

From *The Ulster Sentinel*, Kingston, New York

Wednesday, June 20, 1827

"Major John Andre"

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Mr. Editor – If I mistake not, your paper some time since contained an account of the capture of Major Andre; as given by Col. Van Wart to Mr. Browere, under the impression that David Williams, the other survivor, who, to use his own words, has been "killed three times", from which, if you think it advisable, you can publish some extracts, or the whole, as you think proper.

It was not procured for publication, Sir, yet as the generous veteran has given his consent, I can hardly refrain from offering it for insertion in your paper.

Jan. 31, 1827

As to the narrative you request, I cannot materially add to the one already given by my comrade and cousin, Col. Van Wart. I can tell it a little more fully; and as you express a wish to know it, I will give it minutely. The following is a correct account.

"The transactions are as fresh in my recollection at this day as they were the hour that unfortunate and elegant man was upon the scaffold, to render up his life as an expiation to the injured laws of our infant country. It is a great error, which I find most people have adopted, that Paulding, Van Wart, and myself, were of the regular army – such is not the fact. We were neither of us enlisted soldiers, but had at all times volunteered, and at different times were engaged in skirmishes – pitched battles were not much in fashion at that day – and our glorious commander understood and valued too much the interest of his country to risk his small army against the united forces of British and Tories. Thus at all times from the year '75 to the year '80 we were a kind of standing corps of volunteers. When an alarm was given, we went. At the time referred to by Col. Van Wart, we were "out of business", and having heard that Tories, refugees, &c.

frequently passed to the enemy with cattle, we left our homes of our own accord, which was twenty miles from Tarrytown, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, with our guns, seven of us in company, to wit, John Paulding, Isaac Van Wart, John Yerks, William Williams, William Paulding (brother to John), James Romer, and myself. And let it be expressly understood that this expedition was of our own planning, and that we were at that time under the command of no persons whatever. We traveled together as far as John Anderson's, fifteen miles from where we started, at which place we arrived at about nine or ten o'clock in the evening; that night we slept in his hay barrack. In the morning we left our lodging and proceeded towards Tarrytown. At Davis' Hill, Paulding, Van Wart, and myself agreed to go near Tarrytown & lie in wait while the other four staid at Davis' Hill to watch, as the road parts at that place. We therefor proceeded, and at "The White-Wood Tree", half a mile north of Tarrytown, we stopped, and having previously procured a pack of cards, we went into the bushes about twenty rods from the said "tree", and commenced playing cards. While playing, a number of people passed whom we knew and of course did not molest. I should think it was not more than three quarters of an hour after we had seated ourselves and thought our search fruitless, before we heard a horse pass the small bridge about 15 rods from where we were, at a brisk pace. Either Paulding or Wart, I do not recollect which, said "there comes a trader". Upon this we sprang up and resumed our arms and stopped him; it was Andre on horseback. He accosted us in this way, "My lads, I hope you belong to our party". We asked – "Which party?" He said, "The lower party." We said, "We do." He then said, "I am a British officer, having been in the country on particular business, and would not wish to be detained a moment; and as a token to let you know I am a gentleman here is my gold watch", which he showed, and an elegant one it was. We then told him we were Americans. He replied, "God bless my soul, a man must do anything now-a-days." We told him that we would not enable him to pass, as he was a prisoner and must dismount. We then took him down in the bushes, about twenty rods, and I was the one appointed to search, while the other two took care, the one of his horse and the other as a guard. I commenced my search by taking off his hat, next his coat and vest, and then his small clothes, and found nothing. To all this he quietly submitted. I then told him he must sit down and I would take off his boots. I pulled off his boot, and as it came off, Paulding

said, "here 'tis". I do not recollect that at this time, he changed countenance at all, or showed the least symptoms of fear – his whole conduct was that of a gentleman. He then said, "Now you've got all." We then told him to dress and go with us – he did – we took him across the road towards Davis' Hill; - we had gone something like 10 rods, when we asked him where he got those papers; he said he got them at "Line's bridge, of a man." We asked him who the man was. He said he did not know. He then made us offers; he told us if we would let him go, he would give us 1000 guineas, his horse, watch, saddle, and bridle. Our answer is known. He then told us, he would give us 10,000 guineas, and as many dry goods as we would name, and to make it sure, we might deposit him as a hostage in any place we pleased, until the goods and gold were delivered to us. Col. Van Wart mentions that he discovered drops of sweat on his face – that he said he wished we had killed him &c. I do not recollect any thing of the kind, and as I was so intent upon all his movements, I think I should have heard it.

While he rode, I led his horse, and I recollect well that the coolness and unconcernedness of his manner frequently made doubts arise in my mind. He at all times conducted himself as a gentleman and an officer. We then conducted him to camp, commanded by Col. Jameson – He called his name John Anderson – we supposed it was. He then addressed a letter to Gen. Washington, in which he declared his name and rank – it was John Andre, of the rank of Major, acting adjutant general to the British army. The fate of the poor fellow is well known – I saw him executed. I have frequently heard it said he was agitated, &c. It is not correct at least as far as could be seen. He met his death like a man, and died like a soldier the death of a dog. You are at liberty to publish this or do anything else with it as you please. If there are any other facts in which I was concerned generally, or anything more particularly relating to the melancholy fate of poor Andre, I am ready and willing at any time to attend to it, and will promptly answer any communication. Address to John B. Spenser, my attorney, at Livingstonville.

I am Sir, respectfully yours,
David Williams."

This article originally appeared in "The Ulster Sentinel", Kingston, NY on Wednesday, June 20, 1827. It is held in the archive of the Senate House State Historic Site and was transcribed by Archivist Lisa Bruck.

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