



Iowa Society DAR

PATRIOT STORIES

Peter Wheeler, Connecticut, A124007

- Private
- Born: 16 Apr 1774 Woodbury Fairfield Co CT
- Died: 3 Jul 1778 Westmoreland Co CT; Killed in the Battle of Wyoming
- Residence: Westmoreland Co CT

Peter was the 9th child and last child of Ensign Caleb Wheeler and Martha. His grandfather, John Wheeler had founded (chartered) the town of Woodbury CT.

Peter married in 1768 to Annis Martin (bp 20 May 1750 Woodbury Fairfield Co CT) of Lanesboro/Lanesborough, MA. Their first child, Preserved, was born 9 Jun 1769 in Lanesborough. As of Fall 2021, Preserved is the only child with recognized DAR daughters.

- Preserved (b 9 Jun 1769 Lanesborough Berkshire Co MA d 15 Mar 1856 New Haven Addison Co VT) in Jul 1790 married Esther Bacon (b 6 Dec 1733/4 Lanesborough Berkshire Co MA d 24 Sep 1809 New Haven Addison Co VT).

In 1768 a PA consortium purchased land from the Six Nations of Oneida Lake, NY and all remaining Indian land in northeastern PA which included the Wyoming Valley. That year PA settlers were approved grants to settle on the east side of the Susquehanna River. These lands had been inhabited and improved by men from CT since 1762 before Indians drove them back home. Caleb Wheeler, Peter's father had been among the men of CT.

During 1769, 40 CT men returned to resume establishing their former homes. CT attached the Wyoming settlement to Litchfield County CT and called it Westmoreland.

PA sent civil officers to expel the CT intruders. These skirmish events were ongoing up to the beginning of the Colonial Revolution. During this time several forts were constructed. Most were not fortifications with great guns but only stockades of logs set on end in ditches to give protection for women and children. Their defense was small arms to fire through 'loop-holes'. The entire valley had one 4-lb canon at Wilkes-Barre which was used to sound the 'alarm'. The large fort named Forty Fort was built by the CT men. It held 150 widows and 600 orphans during the Revolution. The settlement had 2,500 inhabitants at that time.

The Wheelers second son, Sheldon, and third son, Reuben, were born in Wilkes-Barre in 1776 and 1778 respectfully. This establishes the Peter Wheeler family as of the CT settlers.



*This story is provided by a member of the Iowa Society DAR. It is believed to be factual.
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Peter Wheeler, Connecticut, A124007 (Continued)

In June 1778 the British detachment of Col John Butler, Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens and a force of Seneca Indians descended into the valley. The British numbered 500 and the Indians 700 (warriors and squaws). On 2 Jul the Jenkins Fort fell. Some of the aged men made units to protect the forts. All the rest including boys numbered 400 assembled at Forty Fort to meet the enemy. On 3 Jul the unit led by Co Zebulon Butler was opposed by Col John Butler with Tory Rangers in green uniforms and Seneca Chief, Gi-en-gwah-toh (He-who-goes-in-the-smoke).

The battle began about four in the afternoon and the settlers fell before the rifles, tomahawks, and spears of the enemy. The brave soldiers of Wyoming were slaughtered without mercy. Sixty of the four hundred men survived. After the surrender, the Indians and rangers looted the farms and destroyed livestock and homes.

Survivors fled to the mountains through the swamps into eastern PA. The first real protection was on the border of NJ. One fleeing party of almost 100 had only one man able to assist.

In a few days the settlers were gone. The dead lay decaying and unburied until Oct. The first returning settlers had to bury the victims of the massacre.

At the time Annis Wheeler was pregnant and a mother of three young sons one born early that year 1778 (Reuben). The oldest boy, Preserved, was nine. They returned to their old home in CT 300 miles away. A Dutch farmer in NY gave them food and a donkey to ease the tedious journey.

In Jan 1779 the fourth son, Peter, was born following his father's death fighting for the American Revolution. The Wyoming Monument in Wilkes Barre has the names of the fallen heroes of this battle.

Sources:

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- William Richard Cutter, A.M. American Heritage (Periodical Oct 1978) "Wyoming Valley Massacre.
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