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## **WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN'S CONNECTION TO THE HISTORY OF PENNSYLVANIA ROUTE 6**

While US Route 6 was not officially a cross-country driving route until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, excerpts from the "History of Route 6" show a connection to stories relating to the times of two of our great presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. There were battles for ownership of what would become the northern tier of Pennsylvania as our young nation was developing pre- and post Revolutionary War. During Lincoln's era, the region was also a supplier of Union Soldiers; leading to the designation of US Route 6 as the Grand Army of the Republic Highway.

Traces of Washington can be found across the corridor, but probably the most significant site is the statue of George Washington in what is commonly thought of as a British uniform in the town of Waterford, Erie County. In reality, Washington had been sent by the Governor of Virginia and is wearing the uniform of an officer in the Virginia Militia. In December 1753, at age 21, Washington was asked by Governor Dinwiddie to carry a British ultimatum to the French Canadians on the Ohio frontier. Washington delivered the message to the French Canadians at Fort Le Boeuf in Waterford. The unheeded message called for the French Canadians to abandon their development of the Ohio country to the south. The two colonial powers were heading toward the French – Indian War.

The "History of PA Route 6" tells how Northern Pennsylvania was a key frontier during the American Revolution; while at the same time, it was also in a state of hostility due to the conflicting claims of Connecticut and Pennsylvania and threatened by British Loyalists (Tories) and their Native American allies. The Pennamite–Yankee War was the intermittent conflict between 1769 and 1799 between settlers from Connecticut, who claimed the land along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River in the present Wyoming Valley, and settlers from brutal actions by both patriots and loyalists, called the Battle for Wyoming.

Historical markers can be found in the Endless Mountains Region that interpret the story of Sullivan's March, led by Major General John Sullivan and Brigadier General James Clinton, which was an military campaign against Loyalists ("Tories") and the four Amerindian nations of the Iroquois who had sided with the British in the American Revolutionary War.

Many of the connections to Washington were people who took orders from the First President as the nation was developing. Wayne County, on the eastern side of the PA Route 6 Heritage Corridor, is named after General Anthony Wayne, who served as the first Commander-in-Chief of the army under Washington. Wayne's treaty with the Iroquois is credited with opening up northwestern Pennsylvania for settlement in the 1790's.

The only known artifact of Abraham Lincoln that is housed along PA Route 6 is the American Flag used to hold Lincoln's head after his assassination, which is on display at the Column's Museum in Milford; however, during Lincoln's Presidency, the northern tier of Pennsylvania served as a source of soldiers for the Civil War. While neither President Lincoln nor the Civil War have footprints in the PA Route 6 Heritage Corridor, the reminders of the war and times can still be found here.

In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln called for volunteer troops to rise to the defense of the Union. Thomas Leiper Kane, a prominent businessman in McKean County, began recruiting young men from northern Pennsylvania. Approximately 700 lumberjacks, raftsmen, and farmers from the "Wildcat" district (Elk, McKean, Tioga, and Cameron counties) heard the call, and headed off to Camp Curtin, near Harrisburg. While there, they were joined by companies from Chester and Perry counties, and were designated the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps. When called to join the federal Army of the Potomac, the regiment was renamed the 42<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment, but these sharpshooters were more commonly identified by their Bucktail insignia, and became known as the Bucktail Regiment.

The Bucktails served with distinction in most of the major engagements of the Civil War, including Antietam, Gettysburg and the Wilderness. The unit completed its service on May 31, 1864.

General Kane founded the town that bears his name in the early 1860s. Originally known as Clarion Summit, then Kane Summit, he came to the region with his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Kane. Dr. Kane supposedly talked her way through enemy lines to be by his side and treat him when he was wounded and captured during the war. After the war, Dr. Kane and her sons Evan and Thomas founded the first hospital in Kane. General Kane became an ardent supporter of human rights, and, in particular rallied to end the persecution of the Mormons. He is credited with averting a war between the Mormons and the U. S. Government in the late 1800s.

After the Civil War, veterans of the "late unpleasantness," like veterans of many wars before and since, faced the task of returning to families, friends and jobs. Veterans of the Civil War joined together, first informally, into organizations based on the need for the continued camaraderie of friendships forged in battle. One of these, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) emerged as a powerful political force. By 1890, it had more than 409,000 members. The GAR became a serious political body. Five members were elected President of the United States, and Republican candidates vied for the endorsement of the GAR. The GAR founded soldiers' homes, and was active in relief work and pension legislation. The Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War lobbied strongly to have a transcontinental highway designated the Grand Army of the Republic Highway as a memorial. In 1937, the Pennsylvania legislature recognized U. S. Route 6 in the Commonwealth as the Grand Army of the Republic Highway.

The "[History of Route 6](#)" contains many more stories about the northern tier of Pennsylvania's connection to the growth of the nation. To learn more about the History of PA Route 6, its themes, and historic sites, see the heritage corridor section of the PA Route 6 Alliance website: [www.paroute6.com](http://www.paroute6.com).