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The Swope House circa 1836 Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

By George A. Blauvelt, Jr.

During my recent visit to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to finalize arrangements for our 78th Annual Reunion with Jim Curren and Suzanne Piccolo, I had the opportunity to visit with Dorothy Blauvelt Ralson. Dorothy is a Great Niece of Helen Blauvelt, ABD Member #817, who celebrated her 106th birthday on July 13, 2003.

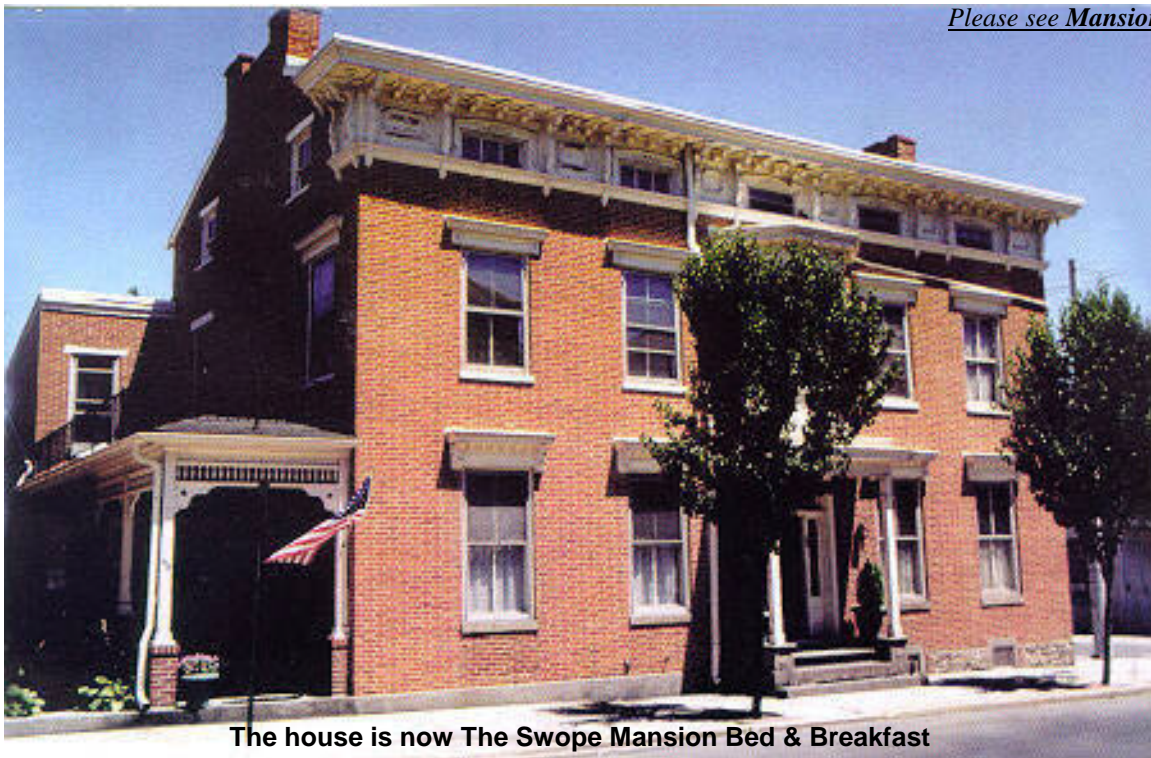
I called Dorothy and asked if I could come by and say hello, as long as I was in Gettysburg. With great enthusiasm, she invited me to her home. Little did I know that I would spend the next hour or so with a "great gal" who was extremely excited to show me the restoration she has been doing at her home, "The Historic Swope House." Purchased by Dorothy and her husband in June 2001, this historical house has been used for many purposes during its 167 year history.

The house is located on the northwest corner of York

and Stratton Streets. It's just a short distance from the Gettysburg Hotel. The Swope House was built and owned by George Swope, one of Gettysburg's wealthiest citizens at the time of the Civil War and the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1863.

The house gained its historical significance as the place where Lt. William H. Pohlman, who might just be the only Civil War soldier born on the island of Borneo, died. Born in 1842, the son of missionary parents, he was sent to America in 1846 and raised by his Aunt Elizabeth Pohlman McClure, who resided at 196 State Street, Albany, New York. Pohlman was greatly influenced by his involvement with the North Dutch Church, now known as the First Church in Albany (Reformed.) Attending Rutgers College, New Brunswick, New Jersey at the outbreak of the Civil War, he left college and enlisted as a private in the 1st New Jersey Volunteer Infantry Regiment, Company G, on May 28, 1861, to

*Please see **Mansion** on Page 10*



The house is now The Swope Mansion Bed & Breakfast

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serve three years. Pohlman participated in the Battles of Bull Run, Antietam, Yorktown and Fredericksburg early in the war. Promoted to Lieutenant in January 1863 with the 59th New York Infantry Regiment, Pohlman became the Regimental Adjutant, and participated in the Battle of Chancellorsville.



Lieutenant William H. Pohlman

The 59th New York Infantry Regiment arrived at Gettysburg on the morning of July 2, 1863, the second day of the three day battle. It would be Lt. Pohlman's fourteenth engagement of the war.

During the battle of July 3rd Lt. Pohlman was wounded in the left shoulder by shrapnel, rendering his arm powerless. His men urged him to leave the field, but he said, "Not while I have my sword arm left." An hour later, during the Confederate Infantry

assault known as "Pickett's Charge," a minie ball shattered Pohlman's sword hilt, penetrated his right wrist and passed up his arm. Tying a handkerchief around the arm to keep it from bleeding, he stayed on the field until the attack was repulsed. He then walked under his own power three miles, fainting once along the way, to the 2nd Corps Field hospital.

After being treated for his wounds he was moved into the town of Gettysburg to the home of John Swope. This home for recuperation together with his good constitution were thought to be good for him to carry him through. However, on July 20th, a secondary hemorrhage set in and on Tuesday, July 21, 1863 at 11:30 AM, Lt. Pohlman died of his wounds at the Swope House.

His very last words "Cease Firing" are engraved on a cannon barrel placed at his gravesite in the Albany Rural Cemetery. Today, Lt. Pohlman's name appears on the square bronze tablet on the New York State Monument in the Gettysburg National Cemetery.

Dorothy's tour of her home included the bedroom and area where Lt. William H. Pohlman stayed and died. Much of the original house remains. The exterior is basically unchanged, as well as the pine flooring on all three floors. The Swope House has approximately 8,700 square feet of livable space. Today the nine bedrooms, five full baths and two half baths, library, sitting room, living room, kitchen and carriage house provide plenty of spacious room for the Ralson Family and their guests.

The only area Dorothy didn't wish me to see was the basement. She claimed, "It's haunted... so they say!" Who knows, maybe someone at our Reunion would like to see if this is true? Dorothy has graciously offered to have her home, "The Swope House" open on Saturday afternoon for our Reunion attendees to tour. Thanks Dorothy, for a wonderful visit and some great conversation.

