

UNKNOWN REBEL GOVERNOR

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Did you ever hear of Henry Martyn Hoyt? I count his name as probably the least familiar governor of Pennsylvania. Who ever heard of Henry Martyn (spelled with a Y) Hoyt? I'd forgotten his existence myself, and I do Pennsylvania research almost every day. He was the first governor under the 1874 Constitution, and a good one, but somehow he's a forgotten man. He was elected by the Cameron Machine, which ruled the state for decades. Hoyt was born in Luzerne County, his father a veteran of the War of 1812, his mother related to General William Sherman. During the Civil War, already an excellent lawyer, he rose to the rank of brigadier general. He was captured at the battle of Charleson Harbor, escaped and was recaptured when the Confederates put bloodhounds on his trail. An ardent Republican, he served in numerous Luzerne County offices, including judge. Hoyt was also Republican State Chairman. In 1878, he was the Cameron-Quay machines choice for governor. As Governor, he was a reform-minded man despite the fact that hard-machine politics had elected him. But he was confronted with one of the worse legislative scandals in history. It had to do with the railroad riots of 1877 in Allegheny County. A bill before the House brought widespread bribery attempts of state legislators. Under an old law, counties were liable for such riots. The bill, with a \$4 million dollar appropriation to Allegheny County was defeated,

but three members and seven other persons were found guilty of violating the state's bribery laws. Further investigation brought forth information that the four millions which had been sought were twice the amount needed. Hoyt, in disgust at the machine, disassociated himself from the Quay ring, and thus contributed to the election of a Democratic governor in 1882--the first since the Civil War. Hoyt himself was a good governor. He favored rehabilitation for prisoners; approved a geological survey of the state, prosecuted railroads for discrimination in rates, and helped defeat school segregation, all the while balancing the budget. A state bribery law also went into effect. After his tenure and the win by the Democrats, Hoyt never held public office. But he worked for prison reform and his charitable efforts eventually led to the formation of our Department of Welfare. His son Henry M. Hoyt, Jr. became the Solicitor General of the United States. Remember the name--Henry Martyn Hoyt--not for games of trivia on little known persons, but that he was in fact a good governor of Pennsylvania.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.