



Sweetland/Swetland Lore #86 Summer 2018

SWEETLAND/SWETLAND FAMILY ASSOCIATION



John Sweetland: One of the Tough and Talented Men from Marblehead, Massachusetts in the Revolutionary War

By Carolyn Cottrell Hartman

The year 1776 was nearly over and the Revolutionary War was not going well for George Washington and his troops. They had yet to win a major battle with the well-trained British and Hessian troops who far outnumbered them. George Washington led his men who were tired, often without food, and untrained. Many were sick and even more were going home because their original enlistments were up. If he could not win at Trenton, General Washington knew that the revolution could be over. Washington moved his troops to nine miles north of Trenton, New Jersey to McConkey's Ferry on the Delaware River. He ordered Colonel Cadwalder to make the crossing at Bordertown and Brig. General Ewing to cross at Assunpink Creek Bridge. The severe snowstorm prevented them from crossing.

Colonel Rahl's Hessian/British troops occupied Burlington and Trenton. Other British troops were garrisoned at Princeton, Perth Amboy, Borderton and Pennington. Colonel Rahl settled his troops in Trenton for the winter. Rahl was an experienced leader but had a fondness for hard liquor. He and his Hessian troops celebrated the Christmas holiday with drink and loud revelry. Even though Rahl had been warned that Washington was planning an attack, the German took little note of the warning. Since Washington believe the Hessians would be vulnerable the day after Christmas, he made plans for a daring night crossing of the Delaware River for an early morning assault.

When he prepared to cross the Delaware, Washington's only hope was a surprise attack. As he always did when he needed help crossing a body of water, Washington enlisted the help of Colonel John Glover and his very tough and dedicated group of men from Marblehead, Massachusetts. These "Marblehead Mariners" made their living as commercial fishermen working the rough seas off the coast of Massachusetts. If anyone could get his troops, equipment and horses across the river with the icy and very choppy water and a 'nor'easter' blowing on Christmas, 1776, these men could do it. The mariners confiscated all boats that were needed that night and destroyed any other boats that could possibly float all up and down the river. Washington with his troops crossed at McConkey's Ford. Although the snow made the approach more difficult, it also guaranteed that the Hessian guards would be inside their quarters.

The following is David McCullough's description of the river crossing from his book, *1776*: "Glover's men proved as crucial as the change in the wind. In a feat of extraordinary seamanship, at the helm and manning oars hour after hour, they negotiated the river's swift, contrary currents in boats so loaded with troops and supplies, horses and cannon, that the water was often but inches below the gunnels—and all in pitch dark, with no running lights. Few men ever had so much riding on their skill, or were under such pressure, or performed so superbly."

One of these mariners was JOHN SWEETLAND (christened 28 Oct 1750-died about 1785). As noted in Pam Matthias Peterson's book *Marblehead Myths, Legends and Lore*, "It could not have been accomplished without Glover's men and their seafaring abilities. They knew how to row, how to handle the boats they confiscated for the task and they had the strength, skill and determination to transport 2,400 men, plus horses and artillery across a river filled with chunks of ice. They traveled tirelessly back and forth through the icy water all night long until all the troops finally were on the New Jersey side of the river."

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(Continued from p. 1)

The first that Colonel Rahl and his Hessians knew about the attack was when they awoke to the sound of gunfire. Much of the fighting was by bare fists, rifle butts, bayonets and swords. Rahl's ineffectual counter-attack was broken up by small arms fire. When Colonel Rahl fell mortally wounded, the Hessians began surrendering. It is believed that the entire battle lasted only about forty minutes. Washington and his troops later re-crossed the river into Pennsylvania. Casualties that night included:

Hessian/British troops: 40 killed, 60 wounded, 918 captured

American Troops: 4 killed, 8 wounded

Washington's victory that night resulted in a new respect for the Colonial fighters, increased morale, and it caused more volunteers to join Washington's Army.

The Marblehead Mariners still exist in the form of a group of re-enactors who regularly appear in parades and other town events in Marblehead, typically in February, as shown in the photo below:



Regarding the famous painting of "Washington Crossing the Delaware" by Emmanuel Otlieb Leutze, it is unlikely that General Washington would have been standing in the small, overloaded boat in the very rough water. What we do know is that JOHN SWEETLAND and his fellow mariners did their job and were heroes that Christmas night that marked the first victory of the Revolution.

Editor's Note:

Carolyn Cottrell Hartman is the 4th great granddaughter of John Sweetland of Marblehead, Massachusetts.

Family History Vital Records such as those at Left became Available due to Volunteer Indexers. Page from Revolutionary War Index at Right is Courtesy of Jane Sweetland.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER U-817 NAME (Print) Benjamin Joseph Sweetland ORDER NUMBER

2 PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 306 Wasas St. San Diego SD. Calif.

3 MAILING ADDRESS Home

4. TELEPHONE Jackson 1959 DATE OF BIRTH June 30 1888 5. AGE IN YEARS 53 6. PLACE OF BIRTH Carson City Nevada

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS S. M. Fuller Sta. R. 60. San Diego Calif

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Don Lee Road Casting Co. Sta. R. 62. San Diego SD. Calif.

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. FORM 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21520-2

Draft Registration Card for Benjamin J. Sweetland
1941

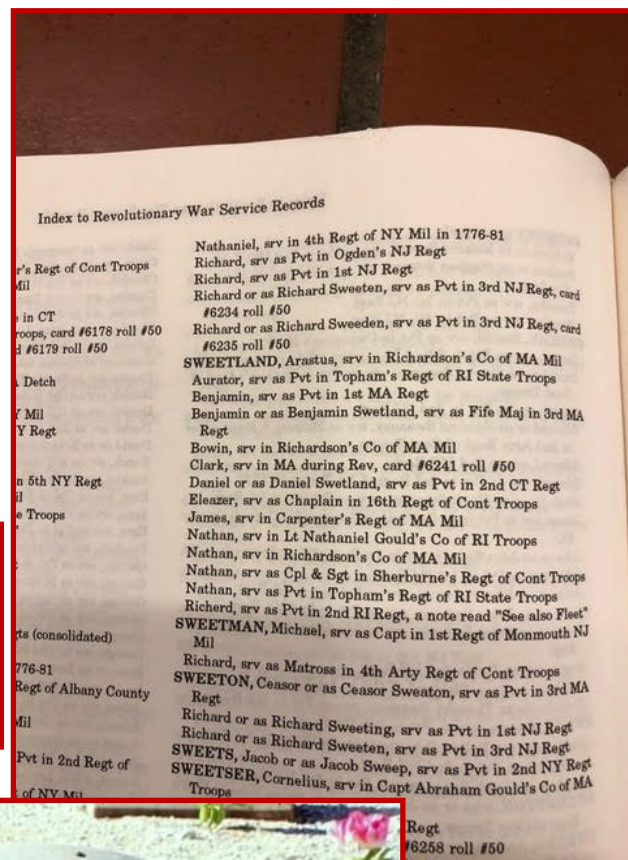
From the Carson City Daily Appeal, Sept. 30, 1890 Funeral of Mrs. Chubbuck. Yesterday afternoon the funeral of Mrs. Chubbuck took place from the residence of her son-in-law, W. D. Cottrell. Notwithstanding the bad weather there was a large gathering of friends at the house, and the numerous floral tributes showed the high esteem held for the deceased (Posted on FamilySearch by Thayne M. Edington). [See Mary Lovell (Gardner) Chubbuck's Headstone below]



Headstone photos such as the one at left from Lone Mountain Cemetery in Carson City, Nevada may be found along with obituaries on web-sites such as:
findagrave.com

Father: George W. Chubbuck 1828-1916. Mother: Mary L. Chubbuck 1832-1890.

These were the parents of Louisa M. Chubbuck who married William Harris Sweetland.



Index to Revolutionary War Service Records

Nathaniel, srv in 4th Regt of NY Mil in 1776-81
Richard, srv as Pvt in Ogden's NJ Regt
Richard, srv as Pvt in 1st NJ Regt
Richard or as Richard Sweeten, srv as Pvt in 3rd NJ Regt, card #6234 roll #50
Richard or as Richard Sweeden, srv as Pvt in 3rd NJ Regt, card #6235 roll #50
SWEETLAND, Arastus, srv in Richardson's Co of MA Mil
Aurator, srv as Pvt in Topham's Regt of RI State Troops
Benjamin, srv as Pvt in 1st MA Regt
Benjamin or as Benjamin Sweetland, srv as Fife Maj in 3rd MA Regt
Bowin, srv in Richardson's Co of MA Mil
Clark, srv in MA during Rev, card #6241 roll #50
Daniel or as Daniel Swetland, srv as Pvt in 2nd CT Regt
Eleazer, srv as Chaplain in 16th Regt of Cont Troops
James, srv in Carpenter's Regt of MA Mil
Nathan, srv in Lt Nathaniel Gould's Co of RI Troops
Nathan, srv in Richardson's Co of MA Mil
Nathan, srv as Cpl & Sgt in Sherburne's Regt of Cont Troops
Nathan, srv as Pvt in Topham's Regt of RI State Troops
Richard, srv as Pvt in 2nd RI Regt, a note read "See also Fleet"
SWEETMAN, Michael, srv as Capt in 1st Regt of Monmouth NJ Mil
Richard, srv as Matross in 4th Arty Regt of Cont Troops
SWEETON, Ceasor or as Ceasor Sweaton, srv as Pvt in 3rd MA Regt
Richard or as Richard Sweeting, srv as Pvt in 1st NJ Regt
Richard or as Richard Sweeten, srv as Pvt in 3rd NJ Regt
SWEETS, Jacob or as Jacob Sweep, srv as Pvt in 2nd NY Regt
SWEETSER, Cornelius, srv in Capt Abraham Gould's Co of MA Troops

Regt #6258 roll #50



SFA Notes Passing of Longtime Member Mary Watkins Bowers

Mary was born on February 27, 1925 to William and Zoe Watkins. After graduating from Butler University in Indianapolis, she earned her Masters and Ph.D from University of Minnesota. Mary taught at the American School in Tokyo Japan before returning to marry Norman Bowers on November 21, 1954. Mary and Norman lived and worked in Pensacola FL, San Jose CA, Nashville TN and Chapel Hill NC before settling in Illinois. Mary was on the faculty at Northeastern Illinois University, and helped to develop their program in Counselor Education. Mary was a member of First United Methodist Church, Evanston since 1962 and was active in United Methodist Women, serving as president and many other positions. After retirement, Mary traveled to Japan, Norway and Europe and spent winters in Bradenton FL, where she reconnected with childhood friends. Mary passed away on November 18, 2017 in Minneapolis MN. Mary was preceded in death by her husband, Norman D. Bowers, her sister Rachel W. Noffke. Mary is survived by Alice and John Anderson, Karen and Rod Thompson, and Laura Bowers and 8 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.

Editor's Note: Mary and her husband Norman Bowers participated in the Sweetland/Swetland Family Organization and attended reunions, as pictured above. Mary's husband, Norman, was instrumental in placing original Sweetland/Swetland documents, books and diaries in the Allen County Library in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

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.

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SFA Website:
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S/S Family Association

President: Joy Folsom

682 Ohio Street, #36
Bangor, ME 04401
President@swetland.org

VP: Wendy L. Blanchard

23 T. Peck Rd.
Monson, MA 01057
VicePresident@swetland.org

Secretary/Reunion Chairman: Jamie Swetland

84 Marshland Rd. Ext.,
Apalachin, N.Y. 13732
jswetland@live.com

Treas.: Priscilla Swetland

Roger & Priscilla Swetland
4819 State Route 367
Montrose, PA 18801-6916
rpswetland@epix.net

Historian: Roger Swetland (address above)

Scholarship Chairman:

R. David Kryder,
1036 North Paseo Iris, Green
Valley, AZ 85614
(520) 393-1783
david.kryder@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Anne M. Kirby
3482 Concomly Rd. S.
Salem, OR 97306
(503) 588-9548
anne.kirby9@gmail.com

Newsletter Publisher:

Mark W. Harrison
3326 Eagles Roost Ln
Macedon, NY 14502
Publisher@swetland.org

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MAIL TO:

Priscilla Swetland, Treasurer
4819 State Route 367
Montrose, PA 18801-6916

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