# Sweetland/Swetland Lore #58        Summer 2011

## President's Message
### By Jamie Swetland

   Wow! What a spring we have had of wild weather, from earthquakes and tsunamis to torrential rains and tornados. It is a definite sign that things are always changing and life can change at a moment's notice. With summer approaching, many individuals and families make their way to the highways and byways for family vacations. However, with the recent impacts to the US and world economy, this too will change. Shorter trips and trips to visit with family rather than amusement parks or distant locations may be more the norm this year.

   As you plan your trips this year, short or long, don't forget your family's ancestors. You may find that on these trips a small side trip or stop by a cemetery may be a good diversion and can open up doors into one's own family history. An afternoon cavorting about headstones and puzzling together the names, dates, symbols and children of various ancestors can be quite satisfying for solving some family mysteries and history. Our oldest son, Samuel, is not keen on cemeteries at first as he finds them to be spooky. However, once he becomes more comfortable, he joins in with our other children in looking at the headstones for names and dates along with us.

   In the pages that follow you will find some great information on unraveling mysteries in cemeteries and headstones. Even though things change all around us, such as the economy, weather, and careers, our history remains the same and often enlightens us more as we make new discoveries. So make a change this year and take the time to stop by and visit some family.

## The Sweetlands of Crown Hill
### By Walt Tynan



**Crown Hill Cemetery Gate and Waiting Station**

   About three miles from the center of Indianapolis, Indiana, lie the sprawling 550 acres of Crown Hill Cemetery, one of the nation's largest private cemeteries.  It is named for its highest point, the Crown, where the poet James Whitcomb Riley rests and from which one can gaze out for miles over the city (it marks the highest point in the county).  A busy thoroughfare, 38th Street, bisects Crown Hill into the old and new sections, with the old section lying to the south of 38th, and the new section to the north.  The two sections are connected via a wide underpass.

The new section has modest, almost uniformly rectangular headstones of no particular distinction, but the old section is a veritable granite and marble forest of Victo-

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> "How many times have I walked up to a grave and felt somehow there was love there for me?"
> —Cathy Cranford-Ailstock

rian graveyard iconography: towering obelisks, draped urns, mournful angels. A U.S. president is buried here, as are three vice-presidents, and nearly all of the one-time movers and shakers of the city (but the most frequently visited grave is that of John Dillinger).

There are four Sweetlands lying in repose here as well. Though at least two are related, none is buried next to another. The earliest burial of a Sweetland was for a Charles Sweetland in September, 1901. When I went to find his gravesite, I was immediately struck by the fact that all the markers in the section where Charles is buried are for infants or young children. The inscriptions tug at one's heartstrings: "Infant Kornbroke/Nov 27, 1899/Jan 7, 1900," "Infant Metzger/Dec 13, 1901," and the most poignant, "Carl Lynn/World's Youngest Bicyclist/1899-1902." For a cemetery, it's a particularly sad area not helped by the fact that some tombstones are of marble, a softer stone, and time and the elements have gone far in obliterating names and dates carved over a century ago. I never discovered a marker for Charles Sweetland.

The next burial of a Sweetland was early in 1910. Listed in Crown Hill's records is one "Sweetland, Henry aka Lee McClain". I had never encountered a name and an alias listed among the buried at Crown Hill, so I found this strange. What further complicated the picture was the discovery of Henry's tombstone. Henry is buried in a military section with each identical marker neatly numbered in chronological order. I quickly located Henry's marker, but I was surprised to see the name "Henry McClain" on it. Had somebody gotten something wrong?

Under this name (in a section devoted exclusively to Civil War veterans) are the initials U.S.C.T., which I came to find out stood for United States Colored Troops. So Henry was African-American and fought in the Civil War. Perhaps he had been a slave who took his master's last name. I searched out his obituary in the newspaper expecting to find a small quip of a death notice, as obituaries of the time were generally little more than a terse line or two. But Henry's featured rather prominently with a photo of him -- a stern, proud man -- under the caption "Colored Man Once in Council, Dies." An outline of his life is given: born in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1844, he had lived in Indianapolis for the previous 36 years, "...fully half of this time he spent as a transfer man, and was well known." For a time he was active in city politics and served for two years as city councilman. The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis (published in 1994) lists Henry as among the very first African-Americans elected to the City Council (he served from 1890 to 1892). He died January 14, 1910, after an "operation for blood poisoning" and he left a widow, Ellen, and a grandson, Henry Brooks.

In the years following Henry's death, Ellen Sweetland is listed in city directories as the widow of Henry or as the widow of Lee, the mystery of his alias continuing. When she died in 1923, Ellen was interred in a far-flung section of Crown Hill, in an area that looks at first glance like a barren field. Anchored at one end by a huge, gnarled sycamore tree, one has to walk the section to see that a flat marker interrupts the grassy lawn only sporadically. One of the very few markers here is to the city's first fallen African-American police officer (he died in the line of duty in 1918 but the marker seems to have been placed there several years posthumously), leading one to think that this section was once reserved for African-Americans, in the days when even cemeteries were segregated.

The fourth and final Sweetland to be buried in Crown Hill is Catherine A. Sweetland, who died in the summer of 1936. Her short obituary lists her as the beloved sister of Oliver and Walter Hess and she is buried in the Hess family plot, along with her parents and Oliver. In the late 1890s, her name starts to appear in the city directories as the widow of Dana, sometimes as the widow of Danny. And in one telling year, she is listed as the widow of Colville D. A distinctive name, Colville Dana Sweetland can be traced to Illinois, where he was born around the same year as Catherine (1855). He must have died some time in the 1890s, when Catherine moved in with her brother Oliver, who is listed as a wheelmaker, fireman, and painter in various directories and died three years after his sister.

There were other Sweetlands in Indianapolis during the first third of the last century, including another

Charles who worked for the newspaper and another Henry who was a baker in the 20s and 30s. However, these Sweetlands apparently ended up outside the gently rolling, hallowed grounds of Crown Hill.

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**Walt Tynan** *was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, and received his master's degree in linguistics from Indiana University. After teaching English and linguistics in Japan and China throughout the 1980s, he returned to the U.S. and taught at an American university. He became interested in genealogy when he inherited a painting from his grandparents that was signed "Sweetland." Since then, he has set out to discover more about the artist.*

## Symbols on Graves



**Alpha and Omega**
The juxtaposed symbols often represent God's eternity, or the "beginning" and "end."



**Anchor**
May indicate a seaman or be regarded as symbol of safety.



**Broken Column**
Indicates a life cut short, someone who died young.

For more grave symbols, please visit:
http://genealogy.about.com/od/cemetery_records/ig/tombstone_symbols/index.01.htm

## Making Those Cemetery Visits Productive

### Anne Kirby

Your ancestor's tombstone provides physical evidence of the life they lived. Standing at their burial site can be an inspiring experience and may provide clues about the person's life. While not considered a primary information source, gravestones do provide dates, birthplaces, maiden names, spouses' names and parents' names. They can also provide evidence of military service, membership in a fraternal organization and religious affiliations. That is, if you can find the headstone.

My cousin and I had a rather frustrating experience recently as we attempted to find our ancestors' headstones in several Oakland, California cemeteries. Some cemeteries have offices with sexton's records. We discovered that these particular cemetery offices had no alphabetical or computerized lists of who's buried there. Rather, they relied on very large burial register books with handwritten information organized by the date of burial. Another set of books contained plat maps and plot records.

It was no easy task for the staff to pull out these huge books, and we wished we had come better prepared. After finally finding the gravesite in the book, it was hard to find the actual marker or tombstone because we were given a large section of cemetery to look in, but not the exact location. The section contained hundreds of gravesites and we trudged up and down the hills for several hours before finding the headstones. The search was well worth the effort, but if I'd done my homework ahead of time, it would have been much easier. Next time I will adopt the tips I've learned from experience and from the website genealogy.about.com.

**Tips for cemetery visits**

- Before visiting a private cemetery, be sure to get permission from the land owner. Never go unaccompanied to a remote area.

- As you write to and interview family members, be sure to ask them about locations where your ancestors are buried. Get names, location and even directions to the specific tombstones, if possible. This would save hours in a large cemetery.

- If your ancestor's remains were moved from one cemetery to another, try to find out the date of the move. That new burial date will be the date to look under for finding the grave.

- Most genealogy computer programs have a place for each individual's burial information. When you do find a grave, enter the complete information in your program so anyone could find that grave. I took digital photos of the headstones with landmarks visible in the picture so I could find them again.

- Write down names, dates and inscriptions exactly as they appear on the stone. Remember to check the back of the stone for more information.

- Notice who else is buried nearby. Family members will often be buried together in the same plot. A small, unmarked stone may indicate children who died in infancy. Checking the plat map at the office, I found a relative buried in family plot whose name did not appear on the family headstone.

- Genealogy.about.com suggests taking along a recorder or video camera. You can read off names, dates and inscriptions easily and make note of important information, such as when you start a new row.

- Before taking a picture of a tombstone, use hand-held clippers to clear brush away from the stone and then use a nylon bristle brush and plain water to clean the stone from bottom to top, rinsing well as you go. A bright sunny day and a mirror to help reflect the sunlight on the stone can help bring out the carvings.



- Remember that information on a headstone may provide clues, but be incorrect. For example, more recent Irish research gives Nellie's birth name as Ellen and birth year as1880, while headstone at right shows her nickname, Nellie, and birth of 1883. Ellen (Nellie) did tell her family she was born in 1883.

## SWETLAND FAMILY ASSOC. TREASURER REPORT , MAY 01, 2011

**BALANCE AS OF MAY 01, 2010**
$1673.10

**BALANCE AS OF MAY 01, 2011**
$1866.69

**DONATIONS:**
$180.00 Scholarship Fund
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$5.00 Reunion Fund

$950.00Scholarship Fund
$718.69 Lore Fund
$198.00 Reunion Fund

**EXPENSES:**
$146.41 Lore Issues  54, 55, 56, 57

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### Donation Form (Please make checks out to Swetland Family Association)

My name is _____

Enclosed is my donation for the newsletter fund $_____ ,
the general (reunion) fund $_____   and the scholarship fund $_____ .

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