



Sweetland/Swetland Lore #73 Spring 2015

SWEETLAND/SWETLAND FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Learning, Opportunities, and Sharing Knowledge

By Jane Sweetland, daughter of Eugene David Sweetland and Nancy Seeliger
Granddaughter of Ernest John Sweetland and Nell Reilly



My grandfather, Ernest John, was an inventor and my dad, Eugene David, was a mechanical engineer. I'm third of ten siblings, so there was always lots of action in our house, but even as a child, I remember that learning was important to Dad. I remember him being disappointed that none of us seemed to like the way science was taught in schools.

So that we might grow up curious about the universe, Dad took some of our science education into his own hands and his are the lessons that have stayed with me for life. One lesson took place when I was about eight and a solar eclipse was going to be visible in western North America. Dad brought us all to the dark garage and he stood on a chair and held up a light – becoming the “sun” in the middle of all of us orbiting planets. Then when my brother Dave, the moon, got between my Dad, the sun, and my Earth-sister Mary—we had an eclipse! We then made “goggles” out of cardboard with tiny pinpricks and he bundled us all in the station wagon to head to Mount Tamalpais, about 20 minutes north of San Francisco, where we would watch through our pinprick goggles as the earth grew

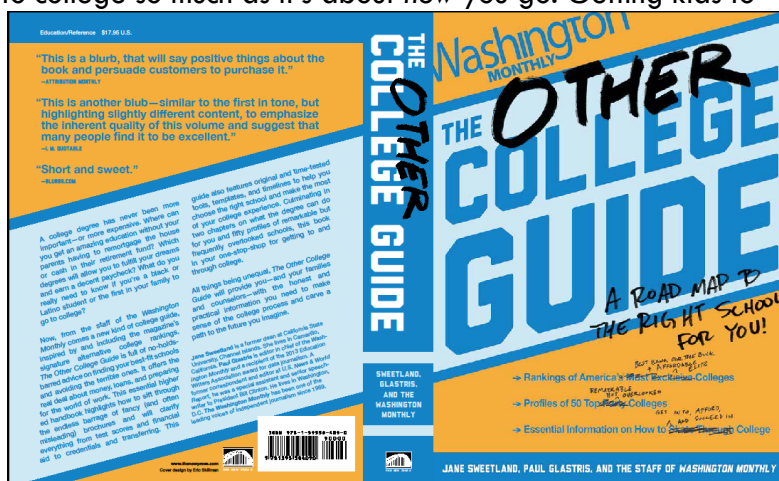
dark – just like it had in our garage.

I grew up on stories and the joy of learning and so it is not surprising, I suppose, that I became a teacher, a counselor, a dean, and an associate vice president. After a decade in the K-12 system and another at California State University Channel Islands overseeing admissions, records, and financial aid, I started writing to help students navigate the college-going process.

The New Press will nationally distribute the result of that work, *The Other College Guide*, in March. I don't make anything from the sales of the book, but I am much rewarded by helping and encouraging students to ask questions about goals and finances; about distance from home and the academic environment. The truth is, going to the *right* college for a particular student has little to do with prestige rankings. As a survey of recent employers said: It's not about *where* you go to college so much as it's about *how* you go. Getting kids to get the most out of their education may begin with a lesson like the one I learned in our garage.

The Other College Guide will be available through all booksellers beginning March 3, 2015.

Jane wants you to know that she does not gain financially from book sales, but she is often compensated by hearing from students and their families. If you have questions about college, she would be delighted to hear from you. She can be reached through her website: www.SweetlandEdu.com



Revolutionary War Soldier Survives War, But Not Illness

Another Revolutionary War soldier recently surfaced as a relative during research on Mary Jane Sweetland, daughter of Benjamin Oliver Sweetland and Mary Jane Putnam, all of Marblehead, Massachusetts. Fabius W. Rix married Mary Jane Sweetland in 1847 and his grandfather, James Rix was born in 1743 in Marrimack, New Hampshire.



James served as a Revolutionary War soldier in a company of minutemen and was in the battle of Bunker Hill. His name appears on the Lexington alarm roll in Col. James Frye's regiment which marched on the alarm, April 19, 1775. James Rix's signature appears on a receipt for coat money or its equivalent for eight month's service in Frye's regiment, dated Cambridge, Dec. 26, 1775. He was a sergeant in Capt. John Blanchard's Company, Col. Wesson's regiment Aug. 15, 1777. A receipt on April 10, 1781 is for bounty paid by Haverhill to serve three years. He was reported as discharged Dec. 4, 1779. He was at Ft. Stanwix when that fort was besieged for 21 days. Then they granted him a furlough and he started for home, only to die on the way from smallpox (*Rix Genealogy* by Guy S. Rix, p. 18).

Letters sent to his wife, Meriam Clement, reveal the character of this relative as well as the challenges he faced. These letters were preserved by Guy S. Rix in his book, where James' original spelling is preserved.

Camp Valley Forge, Feb. 5, 1778

Dear Wife:

With pleasure I embrace this opportunity of writing to let you know that I am in extraordinary good health at present and have been so for two months past, thank God for it. I hope you are well but I have not heard from you since I saw Dudley Dustin at Stillwater, tho I have sent to you several times. I have a great mind to come home, but the time I was promised a furlough, orders came the day before not to give any more until further orders, and being disappointed of our money by the paymaster's fault and the experience of so long a journey, I will content myself to stay till spring. By what is learned and by every thing we see, the wars will not be continued very much longer here in America at present. I am badly out of clothes, but we hear there is cloth coming into camp, tho I am better off than greater part of the men of our state. I have sent here an Indian Broach to each of my sons and a ribbon to my eldest daughter Anna. I have nothing else to send but my love and that I have for all.

I remain your loving husband,
James Rix

**Directed to Miriam Rix
In Haverhill, West Parish
With care deliver.**

Camp 10 miles from Kings Bridge July 14, 1781

Dear Wife:

I am writing to you but I know of no way of sending it. I am not with Capt. Emerson, but am as well situated in Col. Jackson's regiment, Capt. Wales's company. I was promoted sergeant in five days after coming to West Point, then the commissary sent for me to his assistance and went and staid with him one month, then my Capt. sent for me to join the company to do orderly duty. He would take no denial so I do that duty tho it does not suit me.

Brother Nathaniel is left at West Point tending ferry. I have not seem him for thirty days, but I heard from him yesterday by William Marriman. He waited upon an officer until we marched here. He is well suited much better than I am. As to my health, I am very well, but hoping this campaign will end the controversy, I strive to be contented.

(continued on p. 3)

**"I strive to
be**

I hope you are well. Give my best wishes and compliments to Capt. Ayre, and to all friends and neighbors. When I have an opportunity I will write more fully.

I remain yours,
James Rix

P.S. When I was writing the within enclosed, I had no expectation of any opportunity of sending it home, but there is an opportunity offered since. Tell Mr. [illegible] to hire me a man that is fit for the service and come and see me and bring the man. Let it be done very soon or the show will be over soon and he disappointed tho not I, for I very belive the conclusion of the Despot will soon be.

I will be home by November next man or no man I will warrant.

James Rix

Sadly, James Rix died of smallpox on his way home. He left behind his wife, Meriam Clement, and six children: Nathaniel, Timothy, James, Lydia, Anna and Peter. The daughter Anna to whom he sent a ribbon was just five years old and his youngest son Peter was three.

Report of 2014 Sweetland Research Project in England

In the Summer issue of Lore in 2014, readers were invited to contribute to further research in an effort to find the ancestors of John Sweetland, born in 1652 or 1653, died in Rhode Island on 9 June 1711 and buried in the Peck Cemetery. In earlier research, Robin Gygi, research consultant for Richard Price, noted that "Contributors to the [findagrave.com] site have indicated that Peck Cemetery is located in Cumberland, Providence, Rhode Island. Gravestones for the three earliest generations of John Sweetlands have been erected there. There is a notation that the death for the earliest John Sweetland (died June 1711) was actually recorded at Attleboro (MA). At the time, this included parts of Cumberland, RI near Arnold's Mills. Thus, it appears John died at Arnold's Mills, Cumberland, RI, his death was recorded at Attleboro, MA, and he is buried in Peck Cemetery, Cumberland, Providence, RI.

In an attempt to find John Sweetland's birth and parents in England, Previous research had located a John Sweetland in southern England christened 27 June 1652 in St. Sidwell, Exeter, Devonshire, son of Zachariah Sweetland. However, concrete evidence was lacking to prove that this was "our" John Sweetland who had come to Massachusetts. The necessary parish records were not available at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, so the original records were searched by a researcher at the Devon Record Office in England. He found that the person we had hoped was our relative John had moved to Cullompton, England as a journeyman weaver, married and had a number of children there. Therefore, this John could not be the same John Sweetland who is our ancestor who married in 1684 in Massachusetts.

This was disappointing news. One problem with finding John Sweetland is that his birth was during a period in England's history when many parish registers were not being kept. It is possible John's christening simply does not exist. The researcher stated, "We need to return to U.S. Records to learn more information about John Sweetland and his family before continuing the "needle in a haystack" approach in England." She recommended several approaches: First, searching U.S. records to obtain more information about John Sweetland's immigration, such as neighbors with whom he may have immigrated. Second, learning more about the children and grandchildren of John Sweetland and Rebecca Clark for indications of recurring family names. And third, searching the Massachusetts lands Records at the Family History Library to help pinpoint his year of immigration. As time goes on, these avenues may be pursued.



One Big Family

Last Christmas I recalled the Christmas of 1995 when I sat at the foot of the long oak dinner table of my Robinson grandparents and gazed at the silver candlesticks, wedding gifts to my Sweetland parents, the Irish linen tablecloth brought by my Grandmother (Reilly) Sweetland from her homeland, and the red table runner made by my daughter, Ruth. Along the sides of the table sat my children and my parents, and at the other end, my husband. But beyond my husband, in my mind's eye, I imagined the table extending on and on, flanked by those unseen progenitors who came before us: poor peasants in coarse clothes who scratched for a living in England, austere Colonists who immigrated to America for religious freedom, fisherman of Massachusetts who frequently fished off the shores of Nova Scotia, uniformed soldiers from the Revolutionary War and their wives who anxiously waited for them to return, sunburned women trudging across the plains with their families, one of them burying her newborn baby by the Platte River, miners moving their families from one Western mining town to another.

I felt balanced in time between generations, between those who have gone before me and the living members of my family. I felt peace, goodwill toward all men as I felt love for all at my table, both seen and unseen. I thought of my responsibility to my family: my ancestors, parents, husband, children, future grandchildren, and so on. By preserving ancestors' pictures, stories and artifacts I honor them and help my descendants feel of their strength and determination and even benefit and learn from the mistakes and hardships these progenitors endured long ago.

The picture has changed a bit since that day, with Dad's passing in 1997 and grandchildren coming along, but my perspective remains. The Sweetland/Swetland Family Association and newletter *Lore* provide a way for each of us to share our heritage with each other. I hope that you as readers of *Lore* will use this publication as a tool to preserve pictures and stories for your own families and all the other branches of our large family tree. --Anne Kirby, editor



Christmas at the Oak Table

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Do you have interesting Sweetland/Swetland family information to share and would like to be included in the next Lore? For example an interesting story, a photo of an ancestor's home, people, a family heirloom, tools, etc., or comments on a previous story. Please feel free send these to our editor, Anne Kirby (see contact information at right) along with your written permission to publish the information.

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