention in Receiving orders and alacrity in Executing them. I have acquiesced with Col. Woodhull in ordering one eighth of our Regiments to Minisink as a temporary Guard untill your Excellency's pleasure is known on the subject. The Indians were under the command of Brant, who was Either Killed or Wounded in the action. They Burnt Major Decker's House and barn, Samuel Davis's house, barn and mill, Jacobus Van Vleck's house and barn, Daniel Vaneker's barn (here were Two Indians Killed from a Little Fort round the house -- which was saved, Esquire Cuykindall's house and barn, Simon Westfall's house and barn, the Church, Peter Cuykindall's house and barn, Mertinus Decker's fort, house, Barn, and Saw Mill, and Nehemiah Patterson's Saw Mill; Killed and Scalped Jeremiah Vanoker, Daniel Cole, Ephraim Ferguson and one Travern and took with them Several Prisoners mostly Children, with a great Number of Horses, Cattle, and Valuable Plunder. Some of the Cattle we rescued and returned to the owners.

I hope your Excellency will make allowance for the imperfect Stile, Razures and Blotts on this Line, whilst I have the honour to Subscribe myself with the most perfect Esteem, in haste,

Your Excellencies
Most Obt. (obedient)
Servt. (servant),

John Hathorn, Col.