

[Swift, Fawnia Cole]

A REMARKABLE LIFE

Died in Webster, N.Y., Jan. 8, 1880, at the advanced age of 89 years, Mrs. Fawnia Swift, leaving three children, 20 grand-children, 35 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren. Her father, Southworth Cole, came from Massachusetts to Palmyra in 1798 when she was but 7 years old. Her first husband, Capt. Asa R. Swift, the first white boy born in Palmyra, was [the] son of Gen. John Swift of the Revolutionary Army. He was drowned while acting Sheriff of Ontario county. By this marriage was her son Henry C. Swift, for two terms Sheriff of Ontario county, and two daughters, now Mrs. Van Deren, of Geneva, and Mrs. Michael Elsworth, of Ontario.

Her second husband was prominently known to the whole community as Gen. Philetus Swift, by whom she had one daughter, now Mrs. Electa Russell, of Webster. [He was the brother of her first husband.] And now, after surviving him more than half a century, her remains have been placed by his side in the cemetery at Canandaigua.

In her early life she attracted much attention as a belle of no inconsiderable note. Always moving into higher circles and ever true to her convictions she left a bright example, of which her numerous respectable descendants may well be proud. Her death was tranquil and happy as her life had been beautiful. A life so remarkable for its quiet dignity, its genial love and its social eminence, that her neighbors and friends entirely outside of any family connection thought that her demise was worthy of more than ordinary notice; and hence these facts have been collated in behalf of the community.

S. A.

Union & Advertiser, Rochester NY, Tue. 20 Jan 1880

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from Webster Thru the Years
(several excerpts)

Early in the year 1789, three brothers, John, Philetus and Lewis, sons of Elisha and Mary Ransome Swift, a colonial family of Litchfield Co., Connecticut, wishing to establish homes for themselves crossed into New York State.

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...The third brother, Philetus, went a few miles farther west and south [of Rochester], settling in the town of Phelps, then called "Sullivan." He purchased Lot No. 1 Township No. 11, Range 1, containing 320 acres. Here he built a small house and grist mill on Canandaigua Outlet, which crossed his farm.

Mr. Swift had lived in Wollingsford, Vermont and had buried a bride of six months before migrating to New York. In 1793 he married Sally Deane, daughter of another pioneer. To them was born one child, a son Dean Swift, lieutenant in the War of 1812. He married Ann Whiting and died in 1818.

In 1816 Gen. Philetus Swift built of cut stone one of the finest colonial homes of that day, on his land. It still stands on the north side of the state road just east of Phelps village, a magnificent example of the industry and pride of the man. The famous Swift Mills which he built, are directly back of the house, and were later known as "Barlow Mills."

Philetus Swift was foremost in the organization of the Town of Phelps. He held the office of Supervisor for several terms, and was a member of the Assembly for Allegany, Genesee and Ontario Counties in 1807-08 and again in 1823, also a one time Judge of the County court.

In 1823 his wife, Sally Deane, died. Some time after, Philetus married **Fawnia Cole**. One child was born of this marriage, Electa Jane Swift, who married Alexis Russell of Phelps, and in 1845 moved to Webster on a farm on the Phillips Road, afterwards owned by Anthony Kuhn. Then in 1849 the family moved to the village.

After Gen. Swift's death in 1828, at the age of 65, his widow, **Fawnia Swift**, remained for a time in Phelps. In 1845 she moved to Webster to be near her daughter, purchasing the cobblestone house on West Main Street, which still stands and is now the residence of Fred Hoffman and family. Here she lived until her death, at the age of 88 years, in 1880. She was an active member of the Universalist Church. Her daughter, Mrs. Electa Russell, died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Cora Hawley, in April 1904.

In compliance with Mrs. Russell's wishes, Gen. Swift's remains with those of his wife and son, were removed from the cemetery in Phelps to the Rural Cemetery here in Webster.

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Webster Herald, Webster NY, Thu. 5 Dec 1957