



Please Note: This year there will be no SFA reunion. However, the Scholarship WILL be awarded. Please see page 3 for the scholarship application information and send it along to your family's high school seniors.

Our last issue "Lore #76" carried an inquiry from a Harvard researcher regarding Benjamin Richards Sweetland, who died in Tucson in 1897. Here's the fascinating story behind that inquiry...

Like a Hole in the Head: The en-GAGE-ing story of a Sweetland and a Swetland by Matthew L. Lena (Boston)

In the 1800s a popular form of photograph was the "occupational portrait" – a man holding the tools of his trade (a miner with his pick, a painter with his brushes, a soldier with his rifle) or a woman with a symbol of her domestic skill (perhaps a spinning wheel or loom). The man in the portrait shown here is Phineas Gage (1823-1860), whose mother was Hannah Trussell (Swetland) Gage (1797-1887). He's holding the important tool of *his* trade – but what exactly is it?

Phineas Gage was perhaps the unluckiest man you ever heard of – or the luckiest, depending on how you look at it. On September 13, 1848 he was a "blaster", an explosives expert in charge of a work gang clearing the roadbed for a new railway in Vermont. To blow apart a body of rock, Phineas would drill a hole in it, then use his "tamping iron" – the iron bar he's holding in the portrait, 1-1/4 inches in diameter and almost four feet long – to pack a charge of blasting powder, covered by sand, into the hole. Then the fuse is lit, and everyone runs for cover!

But a moment's distraction led to an awful accident, and Phineas' life was changed forever: a spark set off the blasting powder prematurely, and the tamping iron was driven into the left side of his face (pointed end first, luckily), behind his left eye, through the front of his brain, and out the top of his head. It landed some eighty feet away, "smeared with blood and brains" according to a witness. He was killed instantly, of course.



Except he wasn't killed. He spoke within a few minutes, walked with little assistance, and sat upright in an oxcart for the ride back to town, where after a touch-and-go ten weeks he had recovered sufficiently to return home to his parents' farm in New Hampshire. He lived for another twelve years.

Phineas' permanent physical injuries were blindness in one eye and scars on the face and forehead. On the top of his head, where the skin had grown back over the place where a large square of bone had been knocked out of his skull, there was a soft spot – beneath which, his doctor said, "the pulsations of the brain can be perceived".

(continued on p. 2)

But the accident also did something more subtle to Phineas. Before his injury, he had been hard-working, responsible, and “a great favorite” with the men who worked for him, and his employers regarded him as “the most efficient and capable foreman in their employ.” But after the accident, his doctor said, these same employers “considered the change in his mind so marked that they could not give him his place again”:

The equilibrium or balance, so to speak, between his intellectual faculties and animal propensities, seems to have been destroyed. He is fitful, irreverent, indulging at times in the grossest profanity (which was not previously his custom), manifesting but little deference for his fellows, impatient of restraint or advice when it conflicts with his desires, at times pertinaciously obstinate, yet capricious and vacillating, devising many plans of future operations, which are no sooner arranged than they are abandoned in turn for others appearing more feasible. A child in his intellectual capacity and manifestations, he has the animal passions of a strong man. Previous to his injury, although untrained in the schools, he possessed a well-balanced mind, and was looked upon by those who knew him as a shrewd, smart business man, very energetic and persistent in executing all his plans of operation. In this regard his mind was radically changed, so decidedly that his friends and acquaintances said he was “no longer Gage”.

In fact, Phineas Gage was the first case in which injury to the brain was directly connected to a change in personality. Almost every college textbook on psychology talks about him.

This sounds like an unhappy story, but it's really not. Decades of research have reconstructed Phineas' life in fairly good detail. We know that he traveled around New England for a time, earning money giving “lectures” about his accident (admission 12-1/2 cents – a lot of coin in those days!), exhibiting his tamping iron and letting visitors touch the soft spot in his head. He even appeared at Barnum's American Museum in New York (though never with a circus or freak show, as is sometimes said). For a few years he worked in a livery stable in New Hampshire.

In 1852 Phineas went to (of all places) Chile, where he became a stagecoach driver. He kept this job until his health broke seven years later (when he went to California and soon died) and was apparently good at it. In fact, a doctor who knew Phineas in Chile wrote that he was “in the enjoyment of good health, with no impairment whatever of his mental faculties.” In other words the difficult, indecisive, childish, profane man described by Phineas' doctor soon after the accident didn't stay that way. He had pulled himself up by his bootstraps and rebuilt his life.

For most of the 20th century scientists believed that the brain's ability to grow and repair itself essentially ceases after childhood, but in the last few decades it has been realized that this view was too limited: the brain can adapt and “rewire” itself significantly, even in adults. This has important implications for patients recovering from brain injuries, and Phineas' story can be seen as an example of such newly recognized possibilities. As author Sam Kean put it: “If even Phineas Gage bounced back – that's a powerful message of hope.”

So where does Benjamin Richards Sweetland come into this story? Well, at some point Phineas gave his tamping iron to the Harvard Medical School Museum, but he later got it back. In the files of the museum there is a little note that reads: *Mr. B.R. Sweetland - Please deliver my iron bar to the bearer. (signed) P.P. Gage, Aug. 26, 1854.* B.R. Sweetland – a distant relation of Phineas' mother – had been born in New York (1821), went to California sometime in the 1850s, and died in Tucson, Arizona in 1897. (continued on p. 3)

We think that somewhere in his travels between New York and California, B.R. must have stopped in Chile (as many travelers did at that time in coming around the horn of South America) where he ran into his cousin Phineas. Phineas must have asked B.R. to get his tamping iron back for him from Harvard, giving B.R. that little note to show the museum curator. But we have been unable to find out anything specific about these travels of B.R.'s, and especially when he was in Chile. If we could, then it may help us locate more information about Phineas Gage and his life, which will help us further understand how he recovered from his injury, and what it means for those with brain injuries today.

So we are hoping some reader of *Sweetland/Swetland Lore* knows something about Benjamin Richards Sweetland and can help us learn more about him – see the last page of the Lore #75 issue for what he knows and what we want to know at. And to learn more about Phineas Gage, Google *Phineas Gage* and click on the Wikipedia article, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phineas_Gage.

SFA Scholarship Application Information

Deadline May 1, 2016

Although no 2016 SFA Reunion is scheduled, the SFA Scholarship Committee has been authorized to receive applications for a 2016 Scholarship. The Committee needs your help to develop a significant list of potential Scholarship Candidates.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD AMOUNT: \$300.00, one-time.

REQUIREMENTS: The SFA Scholarship will be awarded to a Sweetland/Swetland descendant who is a graduating high school senior or a person enrolled/enrolling in any post-HS program of study. Their study program can be in any collegiate, vocational, or technical program and at an undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate level.

APPLICATION PROCESS: There is no Scholarship Application form. Each Applicant should provide the Committee with a:

- letter of recommendation from a SFA family member
- statement of qualifications (application support documents as desired)

These documents should be sent electronically to:

the SFA Scholarship Committee Chairman at david.kryder@gmail.com,
with a CC to Scholarship Committee Members:
Karen Swetland at karen.swetland@gmail.com,
Katy Ford at katy_bradley@hotmail.com,
and Jessica Anderson at jes.anderson0@gmail.com.

DEADLINES: Application materials must be received by May 1, 2016 @ 12:01 AM, Arizona time. Late applications will not be considered. The Scholarship Committee will notify all Applicants of the Committee's decisions by May 31, 2016.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Scholarship Applicants should prepare a short biography (~150 words with a recent photo). The Scholarship Winner's information will be included in a forthcoming issue of *SFA Lore*.

QUESTIONS: R. David Kryder, SFA Scholarship Chairman (520) 393-1783.

Keeping the Cousin Relationships Straight

Do you get confused when someone refers to a member of the family as a "second cousin"?

An article on kinship terminology found in a blog of findmypast on 8 April 2013 explains how this works.

First, Second, Third Cousins...

The ordinals in this system, "first cousin", "second cousin", "third cousin", all describe the degree of the cousin relationship or the **number of generations to their closest ancestor**. For example, your second cousin is a person you share great-grandparents with and is not your direct sibling.

When the cousins are not in your same generation then they are "removed."

"First cousins once removed" declares that either one of you are one generation away from being first cousins. For example, if your first cousin has kids, they are your first cousins once removed - the closest common ancestor shared are your grandparents but are "once removed" from the level of first cousin (held by their parents). It's easier to think of what your shared ancestors would call you both - if your closest shared direct-ancestor is your great-great-grandparents, and they call you both "great-great-grandchildren," then you have no removal; you two are third cousins.

- First Cousins: Non-siblings that share grandparents
- Second Cousins: Non-siblings that share great-grandparents
- Third Cousins: Non-siblings that share great-great grandparents

SFA Treasurer's Report
to End of 2015
By
Priscilla Swetland

Balance as of End of
2014:
\$1,791.18

Expenses:
\$137.97
Lores #73,74,75,76

Donations:
None

Scholarship Fund:
\$1,061.55

Lore Fund:
\$518.66

Reunion Fund:
\$73

Balance as of End of
2015:
\$1653.21

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www.swetland.org

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Do you have interesting Sweetland/Swetland family information to share and be included in the next Lore such as an interesting story, a photo of an ancestor's home, people, a family heirloom, tools, etc., or comments on a previous story? Please send these to our editor, Anne Kirby (see contact information at right).

Thank you.

Donation Form (Please make checks payable to Swetland Family Association)

My name is _____

Enclosed is my donation for the scholarship fund \$ _____ ,
and the newsletter fund \$ _____ .

To begin email delivery of Lore, please email: Publisher@swetland.org

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