

**THE STORY OF THE CAPTIVITY AND
RESCUE FROM THE INDIANS OF LUKE
SWETLAND: AN EARLY SETTLER OF THE
WYOMING VALLEY AND A SOLDIER OF
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

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The Story of the Captivity and Rescue from the Indians of Luke Swetland: An Early Settler of the Wyoming Valley and a Soldier of the American Revolution by Edward Merrifield

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An early settler of the Wyoming Valley and a soldier of the
American Revolution

By EDWARD MERRIFIELD

SCRANTON, PA., 1915



I have so often heard from my mother, Almira (Swetland) Merrifield, and my Aunt, Harriet (Swetland) Whiston, the story of their Granddaddy, Luke Swetland, with whom they spent their childhood days, that I feel competent to make a permanent record of it, and to rewrite his own narrative of his captivity. I gratefully acknowledge the aid of Mrs. Kate Pettibone Dickson in the publication of this book and dedicate it to the memory of her mother, Caroline M. (Swetland) Pettibone, a great granddaughter of Luke Swetland.

E. MERRIFIELD.

January, 1915.



CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Luke Swetland was one of the early settlers of Wyoming Valley, coming with the Connecticut settlers in 1769, so far as I am able to ascertain; possibly it may have been in 1763. The hardships and privations of those early settlers has many times been written in prose and verse collectively; but records of the trials and troubles of individuals are few. The awful blow that fell upon the Slocum family, when little Frances was captured by the Indians, and but a short time after, Jonathan Slocum, her father, was murdered by them, has been recalled and preserved in story in a book written and published by his descendant, Mrs. Martha Bennett Phelps, and has a deserved place in history. No one can read of that sad event, and of the wonderful incidents connected with the discovery of the captive without a due appreciation of the troubles incident to the early days of fair Wyoming, and a sincere respect for kindred that has so perpetuated the memory of her ancestors.

There is not so much of pathos connected with the story of Luke Swetland, but there is enough; and the romantic incidents concerning his captivity and escape will at least make it an interesting episode of those troublesome days and entitle it to a place among the archives of Wyoming's history.

Luke Swetland was born on the 16th day of June, 1729, O. S. in the town of Lebanon, Windham County, Connecticut. He was a son of John Swetland, who was born in Salem, Massachusetts, July 1, 1681; and a grandson of William Swetland, who resided in Salem in 1676, and came from Buckinghamshire, England. Luke was married to Hannah Tiffany in Warren Township, Litchfield County, Connecticut, on the first of April, 1762.

They had heard of the plains of Wyoming, and in common, with neighbors and acquaintances, concluded to leave the rugged hills of Connecticut and seek a new home on the banks of the Susquehanna. In fact at that time, it was believed that the Wyoming Valley was within the jurisdiction of their home State. Little did they dream of the hardships, trials

and privations which their advent there brought upon them. Not only were they in the midst of querulous and exacting Indians, but the Pennsylvanians disputed the jurisdiction of Connecticut, which led to a long and bitter contest, known as the Pennamite War.

The war of the Revolution came on, and Luke Swetland at the age of forty-six joined the patriot army by enlisting in Captain Robert Durkee's company. They were mustered into service in September, 1776, and were sent into the State of New Jersey, where General Washington was in immediate command. He saw the great commander frequently during the winter of 1777. Often after, and during his latter years, he spoke of him with the greatest reverence and respect. The company was in the battle of Millstone and Boundbrook, and was at Valley Forge and Brandywine. Early in 1778 there came rumors of a contemplated raid on Wyoming Valley by a force of Indians and Tories, under the British Commander Col. John Butler. This determined the authorities to release the Wyoming volunteers and allow them to return for the protection of their homes and families.