

HENRY HOYT: FROM CIVIL WAR TO GOVERNOR

WHEN?
1830-- 1892

VOCABULARY
artillery
counterattack



WHERE?

EVENT
Commander of 52nd
Pennsylvania infantry; later
served as Governor of
Pennsylvania

Penn

Wilkes-Barre Academy and Wyoming Seminary before he went on to Lafayette College and then to Williams College. After graduation from Williams, he taught mathematics for several years at Wyoming Seminary until deciding to follow a law career which he began in 1853.

When the Civil War broke out, Governor Andrew Curtin appointed him as Lieutenant Colonel in charge of the 52nd Pennsylvania. He fought in numerous battles including Gettysburg in 1863. In January of that year, his unit was ordered to go to Fort Johnson on James Island in Charleston, South Carolina. In a rare night raid, he and nearly 140 men (accounts vary as to the number) captured Fort Johnson. When the Confederates counterattacked however, Hoyt and his men did not have enough reinforcements and lost the fort. The enlisted men were sent to Andersonville Prison camp where many died. While on the way from prison camp in Macon, Georgia, back to Charleston, Hoyt and four others jumped from the train and escaped for several days (Keating 48). They had attempted to reach the Union fleet but were captured when bloodhounds were used to track them down (Hoyt Explore).

While waiting to be exchanged, he and other officers including General Edmund Dana and Lt. Col. Conyngham were placed in position so that Union gunners who were firing on the fort in Charleston Harbor, would fire on them. The Confederates hoped that the Union gunners would stop firing. He was eventually freed from his predicament and made his way back to his command where he served until the end of the war.

After the war, he went into politics and was elected governor of Pennsylvania in 1878. He was interested in exposing the financial corruption that he felt caused the Panic of 1873 that had ruined many businesses and threw thousands out of work. He also upgraded the medical schools, established a state medical board, and improved prison conditions (Hoyt PHMC). Those prisoners who were first-time offenders between the ages of 15 and 25 were now incarcerated in a separate prison where they were taught a trade and could further their education (Hoyt PHMC). He left office in 1883 to return to his law practice in Wilkes-Barre.

He died in 1892 and is buried in the Forty Fort cemetery.

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Henry Hoyt Explore PA history](#)

[Hoyt PHMC](#)

PRINT RESOURCES

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