



# Sweetland/Swetland Lore #76 Winter 2015

SWEETLAND/SWETLAND FAMILY ASSOCIATION



## Old Swetland Family Desk was Discarded and later Rescued — Roger Swetland, Lore Historian



**This Swetland Desk Could Date Back  
240 Years**

This desk has been passed down through the family for many generations.

It is a Connecticut style drop front, with drawers and “pigeon holes”. It is made of hand worked solid cherry with dovetail joints and wooden pegs as nails. The secondary wood is pine. The writing surface and ends are solid one piece boards.

On Mar. 6, 1936, my great-grandfather Elmer Lyon Swetland wrote on the bottom of one of the drawers —“This desk belonged to my great-grandfather Joseph Swetland who died in 1821 from him to Gordon Swetland to W.H. Swetland to me E.L. Swetland Mar. 6, 1936”.

When Elmer L. Swetland had passed away in 1951, the estate went to his daughter and son-in-law Ruth and Harry Drake. They didn't have a use for it and didn't value it for its historic significance and threw it over the bank behind the house.

When my father Elmer D. Swetland stopped for a visit and discovered it thrown out, he picked up the pieces and brought it home. There was a man named Carpenter in the town of West Auburn, Pa. that built and repaired furniture three miles down the road. Dad took it to him and had it put back together in about 1952 or 1953. When I was child, it was used as a

dresser for my brother's and my clothes. About 1974, my parents had the desk restored to its present condition. When my mother moved from the farm, the desk was given to me with the intent that it would be passed on to my son Jamie R. Swetland.

Was it brought to Pennsylvania from Connecticut by Luke Swetland (1729-1823), who along with his wife, Hannah Tiffany, are buried in the Forty Fort, PA cemetery? Did it survive the Wyoming Massacre? I guess only the Lord knows as no one with that information is living at this time.

My lineage is Luke, Joseph, Lord Butler, John Lynn, Elmer Lyon, Dana Butler, Elmer Dana, Roger Elmer, Jamie Roger. Gordon was Lord Butler's brother and W.H. was Gordon's son. If this was Luke's desk, it would be about 240 years old as Luke had fought with General George Washington in the American Revolution.



**Open Desk Reveals Pigeon Holes  
and Writing Surface.**

## The Fun of Family History is often in the “Detective Work” Examining Spanish American War Photos Yields a Sweetland

By Anne (Sweetland) Kirby, Lore Editor



From an obituary I learned that my grandfather's brother, Edgar Harris Sweetland, was in the Spanish American War in 1898. My cousin, Ruthie Reed, generously loaned me six boxes of Sweetland family photos and documents from an old trunk. So when I came to photos of

uniformed men I researched military uniforms on the Internet to see if those pictured were Spanish American War uniforms, and indeed they were. I thought it would be impossible to ever discern if my great-uncle, Edgar Harris Sweetland, was in the photos, let alone which man he was, since I didn't have any pictures of him as a young man. He would have been 21 during the war.

I started studying the original faded, sepia-toned images with a magnifying glass for clues. I looked at every canteen, and most had USA printed on them. But one had EHS CO A on it. Maybe the canteens all had USA on one side and the owner's initials and company on the reverse. I'm sure EHS stood for Edgar Harris Sweetland and "CO A" probably means "Company A". I was elated to find my great uncle in the picture and happy that he had turned his canteen around so he could be identified. In the photo below, see the second man from the right. He's Edgar!



**Above: Edgar Harris Sweetland (1877-1938) stands second from right, identified by initials on his canteen. Below: E.H. Sweetland, L. Front, Spanish American War Soldier in 1898, age 21, identified from tiny initials written by his right knee.**

The second photo is faded and shows more men, probably in target practice. How to tell one man from the other with guns by their faces? Again I got out my magnifying glass and this time I could see a tiny "ES" printed twice in pen next to the knee of the man on the far left, front row. Sometimes a simple magnifying glass is just the tool we need to examine our old, faded photos. Please turn to page three for the last photo—A man busily cooking for Edgar Sweetland and his buddies.





**This 1898 photo of an unidentified cook was among the Spanish American War photos of Edgar H. Sweetland. The man pictured appears to be the same person as the soldier in the center of the first photo on page two.**

**Roger Swetland Needs Your Information to Update the CD  
of the  
2003 Swetland/Sweetland/Sweatlands**

I am looking to do updates to the 2003 Swetland/Sweetland/Sweatland CD this winter. I would like updates of births, marriages, deaths, and any other new information you may wish to add for your family and your ancestors. Hopefully I will at least get some of it done through the winter so that a new release would become available. Please send updates to:

Roger Swetland  
4819 State Route 367  
Montrose, PA 18801-6916  
(E-mail: [rpswetland@epix.net](mailto:rpswetland@epix.net))

**Query****B. R. Sweetland—Can you Help?**

I am interested in learning more about Benjamin Richards Sweetland (b. 1821, Onondaga Co., NY), son of Alvah Sweetland (b. 1795, East Windsor, CT; d. 1850, Onondaga) and Sally Richards (d. 1830, Onondaga). He is almost always referred to as "B.R. Sweetland".

He went to California sometime before 1858, when he is listed as postmaster of Indian Diggings (El Dorado Co.). He later lived in Sacramento (1860, 1870) and Bodega (1880), where he was listed as a physician, druggist, or farmer. About 1880 he moved to Tucson, AZ, where "B.R. Sweetland & Co." sold furniture, paint, wallpaper, etc. He died in Tucson in 1897.

His first wife was Maria (b. 1825, NY; d. 1860, Sacramento). Their daughter Mina W. Sweetland was born June 1858 in California, married Thomas Driscoll (b. June 1840, Pennsylvania) in 1895 at Tucson, and died 1933 in Los Angeles. Mina's obituary calls her the "loving cousin of Mary Ellen White". His second wife was Helen S. Becker (b. 1830, Oswego?, NY, d. 1903, Tucson). Their son Fredrick W. Sweetland was born about 1870.

I am anxious to learn about B.R. Sweetland's travels between New York/New England and California. He may have made multiple trips, and I am particularly interested in the possibility that around 1854 he visited Valparaiso, Chile and/or Boston. I am also interested in any contact he may have had with his distant relative Hannah Trussell Swetland (b. 1797, Lebanon, NH; m. 1823 to Jesse Eaton Gage, b. 1798) or her family, or with the Gage or Shattuck families of New England and New York.

I would be most grateful to hear from anyone having any such information, thoughts as to how I might find it, or contact information for living relatives. This is part of a comprehensive research effort, so even fragmentary family stories are welcome.

Matthew L. Lena, [matthew.lena@hotmail.com](mailto:matthew.lena@hotmail.com), 617/308-8771

**Editor's note: There's a fascinating story behind this query. See our next issue!**

**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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