



“The Fishing-Creek Confederacy – Copperheadism in Columbia, Lycoming and Sullivan Counties.” *Forney’s War Press*, 14 September 1864, p. 4

[Correspondence of the The Press]

Columbia Co., Sept. 12, 1864

People in our cities live and write about the war and Jeff Davis Confederacy, and know nothing about the events which are taking place in the immediate neighborhood; yes in this very State. There has been born to our dear Pennsylvania the challenging “Fishing creek Confederacy.” Pennsylvania is a great State, and has just as great a variety of species of mankind, (I mean intellectual mankind) as she exhibits almost all kinds of surface and soil. There are parts in Pennsylvania where the forests and the skulls of human heads are so thick that it is but seldom that the bright rays of “Sol” can penetrate the one or the rays of intellect the other.

Such forests and such skulls you can find, if you take the trip to the counties watered by the headwaters of the West and North branches of the Susquehanna. Up in Columbia, Lycoming and Sullivan and other counties, where no railroads disturb the quiet of the valleys and the mountains; where not even the tiny telegraph wire spreads the news with the swiftness of lightning; where newspapers are scarce in numbers, small in editions, but still smaller in quality, and where the sweeping Democratic majorities are always rolled up, no matter what’s the question or who’s the candidate, there, my dear *Press*, will you find the deep, almost impenetrable forests, and the equally thick human skulls – there is the birthplace of the changeling “Fishing-creek Confederacy.”

Columbia county was always strongly Democratic and so were the adjoining counties. . . . This was a field were fools could be found to execute the designs of these [Democratic] leaders like the scum of New York did the dirty work in New York in 1863. Here you find old men, and men who learned to write their names and read the Chicago Platform, and who by virtue of their education are the leaders of the masses, who talk treason, who counsel resistance to the usurpations of the Lincoln tyranny, who make their followers believe that they can resist in their mountains and forests any force that Uncle Sam can send against them. Whisky flows as freely as the big words of these braggadocios.

The people are made to believe that it only takes someone to initiate resistance, and that it soon would be followed all over the country; for they are also made to believe that the “Sons of Liberty” are as numerous as the Stars of Heaven and as bold as the lions. The young men up around Fishing Creek bit the bait and resisted the draft. They were sure that during their rise, and before the United States could send a force strong enough to cocere them, [Robert E.] Lee would have Washington, Vallandingham would marshal his forces in the Northwest and Wood would have run off with New York. They revolted; they would not be drafted and killed in this “nigger war.” Of course, the provost marshals, tax collectors, and Union men had to sufer. The followers of Jeff Davis in the North had to imitate the examples of his followers South. The mountains echoed with cheers for Jeff Davis and groans for Lincoln. Ministers of the gospel were dragged from the pulpit and had to run to save their lives, because they said they were preaching the Word of God, when the ruffians, flushed with whisky, demanded to know whether they preached “Abolition or Jeff

Davis.” Then came General Cadwalader with a force strong enough to drive the whole crowd of the “Sons of Liberty,” or “Cowboys of ’64,” out the country. Our heroes, of course, skedaddled to the mountains, and their advisors and abettors stayed at home. The “Sons of Liberty,” or rather the mudsills of the leaders, declared now, like the chivalry of the South, that they only wanted to be “let alone.” But the General could not see it, no more that Grant or Sherman can down in Dixie. The coercion began, some ninety “Let alone” and “Peace men” of the Vallandigham school were arrested and sent to “Number Secure” and the colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, and privates of the Fishing-creek Confederacy retreated deeper into the mountains and woods. But even here they were not secure, they make off in all directions, looking for protection with their friends in the surrounding counties. Most of them started off to the Canaan of all traitors and cowards, to Canada, where they will try to find enough to do to still their hunger and warm their shivering limbs during a Canadian winter.

This is fruit of Copperhead teachings. Would men of age, men of influence, take a patriotic ground, and talk differently, thousands of young men would not be thrown into the path of shame and misery. Our young men are not cowards, or disloyal to the country of their birth, but such teachers are the worst enemies of young and ignorant men, and if other communities take warning from it, the good will balance the evil that these men intended to do. Men who talk treason, and run down every act of the Government, who never can find a word of censure for their Southern friends or their deeds; men who belittle every Union victory or aggrandize every reverse; men who eulogize every Southern general, and try to blacken the reputation of our noble men who fight, bleed and die for the Union, are dangerous to the country at large, but more so to those who listen to them, and are foolish enough to follow their advice.

UNION.