

The Alexander McLean House  
156 Carey Avenue  
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

H.A.B.S. No. Pa. 242

HABS  
PA  
40 WILKS  
4-

*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Pennsylvania

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

PASS  
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40 WILKES  
4.THE ALEXANDER McLEAN HOUSE  
156 CAREY AVENUE  
WILKES-BARRE, PA.

Alexander McLean, born in the year 1800, in the County of Derry, Ireland, emigrated to this country in 1819, and settled in Carbon County, Pennsylvania. He was one of the pioneer coal operators of the country, operating at Summit Hill, Pennsylvania, until 1848, when he moved to Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County.

After moving to this county, he was engaged extensively in coal operations, not as an operator, but as a large stockholder. He was largely interested in the Wyoming Coal Company, incorporated in 1838.

He had one son, William Swan McLean, who was born at Summit Hill, May 27, 1842. He attended Lafayette College from which he graduated in 1865, and in 1862, while attending college he enlisted in the military service as a member of Captain Thomas H. Lynn's Company of the 5th Pennsylvania Militia, but remained in the service only a short time, when he was discharged. In 1871 he married Annie S., daughter of George H. Roberts of Philadelphia. They had four children: George R., Margaret S., William S., Jr. and Percy Craige.

William Swan McLean, Jr the next to the last of the above named, was born in Wilkes-Barre, December 17, 1877, and resided in the same locality at the time of his death on November 17, 1938. He was eminent as a soldier, jurist and politician. Twice he was elected to the Luzerne County Court, in 1921 and in 1931. He became President Judge in 1930, on the death of Judge Henry A. Fuller. In January, 1921 he married Frances Leigh Ricketts, and they had one child, Elizabeth Swan McLean.

Judge McLean's career as a soldier, included duty in the Mexican Border Campaign and the World War, fighting in at least five major battles. King Albert of Belgium awarded him the Croix de Guerre for valor in the battle of Ypres-Lys. He was a trustee of Lafayette College, Bucknell University, Wyoming Seminary and Wilkes-Barre Institute, and served on several State commissions.

Judge McLean was buried in Denison Cemetery, Forty Fort, Pennsylvania. Taking part in the funeral were six hundred (600) men of the 109th Pennsylvania Field Artillery Regiment of Wilkes-Barre, which he commanded from 1919 to 1927, and a battalion of the 109th Infantry from Scranton.

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The Alexander McLean house is an extremely unusual type of Georgian Architecture, and like the finest examples of homes in the Wyoming Valley, had, when it was built, an unobstructed view of sloping meadow land with groups of trees, the broad Susquehanna River and the distant blue hills.

When it was built, in 1841, there were only three houses to be seen in that part of what is now Wilkes-Barre; the McLean, Firwood, and Loveland homes. It has a beautiful and well proportioned facade, two full stories high, with three dormer windows above - flat against the house and running from the ground to roof are six fluted pilasters with finely carved Ionic Capitols, and these six pilasters divide the front of the house into five panels with low arches. Across the center is a wide porch with fluted columns, with Doric Capitols, which was added later, about 1868, and which is not quite such fine workmanship as the original house.

The house has outside shutters of dark green, and nice panelling about the inside of each window. Unfortunately for the antiquarians point of view, every one of the old mantels have been removed and replaced with the modern ones. The second floor originally contained four large rooms, with an open fireplace in each; halls running straight through the house in both directions, crossing in the center; large closets at the ends of the cross hall, and closets in each room - all fireplaces were elaborately designed, one in particular, having a Sheraton Urn in the center, and festoons of flowers carved on the sides. The others were in good simple rectangular Georgian Design.

One of the most interesting features of the house as it was originally built, were the door knobs all over the house, and the shape of the shelves in the guest room closet. The door knobs were of brass, small, smooth, and round. There were none in the guest room, they having been stolen when the house had been left vacant.

The closet shelves were described by a former owner of the house, as being finer than any he had ever seen. Instead of being straight boards, they were cut like the shelves of other old cupboards, in what is known as the Butterfly pattern.

The original staircase mounted to the attic with no change in style. The handrail and spindles were of hard dark wood. There was also a good attic, with four rooms; each room having innumerable cupboards and closets built in under the slope of the roof.

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However, the house has been considerably remodeled in the interior, with hard wood floors and electricity installed throughout. In 1928 the house was moved from its location on Carey Avenue; additions made to the house, converting it into a double dwelling facing on Alexander Street, which is the rear of the original lot on which the house stood.

Alexander Street, also Elizabeth Street, one block from the house, were named after Alexander McLean and his wife Elizabeth.

Historical information obtained from the following sources:

"The Philadelphia Inquirer", edition dated November 18, 1938.

"Kulp's History of Wyoming Valley".

Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, Penna.

Mrs. M. S. Hachita, present tenant of one side of the double dwelling, 17 Alexander Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Author *Clifford H. Jacoby*.....

Approved *Thomas H. Atkinson*.....

Date *April 3rd. 1940*.....

*(JHW)*