

The Denison House
Wyoming, Pennsylvania
Luzerne Co.
E. S. Pond

HAES No. Pa-25

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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

Denison House
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Between Forty Fort and Wyoming, on Wyoming Avenue just beyond the Stone Bridge, on a bluff overlooking the little stream which runs along the avenue for a few hundred feet, is the house, now owned and occupied by Mr. R. B. Reilly, which was built in 1790 by Col. Nathan Denison, the great, great grandfather of Mr. Reilly.

Mr. Reilly told me many interesting things about the old house and its owners. He said that the marriage of his ancestor, Col. Denison, to Mrs. Elizabeth Sill of Wilkes-Barre was the first wedding among white people in this valley. Mrs. Betsy Sill, as she was called, lived in a cabin made of logs or slabs of wood which stood at the place which is now occupied by the house of Mr. F. M. Kirby, on the corner of South River and South Streets in Wilkes-Barre.

The Denison House was built before there were any saw mills in Wyoming Valley, according to Mr. Reilly, and so the planed boards for the siding and the metal leaders for the house were brought over the mountains on bridle paths from Easton. At the top of the old leader under the eaves, is painted in blue figures the date of its erection - 1790.

The house has two stories and a high attic, and contains sixteen (16) rooms. There are numerous back buildings and a wood shed connected with the main building by a broad, low archway. There have been some alterations; some of the old windows, on the south side of the house, have been cut down with French windows opening on a porch--the two bathrooms are modern, and the huge fireplaces have been bricked up and a furnace installed. But Mr. Reilly says he still uses wireless electricity, which some people call kerosene lamps; but all the old rooms of the original house are still unchanged.

The room on the right of the front door is panelled in hand hewn wood from floor to ceiling on two sides, and for about three feet from the floor to ceiling on two opposite sides, except for a place in the front corner between the windows, which was left unpanelled on purpose, to accomodate a corner cupboard, which has now disappeared, but which Mr. Reilly says he remembers very well.

The chimney goes up through the middle of the house, one huge stone chimney about twelve (12) feet square, with three flues. The mantels in the rooms to right and left of the entrance are left in place, and are of single colonial style. The openings are closed.

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The staircase winds up in an interesting way from a so-called "inner porch," just inside the front door.

The original kitchen at the back of the house, opposite the front door is now used as a dining room and its huge fire place is bricked up and papered over, but there it still is--so large that it accomodates logs ten feet long. Bricked up in it is still the iron crane with its pot hooks. Mr. Reilly says this is the first swinging crane installed in a fire place in America, and it was regarded as such an improvement over the old method.

The floor of the old kitchen was of oak, and the door which led from it into the back yard was much wider than an ordinary door. That was so that a horse could come in the door and drag the heavy logs across the floor to the fire-place.

In the room facing south is a fireplace, having a simple hand made wooden mantel of Colonial design. There are four windows in this room, two in the front - two at the side. The original windows have twenty-four (24) panes of glass. It is in this room that the side windows have been altered, being cut down to the floor and opening in the French fashion.

The front door is panelled and encased in a square frame work, with a transom and side lights of glass. The view through the old orchard at the side, and over the brook and meadows in front is still charming.

Author. . . Francis S. Doyance

Approved,

District Officer Thomas H. Atterton

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