

## EARLY LIFE IN WYOMING Part 1

WHEN?  
Prior to 1775

WHERE?  
Wyoming Valley



EVENT  
Early story of the valley

VOCABULARY  
Confluence river ford  
precipice  
Yankee--Pennamite

Our valley is rich in past stories that include so many diverse groups. This article will explore just a short introduction to a Revolutionary War battle that had included several different nations and had influence far beyond our northeastern Pennsylvania borders. This is the first part of a 4-part article: early life in Wyoming valley, situation right before the battle, the battle, and afterwards.



Dial Rock/Campbell's Ledge

This mix of forest and meadows with tall grass we now know as Wyoming Valley had fertile soil enriched by periodic flooding from the nearby Susquehanna river. Beginning in New York at Lake Otsego the river twists and turns into Pennsylvania. Once it enters present day Pittston where it is joined by the Lackawanna river, it meanders for about 17 miles until it exits the valley at Nanticoke. The confluence is near the high precipice known to locals as Campbell's Ledge or Dial Rock. The valley, three to five miles wide, flows beneath the eastern mountain ranges of Penobscot, Wilkes-Barré, and Wyoming and those on the western side known as Penobscot, Larksville, and Back Mountain. Shad and other varieties of fish filled the river along with bear, deer and other wildlife that roamed throughout the area.

Archaeological evidence thousands of years old has been found throughout the area but particularly at the Duryea Coxtan Rail site. The professional archaeologist and volunteers have uncovered a lot of evidence that give clues to those who once lived there. Called the Wyoming people, archeologists believe that contact with Europeans was rare if it happened at all as the area was too far away from the coast (Dziak 14). By the 1500s, that would change as Europeans pushed Natives farther inland. The Susquehannocks were moving south, other tribes from the south around the Chesapeake Bay were pushed north, and tribes along the coast were pushed westward. It is not known if any of them came in contact with the Wyoming people but by 1575, they had vanished. That meant others could now move in without a problem or so it would seem.



The Haudenosaunee (often called Iroquois) did not want what they considered to be the southern door to their homelands to be vacant for just anyone to occupy. Their small population could not spread from what is now southern New York any farther south. Their enemies, the Susquehannocks who had moved to the Lancaster area looked to the Wyoming Valley as good hunting grounds. Dziak writes "this marked the beginning of a 200-year struggle for Wyoming Valley" (16).

The Iroquois made up of the Mohawk, Cayuga, Seneca, Onondaga, Oneida nations, were joined later by the Tuscarora. They grew into a fierce fighting force after discovering the benefits of trading beaver pelts for weapons so that by 1675 they were in firm control of the area. The once-powerful Susquehannocks had been defeated by disease, betrayal by the British, and pushed out of Wyoming Valley. Fighting the incursion into their lands by the British and the French kept the Haudenosaunee busy. However, by 1701, they had signed peace treaties with the French and the British. Those two nations were long-time rivals over the land here as well as the beaver skins so highly prized by the Europeans. Now the Haudenosaunee were in the middle doing business with each nation. Now they began to invite other native tribes who needed a place to live because they had been displaced by European colonists, to come to Wyoming Valley. The Shawnee tribe were one of the first. Probably the most well-known were the Delaware also called the Lenni-Lenape. The Nanticokes lived here for a short time as well as Mahicans and Mohegans. The Iroquois felt that with people living in the valley their southern gateway would be better protected from the Europeans incursions. However, King Charles II of England had inadvertently given two colonies, Connecticut and Pennsylvania, the same land which included Wyoming Valley. Though the grants were given 19 years apart, the rivalry for the land would give rise to kidnappings, court cases, and armed conflict known as the Yankee (people from Connecticut) and Pennamite (people from Pennsylvania) Wars. The number of people attracted to Wyoming had definitely increased.

Next read is BEHIND THE ATTACK ON WYOMING



#### ONLINE RESOURCES

[Native History of Wyoming Valley](#)

[Wyoming Valley's Native Past](#)

#### PRINT RESOURCES

Dziak, Mark. *The Battle of Wyoming*. Pittston, Our History Initiative. 2008.

Glickman, Jay. *Painted in Blood Remember Wyoming: America's First Civil War*. Affiliated Writers of America. 1997.

