

Swetland House
Wyoming, Pennsylvania

HABS No. Pa-23

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. Pa-2

Historic American Buildings Survey
Thomas H. Atherton, District Officer
139 South Main Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

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SWETLAND HOUSE
WYOMING, PENNSYLVANIA
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Luke Swetland, one of the first Connecticut settlers, went through the Battle of Wyoming unscathed, only to be captured near Nanticocke by Seneca Indians. He was taking grain to a mill.

The Indians took him to Catherinetown where he was forced to run the gauntlet. Catherine Mentour took pity on him, put him on a horse and sent him to Appletown. When Sullivan's army drew near New York State, the Indians fled toward Niagara and Swetland made his escape. His account of his captivity is most absorbing.

When he arrived at Wyoming he found that his family had gone back to Connecticut. He followed them. About 1800 they all returned to Wyoming.

Luke Swetland was the first nurseryman in this part of the world. He imported improved fruit trees from New England and raised young trees.

His grandson, William, was perhaps the first merchant in upper Kingston. He opened his "new store" in 1815. It was in the building which still stands across the road from his house. The building was changed and enlarged as the business increased. The bones of those slain in the Battle of Wyoming were put in a large box and kept in the store building until they were finally buried under the monument.

William Swetland's interests were much broader than his store. He became interested in the development of the coal. He was president of the Lackawanna and Elcomsburg Railroad which connected Scranton with the west side river towns as far south as Northumberland and Sunbury. He was deeply and most generously interested in schools and churches.

Luke Swetland began the house, his son, Belding added to it and his grandson, William completed it. The old Swetland house with its fine architecture is one of the treasures of the Wyoming Valley. Its floors are made of two inch planks and the rest of the structure is of the same quality. There was no jerry building then. The hand made mahogany front doors still have their silver hardware. Long before the valley discarded the pump, the cistern and the spring, water was piped into the house--to the amazement of people. The old kitchen is there, in its original condition. It has been preserved and is being restored by loyal, deep affection. As one stands before its broad hearth and under the shadow of its huge mantel, one understands and appreciates much of pioneer life.

The name of Swetland stood for keen interest in vital efforts, especially in education and religion. When the tradition passed to the distaff side, other names equally outstanding in the valley were added to that of Swetland, the tradition kept and increased as broader, larger opportunities offered.



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Approved,
District Officer. *Thomas H. Atkinson*

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