

Army at Forty Fort, demanding that all forts, troops, and other premises in the valley surrender. In return, he guaranteed the safety of all inhabitants. Denison returned a message saying he would consult with Lieutenant Colonel Zebulon Butler. He then sent orders out to all militiamen to join him at Forty Fort. By noon, some 375 men including McKerachan, and his men joined Denison at the fort.

Once there, McKarrachan made a fateful decision to turn over his unit to Captain Lazarus Stewart a member of the Paxton or Paxtang Boys, a group of vigilantes accused of the massacre of the Conestoga Indians in 1763. According to "History of Wyoming: In a Series of Letters from Charles Miner to his son William Penn Miner, Primary Source Edition: By Charles Miner and Adam Hubley; McKarrachan said to Captain Stewart, "My pursuits in life have thus far been those of peace, you are used to war and accustomed to command. On parade, I can maneuver my men, but in the field, no unnecessary hazard should be run. A mistake might prove fatal. Take you the lead; I will fight under you with my men as an aid, or a private in the ranks. Your presence at the head of the Hanover boys will impart confidence."

Now the head of McKerachan's unit, Stewart insisted the best plan of action was to have the troops meet the British on the battlefield. Denison and Butler wanted to wait for the reinforcements known to be on the way. We can only imagine that as a teacher, McKarrachan must have listened intently to both sides. Most of the militiamen agreed with Stewart as they witnessed fires consuming property to the north. They argued that the whole valley could be devastated if they waited. Stewart questioned both officers' bravery.

The Battle of Wyoming

Colonel Denison gave in to the demands and by 3 p.m. most of the garrison left the protection of the fort. Asaph Wittlesey along with forty-four men stayed behind to defend the women and children at Forty Fort. Still considering it rash to attack, Denison and Butler halted at Abraham's Creek, a mile or so northeast. Another argument occurred, and again both answered questions about their bravery. Under immense pressure, Butler and Denison agreed to proceed, advancing toward Fort Wintermoot. Colonel Zebulon Butler led 484 men to meet the enemy along with Continental Army Captains Durkee and Ransom. A battle line formed. Colonel Butler ordered his men to keep firing into the British line. Butler's men advanced, pushing back the British but the American line fell to the Seneca and Iroquois tribesmen hiding in the woods. In a few moments, many men lay dead. Those who were able to escape made their way back to the fort. Captured men died at the hands of the renegades.

Exactly how and where William McKerachan fell and whether some or all of the "Hanover boys" now Nanticoke died in battle is unknown. However, his name, along with those of Lazarus Stewart and many others, is engraved on the Wyoming Monument at 250 East Pettibone Street in Wyoming, Pennsylvania. The sandstone pedestal and obelisk mark the burial site of some of those killed that day.

McKerachan hoped for a new life but ended up fighting for a cause in a new land. A struggle that would eventually give rise to the freedoms we experience today. Therefore we can label him and all those he led as hometown heroes.