



From Freeze, John G. *A History of Columbia County, Pennsylvania* (Bloomsburg, PA: Elwell and Bittenbender, 1883)

Chapter XXX – “Military Occupation of Columbia County”

[393] During the civil war, the Republican party, backed by the administration and the army, which had been subsidized to its purposes, became insolent in its behavior and revolutionary in its purposes with regard to government. No man was allowed to speak freely against or criticise or condemn the course the dominant party were pursuing. All over the loyal North military spies, irresponsible Provost Marshals and armed forces were distributed for the purpose of overawing the people and of preventing at the elections a fair and free expression of opinion. And the nearer the Presidential election of 1864 approached, the more overbearing became these government officials and employees, until a reign of terror was inaugurated in the country. . . . The counties of Berks, Columbia, Clearfield, Pike, Schuylkill and many others were subjected to military raids the memory of which will abide with the victims and their posterity for generations.

[394] [O]n Saturday evening, August 13th 1864, the first detachment of soldiers arrived in Bloomsburg and in a few days, by constant accretions, the armed forces numbered one thousand men. It was given out by those in the secret, or who desired to be thought so, “that they were to scour the county.”

[396-398] This persistent refusal on the part of the military authorities to become acquainted with our people, and make themselves familiar with localities and facts, argues very strongly that the object of the raid upon our County had an entirely different object than the one so ostentatiously set forth, to-wit, the arrest and mustering into service of non-reporting drafted men. They listened only to the false, malicious and exaggerated reports and stories of the enemies of the people, and were thus prepared to “Scour the county.”

And to prove beyond controversy that such was the case, the fact exists that during the time the troops were encamped on the Fair Grounds, a cavalry officer told Col. [John G.] Freeze in the presence of Col. Hiram R. Kline . . . that he had been told by a prominent Republican that to his, the Republican’s “certain knowledge, there were five hundred non-reporting men up the creek.” Another Republican who had a corn field adjoining the grounds or near them, requested soldiers not to take any roasting ears from his patch, and pointed out to them one belonging to a “copperhead” which was a proper object for destruction and spoilation. Again, when Gen. Couch first arrived at Bloomsburg, he was advised to call upon Senator Buckalew who had just returned from a session at Washington; whereupon the General mounted Cedar Hill, “solitary and alone,” and found the Senator at work in a field. He then detailed to him his dreadful story of insurrection in the Fishing Creek Country and insisted that it was very extensive and dangerous, *and that it represented to him* (Couch) *that Colonel Kline was the leader*, Mr. Buckalew’s reply was, as we are informed, he had no particular information of what occurred in the Creek region beyond newspaper statements; that he did not believe there was any general combination of the inhabitants to resist the draft; that the statement about Col. Kline was inconsistent with the character of that gentleman and was no doubt a falsehood, that in his opinion any military or civil officer could proceed into any of the upper townships without being molested. . . . The General alleged that he was pressed for time and the interview closed. The Radical leaders no doubt

had given Couch this story, and it would seem that they were very anxious to have Col. Kline (an active Democrat and respectable gentleman,) arrested. In fact it is very likely that Couch's visit to Mr. Buckalew and the emphatic statement made by the latter alone prevented to arrest of Col. Kline and his incarceration in a Government Bastille.