

[1873]

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Wheatland

The residence of the late Hon. James Buchanan, fifteenth President of the United States, Wheatland is situated one mile from the city of Lancaster, Penn^a in the lovely county of that name. Its appearance suggests a history, and it is interesting not only because it has sheltered some of the most prominent men of this and of other countries, and was owned by one of the finest of patriots, but because of its being now the summer home of Mrs. Henry E. Johnston, formerly Miss Lane, to whom her Uncle most appropriately bequeathed it.

Wheatland was built about 1823 half a century ago and was purchased by its late distinguished occupant from the Hon. Wm. M. Meredith of Penn^{ia} formerly Secretary of Treasury of the United States. An incident connected with this transaction reflects equal credit honor upon both these distinguished gentlemen. President Buchanan had agreed to buy the place, and wished very much to possess it, and it was an understood matter between them although there had been no actual sale, and either party might with propriety have withdrawn. Mr. Meredith's family however were much attached to Wheatland, and when the time for parting from it drew near, he was sore distressed, and expressed his regret to a friend who informed Mr. Buchanan of it. The latter at once offered to release Mr. Meredith, but he insisted that the sale should proceed. The correspondence between these gentlemen on the subject, which is annexed to this sketch, does equal credit to them both. Wheatland is remarkable for its beautiful and extended views, and is approached from the city of Lancaster by a smooth broad road with lovely landscapes on either side. The house itself – large and double, two stories and a half high, with wings at each side, is built of brick now dim with the suns and storms of many summer & winters – is situated midway up a gentle slope, with a beautiful grove of native forest trees in the background, and a lovely rolling lawn in front. On the porch still rests the rustic chair where, in the quiet summer evenings, Mr. Buchanan watched the superb sunsets over the blue hills, and the peaceful farms, which blending together form such a smiling, happy landscape. Before the house yet stand the majestic trees that waved over him, and near the entrance of the grounds still sparkles the spring he loved so well. For this lovely stream he had a special attachment, and during his last illness, in the sweet spring days, to one he cared for and who often brought him water fresh from its cool depths, he would say that, if ever spirits were allowed to revisit this earth, he would return to those waters, in the evenings, just as the little birds were going to their rest, and everything was peaceful, calm and still. It is not surprising then, that some at least of those to whom he was most dear should wander there at twilight, and indulge in fond fancies of his majestic form & noble presence.

The house is well adapted either for entertainment or domestic comfort, its rooms being large, handsome and well arranged. Indeed, the whole place is dignified and stately in its perfect simplicity, and in all his varied career that grand figure of President Buchanan never had a fitter background. But who of Mr. Buchanan's friends, even while most enjoying the hospitality of Wheatland's present generous host and beautiful and graceful hostess, can forget the many dead who have gone in and out of those doors. Can such ever forget the sometimes saddened face of him who, in his quiet home at



Wheatland beheld his countrymen engaged in the fratricidal war which might never have ensued had his wise counsels been regarded. Many who knew him sought him to listen to his sage advice, witty anecdotes and, in his later years, we have to remember bright fires, joyous voices and pleasant cheer, together with comforted poor and endeared friends and relatives – With all this, and much more, some of the best people in our goodly land associate this historic house, while many a pulse quickens, many a true heart warms up truer at only the mention of Wheatland.

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Lancaster**History**