

**Col. John Peters Autobiography used in his application for relief to the British government.
June 5th, 1786, Pimlico, London, England**

SIR, I do not mean to take any pride from family, as you will conceive, nor to boast. of my exploits, but to relate my story in simplicity. I was born in Hebron, in Connecticut, in the My father was a wealthy and colonel of the militia. He descended by his father from William Peters, a brother of Hugh Peters, Oliver Cromwell's chaplain, and of an ancient family of Cornwall, Old England, and by Major General Thomas Harrison, the Regicide.

My mother was a descendant of John Phelps, a considerable man in Cromwell's Party. I had a liberal education at Yale College, in Connecticut, and received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1759; in 1761, I married Ann, daughter of Robert Barnett, a merchant at Windsor, in Connecticut; she was born in the year 1740, and is now the mother of eight sons one daughter. In 1763 I settled in Piermont, in the province of New Hampshire, on the east bank of the Connecticut river, where I had a Tract of land, and had built a house, a saw-mill and I was, by Wentworth, appointed Captain Commandant of the Militia, and Deputy Surveyor of the King's woods. In 1770 I removed to Mooretown, on the west side of the Connecticut where I had a large parcel of land, and I built an house, barn, saw and grist mills, and carried on bandry. Being now in the province of New York, I was appointed by Governor Tryon to be Colonel of the Militia, Justice of the Peace, Judge of Registrar of the County, Clerk of the Court, and Judge of the Court of common pleas. Here I was in easy circumstances, and as independent as my mind ever wished. In 1774 the spirit of and rebellion so prevailed as to became much trouble, a was forming through the Colonies. The counties of Cumberland and Gloucester, (since called Vermont) desired me to attend the congress to meet at Philadelphia in 1114 which appointment I accepted of, and passing through Hebron on my way to Philadelphia, I was mobbed with my Uncles the Rev. Samuel Peters, Mr. Jonathan and Mr. Bemslee Peters. by Go'vernor Trumbull's we were accused of Loyalty. I was liberated after suffering much ill language from the mob. The Rev. Samuel Peters suffered more than I did. He and I agreed in opinion teachers, bankrupts, and smugglers meant to have a serious rebellion and a civil and religious separation from the mother country. My Uncle advised me to meet the congress, to find out what their was. I did so, and being certainly convinced that nothing short of independence would satisfy them, I refused to take the oath of secrecy in Congress, and wrote to my uncle who had been forced to fly to England, telling him what to expect, and I to my family at Verdmont; but on my way home I was seized by three mobs, ill treated and dismissed at Weathersfield, Hartford, and Springfield. In April, 1715, in Mooretown, when another mob me and threatened to execute me as an enemy to Congress. Then they carried me to the committee, Deacon Bailey being president (but since a rebel general) who ordered me the same evening to gaol, and discharged me the same evening at 12 o'clock because they had not found proof of my corresponding with General Carleton, on pretense of which I had been committed to prison. Soon after another mob seized me, that I should sign their Covenant, which was to oppose the King and British army with my life and property, which Covenant I did not sign and begged time for consideration, under bonds, which was granted.

In the meantime news arrived that the British troop had marched out of and were murdering the inhabitants, both young and old. Whereupon the committee required me to give orders to the militia to be ready at an hour's notice to march against the royalists. I gave gained me favor for a few with the mob. However, as the report of the massacre near Boston by the King's troops diminished away, the mob renewed their attack upon me, searched my house for letters of secret correspondence with General Carleton, with whom in fact I never had corresponded. They took all papers found in my house. insulted me, and required me to sign deeds of some lands I had bought, confined me to the limits

of the town, and threatened me with death if I transgressed their Orders. The mob again and again visited me, and ate and drank, and finally plundered me of most of my moveable effects. Added to this Col. Peters of Hebron, wrote against me, and urged on the mob, assigning for reason "that his Uncle Peters, the clergyman, who had taught him bad principles, was driven out of the country, and that would soon become a to America if severity was used."

By January, 1776, vexation had hurt my health, and the madness of the people daily growing worse, I thought of a mode to make my way to Canada, I applied to rebel Col. Beadle, who had been my old and steady friend, and was going against Canada, consented to take me along with him as a companion, and obtained the consent of the Committee. March, 1776, we left Mooretown and Col. Beadle used me kindly and honourably, and never requested me to bear arms, which he had agreed to before we left home.

We arrived at the Cedars, when I prevailed upon Col. Beadle not to burn the town which he was ordered to do. I sent off to Captain (now Lieut. Col.) Foster of the 8th Regiment at Catarague, all the proper information in my power and his answer was .. he would attack the Cedars a certain day" advised me to get out of the way. I applied to Col. Beadle to be sent to Montreal to procure provisions for the rebels; whilst I was there, Captain Foster took the rebel fort at the Cedars; but I had got Col. Beadle. Having received news of Capt. Foster's success, and that a rebel party was going to attack him, I sent him information which enabled him to form an ambuscade whereby he near ISO rebels; the Indians were enraged with the rebels because some of their friends had been killed in the skirmish, and they killed several captives and to stop their outrage Capt. Foster gave them eight yoke of oxen several cows. At Montreal I met Dr. Franklin and the other Commissioners from Congress, also Gen. Wooster and Col. Arnold, and we dined together, when Arnold said: .. Nothing but independence would and he wished to God it was now done."

Dr. Franklin and Gen. Wooster wrote a letter to Col. Gazzen to let him know that Col. De Haws was going around the mountains with 700 men to Capt. Foster. Col. Arnold with the main Body, was to meet Foster at Lachine with four field pieces. I obtained that information and sent it over the mountains by Mr. Guson (clerk to Mr. Doby of Montreal) to Capt. by which means he over the river. Arnold on his return to Montreal found Dr. Franklin and Wooster had gone toward Albany, and he gave private order to plunder and burn the city of Montreal. I discovered this by Mr. Wheatly Norwich, in Connecticut, who, with Arnold, was to share the profit; and Mr. Wheatly offered me part if I would join with him. I thanked Mr. Wheatly for his friendship, desired a hours to consider of it, went the inhabitants of the design and they set a watch over the city till Arnold left the town. I went next to Sorel, where Sullivan commanded. took me a prisoner on suspicion that I had given Capt. Foster and the Indians of Conisidoga information of their intentions, and sent me to St. Johns; the rebels burnt Chamblie St. Johns on their way to Isle-laMotte where we rested six days, and where I was set at liberty because they had no proof against me, except what arose from a letter that Deacon Bailey wrote to Gen. Sullivan, "to care of Col. Peters, who was an enemy to America and would escape to Gen. Carleton the first opportunity."

Gen. Sullivan and army set off for Crown Point, and I had to the woods on the Isle la Motte and returning in the evening of June 28th to the deserted camp, where I found a canoe, which Dr. Skinner (who had also escaped) and I seized and paddled off in to St. Johns, nearly forty where we met General on the 29th of June. The General received me kindly and conducted me to General Carleton at Chamblie, who being satisfied with my conduct, gave me a pass to Montreal, on the inhabitants treated me with much friendship and thanks for the assistance given in preserving their town and property. August 14, I met with Mr. Peter Levines, the present Chief-Justice of to whom I was known years before. Mr.

Levine showed me every kind of attention that friendship and generosity could dictate, and carried me to Chamblie, and introduced me to General Carleton as a person he knew might be depended upon.

October, 1776, I went as a volunteer with General Carleton on Lake Champlain as one of the pilots to General Frazer in the van of the army. After the of the rebel and on the third of November, the royal anny returned from Crown Point to St. Johns. March, 1777. Two deserters from the rebel country arrived at Montreal and infonned me that my property had myself outlawed, and that Mrs. Peters and the children had been turned out of my house in the month of January, 1777; that she and her children had been sent off a sleigh with one bed. by Deacon Bailey, to Ticonderoga, one hundred and forty miles through the woods, snow-stonns and bad roads; that Mrs. Peters, a small and delicate woman, had been compelled to travel with her young children in her arms, deep snow and and were almost dead when they arrived at Ticonderoga, where the rebel general Wayne received them with humanity and used them kindly, till April, when sent her and her children thirty on way to Canada, and left them with three visions a deserted house near fifty miles from any inhabitants between them and Canada; here she stayed eighteen days with her children only (the oldest being fourteen her servant having been detained by Deacon Bailey (for which General Wayne said he ought to be damned). At length a British boat discovered and carried them to a vessel and thence to St. Johns. where they all arrived on 4th May, 1777. well. but naked and dirty. May 6th. 1777. I met my wife and children at St. Johns (having been advised of their arrival there) with clothing and other necessaries, and carried them to Montreal. In May, 1777. I was ordered by Sir Guy Carleton to a regiment of which I was to be the Lt.-Colonel Commandant.

June 14th, I was ordered by General Burgoyne to join his Army with what men I had raised, and he gave my regiment the name of the Queen's Loyal Rangers. July 23rd, 1777, corps, the first time, was mustered. at Skeensborough by Alexander Campbell, Deputy Commissary of Musters. I had mustered. 262 men only, but I had raised all 643, though, as my situation was the advance party, my men were killed off not quite so fast as I enlisted them, but prevented them being mustered as regularly as they should have been. I was in every which happened between army under Gen. Burgoyne and the rebels that campaign, except at Hublenston. August 16th, 1777, I commanded the Loyalists at Bennington, when I had 291 men of my regiment with me, and I lost above half of them in that enlistment.

The action commenced about nine o'clock in morning and continued until near four o'clock in the afternoon, when we retired much confusion. A little before the the pushed with a strong party on the front of the Loyalists which I commanded; as they were coming up I observed a man fire at me, which I returned. loaded again as he came up, discharged at me, crying out: .. Peters, you damned Tory, I have got you!" He rushed on with his bayonet which entered just below my left breast, but was turned by bone. By this time I was loaded and I saw that it was a rebel Post by name, an old playmate school-fellow, and a cousin of my Though his bayonet was in my body I felt regret to destroy him. We from Bennington to the reinforcement was coming which was soon attacked obliged to retreat to the bridge at the mills in Cambridge, which I broke up after the troops had retreated over it.

And the same evening we retreated towards the camp which we reached the next day. General Frazer received me very kindly, and as I was wounded in the breast was also lame with a hurt I had received a the day before the action by a ball grazing my foot, and was much fatigued, and for some time had been harassed with fever ague, he generously gave me up his bed for the night, and he laid himself his cloak on a bench. I received his and Gen. Burgoyne's approbation for my conduct in this action. The report of the defeat of the royal troops at Bennington reaching Montreal, Gen. McLean, Col. of the 84th Regiment, went to Mrs. Peters and told her that news had come from Gen. Burgoyne's camp, and she must expect to hear of many being killed and wounded, but if Col. Peters or her son were among them must hold up with good courage and not despond, as he would see to care being taken of her and her family, that they should never want. After some conversation in like manner, Gen. McLean thought

proper to let her know that was a report that Col. Peters and his son were both wounded and since dead. Mrs. Peters said: " My calamities are very great, but thank God, they died doing their duty to King Country. I have sons left, who, as soon as they shall be able to bear arms, I will send against the rebels, while I and my daughter will mourn for the dead and pray for the living."

September 7th, the rebels made an attack upon the british army marching from Saratoga towards Albany. They were repulsed with great loss of killed, and the royal army suffered much. The royal army kept their ground at Stillwater till September 19, when rebels attacked our ranks in the morning and the attack continued till dark. The royal army having suffered much and Gen. Frazer being mortally wounded, we retreated to Saratoga. Sept. 27th, we burnt some of our tents, and the 28th did the same. Here we remained until October 8th, hoping every day the Royal army would attempt to force their way to Fort George. Cessation of hostilities took place and treaties went on between the Royal army and rebel commanders.

On the 14th of October, in the morning, when it was expected the capitulation was nearly concluded, as I was in great anxiety and distress of mind, knowing how impossible it was that any capitulation could provide for my security, I met Gen. Phillipps, who asked me why I remained there, as I had told him before that no articles would protect me. I answered that whatever might be the event I would not go without orders in writing for that no one should be able to say that I had deserted them in the hour of distress. He said he would get me orders. In the afternoon he met me again, and seemed surprised at seeing me still I reminded him of what he had said, on which he carried me with him to the general's tent, and he brought me out a written permission to take as many of my officers and men as I thought could not be protected and were willing to go. I accordingly got together as many as I could meet with in that condition who chose to make the attempt.

While I was preparing for our departure a person who had left the rebel colonies for having counterfeited their paper money came to me and begged to be of the party. I did not much like his company, but I saw the poor creature in such a trembling situation from the certainty of being hanged that I could not but consent. As soon -as it was dark enough we set out, being thirty-five in number, and each carrying two days' provisions. I ordered Lt. Holiburt, of my regiment to lead, as he knew the woods in the dark better than I did. I followed next, and ordered all of the rest to follow in single file, and in perfect silence, my son and Major Wright in the Teat:'. We steered at first south westward. We had not got far when the money maker began to very troublesome with his fears. I ordered him placed between Major Wright and my son, and ordered the major if he made any noise to put his bayonet into him, and leave him dead; notwithstanding this he was very troublesome. When we had travelled two or three miles from the Royal camp we were challenged by a party of rebels. I replied: "From Gen. Gates and we were in pursuit of some Tories who have fled from Burgoyne's camp." The rebels demanded the countersign and who commanded. The answer was: "Col. Peters with 1800 men, and they might fire as soon as they pleased," was the countersign. The darkness and the surprise caused. the rebels to take prudent care of themselves for that night, but next day they pursued us with about 100 men whom we saw at a distance from a hill, but whether they saw us or not I cannot say. When we thought we could do it safely we turned more north westerly and then northerly.

On the 16th, at the beginning of the night, we found ourselves on the western bank of the Hudson river. The moon was just risen and close under us on the same side, at the mouth of a brook, was a man in a canoe, going to fish. We called to him, and by the fear of our firearms obliged him to come to us; but as three only could go at once in the canoe, and one was obliged always to come back to fetch two more, and as we were obliged to paddle for fear of being heard, in case any scouts of the rebels were at hand, it was midnight before we all got over. Tedious as this was it was much better than the noise we should

have made, and the time we should have consumed in felling and making a raft of trees to pass over upon. Whilst this was transacting, such of us as first went over detained the man, which we told him was only to prevent his discovering us. He seemed surprised at this, having taken us for rebels, and informed us that he and his father were sincere Loyalists and on his mentioning his name one of our party recognised him.

After we had all got over he carried us to his father's who received us very kindly, and offered us aU he had, some bear's flesh, some dried moose and some Indian corn, and informed us that there were two parties lying on the path the two ways we were expected to pass and that perhaps in the morning they might visit his house, as they frequently did; therefore it would be necessary for us to be away very early, but that he would accompany and lead us directly over the mountain so as to avoid these two parties, and go between them.

He accordingly called us very early in the morning, and though the mountain seemed impracticable yet he led us over and clear of the two parties then took leave of us. The 17th, in the woods, we heard the firing of cannon at Saratoga which I knew to be in consequence of the surrender of the British army to the rebels. It went to my heart to hear it, though I knew it was to be the case. We then kept northerly so as to avoid any path. On the 18th we thought we were sufficiently north, and stood east in order to strike Lake George, but 'to our surprise we suddenly came in sight of houses, which obliged us to stand west again and then northerly, and we stood on so until we were quite out of danger. Then we stood east, and on the 19th of October, near sunset, when we were almost famished, we struck Lake George, where Major Irwin, of the 47th, commanded. He received us very uncivilly till I produced my written order. He then treated us with great kindness and humanity, giving us food and ordered boats to any us to Diamond Island, about five miles, where Major Aubery of the 47th commanded and had done good service. He treated us with all possible goodness, and as I was in a fever and ague, with which I had been troubled for some time before I had quitted the camp, and much fatigued, he was so good as to make me sleep in his bed while he went somewhere else for the night. Next day he gave us boats which carried us across the lake, from whence we marched to Ticonderoga, where we remained under the command of General Powel, till the fort was evacuated, when we returned to Montreal, and soon after to Quebec, where Gen. Carleton received me with approbation, but could not pay me till he had official accounts from Gen. Burgoyne. Hitherto I had received no pay from the King for my services. Gen. Carleton had put me on the subsistence list at 30,£ per muster, and had behaved with great attention and humanity to my family.

In 1778, Gen. Haldimand took the command Canada, to whom I was introduced by Gen. Carleton', His excellency ordered me to take command of a party of 200 white men 100 Indians, and to march to Cobos, on Connecticut river, and destroy the settlement there, Having arrived at Lake Champlain, on my way to Cobos, Gen. Haldimand's letter overtook me, which gave leave to all my party to return that chose to do so, but permitted me to pay a visit to Onion River. He also directed me to leave my orders. We all went on by water one day and landed at the river La Mile, and marched up by that river when some got discouraged and returned with all the Indians and all the white men except thirty-four with whom I had proceeded to the head of Onion river; and following it down we destroyed the Block house and all the buildings on it, for about thirty miles, as I was ordered, after which I returned with my thirty-four men to St. Johns, on the 23rd of August, 1778.

In 1779, I again requested General Haldimand to pay me for my services under Gen. Burgoyne in 1717. His Excellency said that matter had been transacted before he took command, and he could do nothing in it till he should have official returns but he continued me on the subsistence list where Gen. Carleton had placed me. I wrote to the Rev. Mr. Peters in London, who applied to Lord George Germaine in my behalf, and his lordship wrote to Gen. Haldimand to settle my accounts and others in a like situation. Gen. Haldimand seemed to be offended, and accused me of complaining home against him which in

truth I had not done, or thought of, nor hitherto had any reason. He appointed a board of officers to examine my claims, but ordered the commissioners not to allow pay for any men that were killed or taken the year 1777, or bat or forage, or for any money advanced by me or my officers to the men in the campaign of 1777 who had not returned to Canada.

The commissioners obeyed his orders, although I produced Gen. Burgoyne's orders, given out at Battlehill, August 26th, 1777, that all the provincial troops should be paid the same as the British troops. By this injustice I lost what was due me on British pay from the first of August to the 24th of December, 1783, when we were disbanded.

November 12th, 1781, Gen. Haldimand draughted the provincial corps and out of them formed corps which he named "Loyal Rangers," and appointed Edward Jessop to be major of it, and at the same time gave out in general orders that he appointed "Lieutenant-Colonel John Peters, of the Queen's Loyal Rangers, as captain of Invalids." This cruel, degrading change was worked while I was at Skeensborough, where I had been sent by Gen. Haldimand with a flag and rebel prisoners with a view to gain intelligence from the southern army, which I performed and reported to him. On my return to Quebec I complained to the general of the hard measures that he dealt out to me by degrading me below those who had been under my command in 1777, nor did I understand why I was invalided. Mr. Mathews, secretary to Gen. Haldimand, gave me for answer that I had a wife and eight children and I might starve if I refused captain's pay, beside I should not be allowed rations if I refused. My subsistence money being stopped I was obliged to accept the pay of a Captain till December 24th, 1783, or perish with my family.

1784, Gen. Haldimand owning land at the bay of Chaleurs urged the Loyalists to settle on it, or at Cataragui, and threatened to withhold provisions from them in case of a refusal. Some of the Loyalists, however, wanted to settle near Maisqui Bay in Canada, where they built some houses and cleared some land, but Gen. Haldimand sent Lieut. Buckley of the 29th to burn their houses and to bring off the settlers. The Loyalists then petitioned the governor for leave to settle in Cape Breton, and not at the Bay of Chaleur... The governor having heard that I had drawn up the petition sent for me and told me that I was the supposed author of it, and in a passion treated me with great indignity. I told him that no man but the commander-in-chief should treat me so; he added. "I will allow the Loyalists nothing, they shall settle on those lands I have allotted for them, or I will send them back to the rebels." His threatening terrified some, and they settled on such lands as he chose, but I and my family left Canada, October 17th with many others to get rid of such a petty tyrant, and we arrived at Cape Breton. Here I left my wife and children in a fisherman's home, under the protection of Peter, the Indian king of Cape Breton (who had more honour than two Swiss governors), and I went to Halifax.

August, 1785, Sir Charles Douglas who knew me in Canada, generously brought me with him to England. I first borrowed 100£ for my family in Halifax, and drew on a friend in London for it. On my arrival in London I applied to the Lords of the treasury for subsistence, and they gave me temporary support of 100£ per annum, notwithstanding Gen. Haldimand refusing a certificate of my loyalty and services though they had been so conspicuous ten years past.

One thing I omitted respecting my sons, who had served his Majesty against the American rebellion. My son John, the oldest ensign in the Queen's Loyal Rangers, was neglected by Gen. Haldimand when he drafted the provincial corps in Canada, and a son of Major Jessop's, quite a boy, who had never done any service, was appointed a Lieutenant over my son and all the ensigns who had served during the whole of the war. Andrew, my second son, was a midshipman during the war on the Lakes, under Commodore Chambers, and has no subsistence. Samuel, my third son, has been a volunteer ever since 1779, and all the reward given me and my sons by Gen. Haldimand is, he returned me to the war office in these remarkable words "as captain of Invalids," and my son John as ensign in the Loyal Rangers,

under the command of Major Edward Jessop, whom as Lieutenant Colonel, I had commanded in 1777, and afterwards, till he was put over me in this astonishing manner.

I cannot say I look back with regret at the part I took, from motives of loyalty and from a foresight of the horror and miseries of independence, though I never imagined they would be so great as they now are, yet I thought the part I took right, and I certainly think so still, from love to my country as well as duty to my sovereign and notwithstanding my sufferings and services, and scandalous treatment by Gen. Haldimand, I would do it again if there was occasion. It is true I see persons who were notorious on the rebel side who are now here and taken notice of and advanced, while I am neglected and deprived even of what is justly due me; but with the consciousness of having done right I can look with disdain at the triumph of successful villains.

Should you desire any further information, I shall willingly attend to your commands, either viva voce vel scriptis.

I have the honour to be, sir, your faithful friend and obliged servant.

J. PETERS.

Duke's Row, NO.3.

Pimlico, June 5th, 1786.