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**Caleb H. Valentine**

(1838–1886)

Caleb H. Valentine was born in Vienna, New Jersey on 22 July 1838. He was the son of Peter Valentine and his wife, Matilda. He was the grandson of Judge Caleb H. Valentine, a prominent Hackettstown citizen.

He was married to Frances (Fanny) Catherine Rusling (1842-1932), the daughter of Robert Rusling and his wife, Mary McCracken. They had five children, Maud, Caleb, Augusta, Morris and Robert.

Caleb's mother Matilda married a third time, to Henry L. Wiggins, a local shoemaker. In his youth, Caleb helped his stepfather in support of the family. He attended the Chester Institute, where he excelled as a student under the tutelage of William Rankin. In 1860, he entered Yale College, but was called back in 1861 before completing the second year of his course due to the death of his grandfather.

His aptitude for public speaking earned him the reputation of being one of the best orators in New Jersey. During the Civil War, Caleb received his commission from the Governor as Colonel of the Third New Jersey Militia, a reserve organization to be called out in case of dire necessity. After the war, he studied law with Jehiel G. Shipman of Belvidere and was admitted to the bar in 1869.

In 1875, "Colonel" Valentine and John C. Welsh purchased the American House hotel in Hackettstown, NJ. David M. Trimmer, a Civil War captain, ran the establishment on their behalf until 1879, when it was sold to Reuel S. McCracken.

For many years, Caleb Valentine was a leader the business and social organizations of Hackettstown and was a well respected member of the community. He died suddenly, on 15 August 1886, while in Toronto, Canada. He and his wife Fanny are buried in the Union Cemetery, Hackettstown.

Read more about the Valentine and Rusling families in J. Harold Nunn's books, *The Story of Hackettstown* and *The People of Hackettstown*, both available at the *Hackettstown Museum*.

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