

HISTORY OF DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

Leiper led the advance and Col. Robertson the main body. The names of thirteen only of this daring band of salliers have been handed down by tradition, and are as follows: Col. James Robertson, Capt. Leiper, Peter Gill, John Kescnger, Alexander Buchanan, George Kennedy, I. Kennedy, Zachariah White, James Meniffee, Kasper Mansker (usually pronounced Manscor), Isaac Lucas, Joseph Moonshaw, and Edward Swanson. When the advance reached the present locality of Broad Street, about its intersection with College, a few of the enemy were seen making a stand at the Branch a short distance off. The whites immediately dismounted for battle, but before they could secure their horses a force of about three hundred warriors rose from the thickets along the Branch and poured into them a deadly volley. They returned the fire with spirit and to good effect. In the mean time another large body of the enemy, which had taken post before daylight in the cedar and privet bushes which thickly covered the present site of Cherry Street embraced between Church and Broad, ran from their concealment after the horsemen had passed and extended their line rapidly in the direction of the fort and the river. The war-whoop of these savages in their rear at once conveyed to the sallying-party and also to their friends in the fort the desperate nature of their situation, and excited in all the gravest fears for their safety. They began at once their retreat, resolutely bringing off all of their wounded who could be assisted. Fortunately for the survivors their horses had broken back in the direction of the fort when the fight began, but on reaching the interposing line they swerved off to its right to escape, when large numbers of the Indians, unable to resist the temptation, quit their places and hurried in pursuit of them. Into the gap thus opportunely left the retreating whites now pressed, hotly pursued from the rear and fired upon from different directions:

At this juncture another most fortunate circumstance occurred to favor their escape. There were great numbers of dogs gathered into the fort, trained to face any danger at bidding, and on hearing the well-known reports of their masters' rifles in the vale below they were seized with an uncontrollable frenzy, and evinced by loud cries their disposition to join in the conflict. Mrs. Robertson, the wife of Col. James Robertson, who was watching gun in hand with intense interest the varying changes of the battle, on discovering the snare into which her friends had fallen, and fearing that they would all be lost, now urged the sentinel to open the gate and hiss on the dogs. These animals on being released flew at once at that part of the Indian line still in place, and attacked it with a fury and persistence probably never before witnessed. It was an anomaly indeed in warfare, as dogs are usually much afraid of the fire of guns. Such an onset, however, could not be despised, and forced the enemy to empty their pieces and resort to their tomahawks in self-defense. Favored by this unexpected diversion, the little band of whites now hastened on, and all reached the fort in safety, except Isaac Lucas. He had reached a point in rifle-range of the place when he fell with a broken thigh. He had just finished loading his gun as he ran, and when he fell an Indian rushed upon him with the

purpose of securing his scalp. Lucas took deliberate aim as he lay on the ground and shot his pursuer dead in his tracks. He then dragged himself a short distance to shelter from the Indian fire, reloaded his rifle, and disposed his tomahawk for a desperate resistance; several determined efforts were made by the friends of the dead man to carry off his body and dispatch Lucas, but were frustrated by the vigilance of the garrison, who kept up a warm fire in that quarter. Lucas was carried into the fort after the enemy withdrew out of range, and soon recovered. Edward Swanson, another of the salliers, was overtaken within twenty yards of the gate by a large Indian, who pressed the muzzle of his gun against his back and, attempted to shoot, but it failed fire. The Indian then struck Swanson heavily on the shoulder with the barrel, making him drop his gun. Swanson now turned, and seizing his antagonist's gun by the muzzle, endeavored to wrench it from his hands. A desperate struggle ensued for the possession of the weapon, which ended at length in the Indian's favor, when by a heavy blow on the head he felled the white man to his all-fours. The combatants had been so closely engaged that the friends of Swanson could not fire from the fort without danger to both; but at this instant, when the Indian was in the act of disengaging his tomahawk to give the finishing blow, old Mr. John Buchanan rushed through the gate and firing quickly, mortally wounded him. Thereupon the savage, gritting his teeth with rage, retired to a stump near by where he fell. Swanson, assisted by his deliverer, made his way into the fort. During the night the body of the Indian was dragged off by his comrades, and was found several days later buried on College Hill, at the place afterwards occupied by the residence of the Rev. Mr. Hume.* No attempt was made to carry off the one killed by Swanson, as he was probably scalped by the whites, and this, according to Indian theology, rendered him unfit for burial. The loss of the scalp was supposed to be sufficient to debar the victim from the "happy hunting-grounds," no matter how bravely he may have fought. Hence they always sought at great risk to consign an enemy to the dominions of the bad spirit by practicing this mutilation upon him.

Of the sallying-party seven were killed, according to the statement of the Rev. John Carr, who lived in the pioneer period. These were Capt. Leiper, Peter Gill, John Kescnger, Alexander Buchanan, George Kennedy, Zachariah White, and J. Kennedy. James Meniffee, Kasper Mansker, Isaac Lucas, Joseph Moonshaw, and others were wounded. Putnam's account says that five were killed, but no names are given. In an obituary notice of Gen. James Robertson, published in the *Nashville Clarion* in 1813, the writer states that only thirteen returned alive to the fort, which would put the number of killed at eight. Very few of the horses were captured; most of them, after a hot chase across Capitol Hill and about the Sulphur-Bottom, broke by their pursuers and reached the gate of the fort, into which they were admitted. At ten o'clock A.M. the enemy withdrew from the contest, but returned at night and fired a great many shots at the walls. It was understood that this party was a reinforcement which had

* On Market Street, opposite the entrance to the Vanderbilt Medical College.