

Sweetland/Swetland Lore #28

(formerly Swetland Lore)

December 2003

Browsing the Internet

Special points of interest:

- .DistantCousins.com is a useful Internet site, p. 1
- Irwin Messick is distantly related to James Bird, p. 2
- The President Speaks, p. 3
- Robert Sweetland is a mythical creature, p. 4
- Two Obituaries, p. 4

One can spend many hours browsing the Internet for references to Swetlands in all the spellings and for their relatives of any name. Interesting things come to light

Sarah Swetland

Sarah Swetland married James Belbin on 27 January 1722/23 in Ringwood, Hampshire, England. She died in March 1749/50 in Ringwood. James and Sarah had four children, James Belbin, Thomas Belbin, Sarah Belbin, and William Belbin. Trying to trace these names through the LDS Family Search yielded no immediate results. However, a Sarah Belben, age 90, died in 1791. The 1881 Census in England records her place of birth as Ringwood, Hampshire, England. She may have married one of the three sons of James and Sarah. This is a reasonable conjecture but needs to be proven before acceptance,

Robert J. Swetland

Robert is one of the men I would love to have living next door to me. He placed his resume on the Internet seeking a position which challenges his potential and utilizes his experience as an Internet/Extranet project manager, consultant, designer, developer, site manager, marketing manager and technical support specialist. Do you know him?

Robert is a 1987 graduate of Ontario Senior High School, Ontario, Oregon. In both

1985 and 1986 his biography was published in Who's Who Among American High School Students.

He owns and runs NETorious.com as of the date he prepared his resume. Since this information was entered on the Internet, the data may no longer be correct. A disadvantage of the Internet material is that seldom does it have the date the material was prepared or the dates of updates, if any.

DistantCousins.com

The underline for this Internet site says, "Uniting Cousins Worldwide." You then enter the surname you are tracing. Entering Swetland gave a number of possible sites to search.

Swetland Genealogy and Family History

Swetland City Directories and Census

Swetland Death Records

Swetland Genealogical Queries

Swetland Surname in General Data-

bases

Swetland Military Records

Swetland Surname in Passengers

Lists

Swetland Miscellaneous Records

No, I have not entered all of these

sites but those I did gave me new places to search further. DistantCousins.com is useful.

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Future Distribution of S/S Lore

To reduce costs we will distribute S/S Lore via the Internet. Mark Harrison has agreed to distribute each issue via the Internet only to those who express a wish to receive them on their computer. If you are willing to receive the newsletter only on your computer, please send an e-mail to Mark at Mark@genesistems.com. Also, send me a

copy so I can remove your name from the set of mailing labels made for future issues. Each copy distributed via the Internet saves us \$0.57. While the treasury is strong today, sending future issues to your computers saves our funds for other purposes such as our scholarship. Our new officers may find it wise to save these funds for future needs.

James Bird, also known as James the Martyr

James Bird, posthumously known as James the Martyr, fell victim to a politically motivated death sentence. Bird was born on December 20, 1785. He was an honorable warrior, one who would seemingly do whatever was required to prevail in battle.

Oliver Hazard Perry, a naval captain, left Newport, RI under urgent orders from the government to take command of the building fleet on Lake Erie. Upon arrival Perry realized that the men were in a precarious situation, exposed to the attack of the British fleet as soon as the ice melted on the lake. An immediate demand was made upon the Governor of Pennsylvania for protection. A requisition of the Governor of the Commonwealth arrived at Kingston, ordering Captain Thomas and his company to immediately proceed to Erie and defend the shipping.

Some delay was occasioned by the failure of a man named Moyer to appear and finally, to summon him, Captain Thomas went to the nearby home of the absent soldier. Within the squalid cabin was an indescribably pathetic scene. Moyer's wife and children were clinging to him and sobbing bitterly. The family was large, desperately poor, and the father's labor was essential to their support. They held him fast literally preventing him from going and, when Captain Thomas appeared in the doorway, the wife threw herself on her knees before him and piteously begged that he allow her husband to remain. Even the firmness of the captain was swayed and the curious crowd gathered the open door was visibly affected. Among the onlookers was a young man who exclaimed, "Moyer, give me your coat and I will take your place." Overpowered by such unexpected generosity, Moyer silently removed his coat and handed it to his benefactor, who immediately went aboard the raft as a soldier in another's place. The young man who was soon to display the most sublime courage was the celebrated James Bird commemorated in the song and story of the War of 1812.

The battleships being completed, they were equipped with arms and ammunition. As there were not sufficient gunners and sailors to man them, Perry called for a small number of volunteers from among

the soldiers gathered at Erie. From the Kingston Volunteers four gunners were selected. For this service James Bird and 3 others volunteered and they were assigned to the Niagara.

The Niagara had just taken on men from the Lawrence because of the demolishing it had received from the British cannonade. The Lawrence's executive officer, Commander Perry, safely reached the Niagara by rowboat along with a few wounded men that survived the initial battle.

The Niagara with its new crewmembers bore down on the English line. James Bird trained the first gun on its target. He swept the deck with a spray of gunfire cutting down The Detroit's main mast.

Then came the return fire. A cannonball brushed Bird's shoulder and laid him on the deck. Bird was sent below and the surgeons went to work. They had hardly cleaned the blood away when he ran to top deck. An officer sent him back down below. The doctors bandaged him up and Bird once again ran to the deck above. Perry let him stay.

Bird joined an onslaught that made The Detroit a disabled wreck. Lossing, an historian, wrote in his history of the War of 1812 that a young man of standing, named James Bird, served with great distinction on the Niagara, and tradition says that he was in the boat in which Perry made his way back to his flagship, the Lawrence, and that he stood on the deck by the commander's side.

The capture of Detroit ended a chapter in the war. The setting for the next scene shifted to the south where a British invasion was beginning. James Bird was longing for romantic adventure. He and some other wild spirits gathered and headed for New Orleans, leaving their commands without permission. General Jackson was gathering an army in this vicinity. Bird and his cohorts were seized as deserters and brought back to Erie.

A court martial composed of politicians masquerading as militia was organized and tried the group. The hearing was clearly partial and the punishment far exceeded the transgression. It has been said that the American officers were largely incompetent men with political agendas.

They were often put in command because of their local influence, not because of merit. These officers had trouble maintaining discipline and, resenting criticism, would deal cruelly with transgressors to bolster their authority.

Bird was sentenced to die. The commanding officer, another politician, sanctioned the sentence. Bird begged to allow word be sent to Perry to speak on his behalf. The motion was denied. Something of folklore has it that Perry received news of the coming execution and sent a reprieve, but it was too late. Before the messenger could reach Erie, a firing squad shot James Bird as he knelt before his open grave. News of the event evoked horror and a poem, set to music, was widely circulated and sung.

NOTE:

Irwin Messick prepared this story for presentation at the reunion last July. Time the did not permit Irwin to relate his story of James Bird at that time but I promised to put it in an early newsletter.

Irwin's interest in James Bird is because James and Irwin are distantly related. Irwin is a descendant of Luke Swetland through Belding Swetland, Eli Swetland, Eleanore Swetland, Eli Swetland Parrish, and Martha Mae Parrish, Irwin's mother. Eli Swetland married Margaret Bird, the sister of James Bird in this story.

Irwin has a number of Revolutionary War ancestors which include, in addition to Luke, Ebenezer Gay, John Bird, James Bird's father, Nathan Parrish, Abraham LaBar and Elihu Williams.

SFA Treasury Report

Priscilla Swetland reports that our treasury now has on hand \$1,700.95 with no outstanding bills.

Your generosity is wonderful and leaves me in awe. Much of your kindness is due to the newsletter, the tie that binds us together. While grateful for your support, I am conscious of the need for support in another way. Stories from all of you will make life easier. I may be able to write newsletters forever by extracting family data on the Internet but that means only one man writing for all of you.

Please send me your stories!

Dear SFA Member

This is a letter from your new President, Roger Swetland. Some of you I have met at the family reunions over the years, but many I have not met personally. The last reunion was a Great Success, mainly due to the fact that we have gathered interest among younger family members. They bring skills that can help with our genealogy research, computer and internet skills.

Doug Sweetland did a wonderful job updating the family genealogy book and also offering a CD version. Many thanks go to Doug and, of course, his wife. Many more family names have been added. As Doug mentioned, it is difficult to proofread a document that large and there are errors. One way to get corrections is to send them to Doug. Another way is to send them to Mark to put in the newsletter. By doing this those who have the book or CD can use the information to update their book or CD.

One other item that would be better is the reporting of Births, Deaths and Marriages, etc., through the newsletter. As I am the historian also, I find for the past several years that input at reunions is incomplete. Most of the time I end up with month and year but not the day. Most people coming to the reunion don't

expect to be asked for the information and rely on memory. If it isn't recent, it may not be complete or accurate. Follow-up never happens and information remains incomplete. I'm not complaining but sending it to Mark for the newsletter seems to be a better way.

Although we hold a reunion every two years, it is never too soon to start planning for the next one. The most critical part is having a good reunion planning committee. Having a good location and good program are also important. Early planning is needed to be able to get facilities (enough rooms as well as banquet and meeting room) that are adequate, when weddings and other events plan and reserve a year or two in advance.

Recently, the oldest person in the United States passed away at the age of 114. This puts Gladys in the spot of being very close to or the oldest person in the United States. She is the reason that SFA began. It is a significant experience to know and meet Gladys, one that I have treasured since first meeting her at the second reunion in Wilkes-Barre. Going through Doug's book, one realizes that longevity occurs in many branches.

As to the name, my son Jamie,

your Vice-President, came across a genealogy item on the internet that a family dispute many generations back caused the family branch members to change the spelling of their last names. This story has passed down through the years and its accuracy must be questioned.

Now for a little about myself for those who have not met or heard of me. I am a descendant of Luke Swetland. I grew up on a dairy farm in Lawton, PA. I attended Williamsport Area Community College and was recruited by General Electric. I worked there from 1966 thru 1970 except for my time in the Army from Aug. 1967 to Sept. 1969. I spent 10 months 27 days in Vietnam. In Sept. 1970 I went to work at Charmin which became Proctor and Gamble and quit in January 2000 taking early retirement. I've been in an electrical, electronic and control career since Williamsport. I designed and built our home and am a collector of John Deere tractors. I now have sixteen. My wife Priscilla is the SFA Treasurer and we have three sons, two married, and three grandchildren, two granddaughters and a grandson. The youngest granddaughter was born on Oct. 17, 2003.

Sincerely yours,
Roger Swetland

My Swetland Ancestors

This is the title which I gave a book in planning. I write this as Mark W. Swetland and the opinions are my own.

Using information from the Sweetlands, especially, the work of Leon Hiram Sweetland, I projected that the William Swetland of Salem, MA in my line was a son of John Sweetland and grandson of Isaac Sweetland.

From that premise I wrote a brief story of each of my ancestors and sent this off to our children, asking for comments. Our son Paul did a remarkable job of reviewing and proofreading the story I sent. He looked at the style of writing, the way it was written and the clarity of the story. With this help I revised the story and sent it out again.

Meanwhile, other Swetland researchers in contact with Doug Sweetland have suggested that William and Agnes may have been married in England and that they had one or two daughters born there. This started me looking critically at the data I have and at what it does not have.

Firstly, nowhere did I find a name for William's wife except in the Perley three-volume history of Salem, MA. This gives the name as Agnes. It also said she married second Simon Lovitt. This Agnes and Simon had many children, so many that Agnes would have been some 60 years old when their last child came along.

My story on William which ex-

ists today has documentation for much on William in Salem but not for Agnes's name or when William and his wife came to Salem. Actually, Salem records report only four children of William without mentioning his wife's name. These four are Grace, Peter, John and Joseph with their birth dates. We know that he had a daughter Sarah and a son Benjamin which fortunately Connecticut cases record descendants of John and Joseph as directly related to Benjamin.

I now need to rewrite the story to begin with William as our first ancestor in New England and proceed down from him to the youngest of our children. Some day I may yet know where William lived before he came to Salem..

13 Raymond Road
Okatie, SC 29909-4526

Phone: 1-843-705-5661
Fax: 1-843-705-5662
email: mwswetland@compuserve.com



Organization

President – Roger Swetland, R.R. #4, Box 121A, Montrose, PA 18801-9437
Vice President—Jamie Swetland, R.R. #1, Box 2575, Gillett, PA 16525-0627
Secretary—Michelle Grandusky, 98 Whittingham Place, West Orange, NJ 07052
Treasurer—Priscilla Swetland, R.R. #4, Box 121A, Montrose, PA 18801-9437
Historian—Roger Swetland (see above)

Charles Murray Swetland (Sweatland)

William (Bill) Cosway of Ontario, Canada reached me by e-mail saying he is searching for Charles Murray Swetland. Bill's information follows:

Charles Murray Swetland (Sweatland) was born about 1812 in the USA and died about 1843. About 1830 Charles married Mary Johnson, possibly in Toronto, Ontario, Canada but this is unproven. Charles and Mary had three girls that Bill knows of. Bill also wants to find to locate the immediate family while they lived in the 1830s and 1840s in the USA.

Harriet, b. 1836, Grand Island, NY, USA

Jane Ann, b. 20 Jan 1840, Grand Island, NY, USA

Elizabeth, b. 12 Dec. 1843, Ontario, Canada

The three girls all married in Canada. Since Elizabeth was born in Canada and her mother remarried Benjamin Rumbull in Ontario, Bill believes that that Charles died prior to the birth of Elizabeth.

Bill's search was aimed at Grand Island but this September he found in the 1840 NY census records a Charles Swetland in Wheatfield, Niagara County, NY as head of the household with ages of other members that seem to fit those he has. His Ontario records show Grand Island as birth place not Wheatfield. Bill hopes someone can complete this puzzle. You can reach Bill by e-mail at jean-bill@sympatico.ca or by mail at 11789 Third Line Road, RR. 4, Acton, Ontario L7J 2M1, Canada. Remember first class postage to Canada is \$0.60 for the first ounce.

Apologies

For a short time while preparing S/S Lore #27, I was using a painkiller to ease the pain from the hip fracture. I still have half of the prescription but it must have been more potent than I realized.

In S/S Lore #27 I gave credits for help on the 2003 Reunion, naming among others a Robert Sweetland. Later I realized that Robert Sweetland is a mythical creature, one that I invented. The man who helped with the 2003 Reunion was Arthur Sweetland of New Kensington, PA.

Arthur, please accept sincere apologies for not giving you the credit you deserve. You did a marvelous job of researching the Troy, Ohio area, locating places for us to stay and what to do in the Troy area. Future reunion chairmen may benefit from your work and we will find Troy as delightful as you projected it would be. Again, please accept sincere apologies for not giving you the credit you deserve.

Obituaries

With much sadness S/S Lore #28 reports two deaths. We extend sincere sympathy to the survivors.

On October 3, 2003 Wayne Myers of Vestal, NY passed away after a long illness in Ideal Senior Living Center in Endicott, NY Wayne was the son of LeeRoy and Julia Myers, both deceased. He is survived by his beloved wife, June K. Myers.

Wayne joined us just before the reunion at Chatauqua, NY. He was most delighted to learn about his Swetland ancestors and thoroughly enjoyed the reunion. He kept in touch until illness prevented him from continuing to write.

He wrote to several of us from time to time and all of us feel deep sadness at his passing. How sad it is that he could not enjoy knowing more about his Swetland ancestors. Let this be a reminder to all that life is shorter that we expect.

On September 1, 2003 we lost another whom we met only once in 1987. This is Linda R. Swetland, daughter of Albert and Margaret Swetland, deceased. Linda is survived by her sisters Virginia and Sandra and many cousins.

Sandy's letter reminded me of the first reunion in Wilkes-Barre, PA. Looking through the photo albums of the reunions I found a picture of the three sisters. The photo of Linda taken at Christmas, 2000, shows that she looks much like she did in 1987. Linda lived two years after her first surgery for melanoma and was out and about until her last two weeks.

Sandy also told us that they had lost their mother, Margaret, on January 3, 2003. She said that Linda was very much a part of her mother's care even while undergoing chemo therapy for cancer. Linda worked full time until June when she began to fail.