



## President's Message—by Roger Swetland

The Sweetland/Swetland Reunion will be held in New London, Connecticut during the third week of June of 2009. We hope that all will attend. This town is significant to members because some of us have Benjamin Swetland (b. 1685) as an ancestor and he died there. His parents were William and Agnes Swetland of Salem, MA.

While at the reunion we will want to visit the Old Cemetery at New London where Benjamin is buried. He married Hannah Hale and also was the one commissioned by the British leaders to pay the minister's wages because of his wealth. If you have the book of Joshua Hempstead's diaries, you will find a lot of information about Benjamin Swetland and his family.

In addition to Benjamin's gravesite in New London, other cemeteries in the area serve as burial places for Sweetlands and Swetlands. In the New London Library are several books with Swetland information in them, as well as at the Old North Church.

We also plan to learn about the ships that came into the port of New London and the ancestors who lived and sailed there.

Those who wish to come may be concerned about the increased price of fuel. However, by starting now to regularly set aside a little extra savings, sufficient funds will be available when the time comes to travel to the reunion. It will be well worth the trip.



## Visiting a Cemetery?

### Special points of interest

- **PRESIDENT INVITES MEMBERS TO ATTEND REUNION**
- **TREATING GRAVESTONES RESPONSIBLY**
- **YOUR LIBRARY CARD MAY BRING MORE INTERNET DATA**
- **PROTECT YOUR COMPUTER!**
- **OBITUARY, TREAS. REPORT**

## Graves, Death and Burial Practices, Colonial to Victorian Days

Are you interested in finding your ancestors' vital information and then understanding the times in which they lived and died, their illnesses and accidents, customs, cemeteries and mourning clothing? All of these may provide more clues about these people. For example, a family photo you may have of a widow wearing black and a long veil could indicate by the clothing approximately when her husband died.

### Tricks for reading old gravestones without damage

Do you plan to visit a cemetery this summer? Gravestones often give us vital information about our heritage. The website [www.savinggraves.org](http://www.savinggraves.org) explains that our forefathers likely thought of gravestones as lasting forever and the phrase "etched in stone" denotes permanence. However, they caution that gravestone inscriptions are far from permanent. Different types of stone weather differently. Rain, wind, frost, vegetation and chemical actions all take their toll on the surface of stone. Sometimes people damage the stones as they try to make them more readable. Highlighting the lettering with chalk (which is an abrasive) or any other method is not recommended. Do NOT use shaving cream because adding chemicals to the stone can have deteriorating effects. The stone should NOT be damaged by your use of it.

A mirror is always safe and helps to produce a great photograph. By using a mirror to direct bright sunlight diagonally across the face of a grave stone, you can easily cast shadows in indentations which will make inscriptions much more visible.

### Inside this issue:

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	1
GRAVES, DEATH, BURIAL CUSTOMS	1-3
DONATION FORM	2
COMPUTER PROTECTION	4
READER COMMENT	4
WILLIAM MESSICK OBITUARY	
SFA TREASURER'S REPORT	

*"Just getting a grave-stone wet can make the carvings stand out."*

(continued on p. 2)

(Continued from p. 1)

Another safe method is using aluminum foil and a damp sponge to make a rubbing. Place foil on marker, dull side up. Using the damp sponge, gently press around the carving or writing areas and instantly you have a 3-D impression of the marker. Try reading the foil impression under different lighting situations. Sometimes it works better if the foil is placed on a tabletop under artificial light.

Just getting a stone wet can make the carvings stand out much more than when dry, and show well for photographs because the surface will dry much faster than the lettering which will stay moist and dark, enhancing the image.

The savinggraves.org website concludes with a suggestion for photography negatives. Using either a digital camera and viewing the pictures in negative format, or scanning regular prints into your computer and viewing using the negative (or reverse) option can be a highly effective way of reading worn stones.

### What those old inscriptions mean

The Connecticut Gravestone Network at [www.ctgravestones.com](http://www.ctgravestones.com) states, "Words and names were often phonetically spelled. In Old English an 'f' is meant for an 's'. 'Mifs' is Miss. 'In his 30th year' means he had not reached his 30th birthday YET. Consort is when the wife has died before the husband leaving him alone. 'Relict' is the same as a widow, hence dying after her husband. Double dated years as in '1726/27', marks the old and new year numeration after the calendar change in England (1752) when the beginning of the year was moved from March 25th to January 1st. So if you find the double date and the stone inscription is missing its month, you would be suspect to look for a death that occurred during those months of Jan., Feb., or March."

### Grave inscriptions online

Good websites for reading inscriptions online include: [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), [www.interment.net](http://www.interment.net), [www.daddezio.com](http://www.daddezio.com). A google search using the words "graves," "photographs," and the state where your ancestor is buried will bring up more sites.

### Causes of death

Each year a Halloween event about death and burial practices in the 18th and 19th centuries takes place at the Swetland Homestead at Wyoming, Pennsylvania. Organizer Clara Hudson works for the Luzerne County Historical Society as the Administrator of the Swetland Homestead and as a Reference Librarian in the Weinberg Library at the University of Scranton. The following information was taken from her well-researched script for the funeral tours at the Homestead, which she kindly shares with us.



Swetland Homestead, Where  
Funeral Tours Occur

Sickness and death were ubiquitous in early times—young men as early as teen years started to put away gold coins to pay for funeral expenses. Childhood diseases took their toll in a time before immunizations. Tuberculosis, also referred to as the decline, consumption and the great white plague, likely killed more people than any other single disease. [ed. - The website [www.prickklytree.webhostingpal.com/tools/](http://www.prickklytree.webhostingpal.com/tools/) contains a glossary of old disease names and their modern definitions. These help us understand old family death certificates.]

In 1793, the largest yellow fever epidemic in American history killed as many as

Continued on p. 3

### Donation Form

My name is \_\_\_\_\_  
Enclosed is my donation for the general fund for \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
for scholarship fund for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I will arrange to have the newsletter emailed by simply doing the following:  
Send an e-mail to Mark Harrison at "[mark@genesistems.com](mailto:mark@genesistems.com)" and ask to be placed on the free, no charge "S/S Lore Email Distribution List".

#### MAIL TO:

Priscilla Swetland, Treasurer  
RR #4, Box 121 A  
Montrose, PA 18801-9437

(Continued from p. 2)

5,000 people or 10% of the population in Philadelphia. People held vinegar-soaked handkerchiefs to their noses, wore bags of camphor around their necks, and tarred rope to ward off the disease.



In addition to disease, accidents maimed and killed many. Mishaps included a train bridge collapse, explosions at powder mills, locomotive explosions, drowning in a vat of bleach in a paper mill, explosion of a soda water generator at a local drug store, run away horses and wagons, duels, and falling down the cellar stairs as in the old photo at left.

Medical ignorance was a major cause of death in the 1800's. Doctors had little knowledge, little training was required and antiseptics almost nonexistent. Granny doctors in backcountry areas relied on herbal remedies and superstitions. For example, for a headache they would place a buckwheat cake on the head.

### Announcing Death

A rider in black adorned in crepe and ribbons traveled in haste to the homes of friends and relatives. The "warner" often brought "death cakes" as invitations. The cakes were large cookies, often with the initials of the deceased carved on top. These were kept as a memento of the person who died. Another means of announcing death was music; the toll of the church bell, choirs and trombones would play chorals. Later a notice would be posted on town bulletin boards, sent via post and written on fine paper with a black border and eventually posted in newspapers. It was considered poor manners not to attend a funeral once invited.

### Burial Customs

Funerals were expedient events in early America since embalming was rare prior to the Civil War. It was considered inconsiderate to die during the winter when the ground was hard and frozen. It was the custom for neighbors to wash and prepare the dead for burial. After the Civil War, funeral "parlors" replaced the home parlor funeral.

Our earliest American ancestors were buried without coffins. They were wrapped in cloth shrouds. Later, they used caskets, but with no embalming they had to be built in a day. Often the coffin maker was a family member or friend working through the night by candle or lamplight. A black cloth called a pall would be laid over a coffin. Ready made coffins appeared during the War of 1812.

### Cemeteries and Mourning

Puritans strolled and picnicked in cemeteries on breaks from church services. In the country and on the farms private family plots usually were placed on top of hills and on rocky ground unfit for cultivation. As villages grew into cities and the churchyard no longer had room, large tracts of land would be set aside for cemeteries. In the Victorian era cemeteries resembling city parks became popular spots for Sunday outings.



During the first year of mourning, the 19th century widow followed specific rules about clothing: The first year all black was worn, untrimmed, with a long crepe veil on the bonnet. The second year she might wear trimmings of lace and a shorter veil of tulle or net. After a year and a half gray, violet or white could be worn and hair was arranged simply during the entire mourning period.

Mary L. Gardner



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SFAWebsite:  
[www.swetland.org](http://www.swetland.org)

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—Anne Kirby, ed.

## READER COMMENT

I noticed that in Lore [March 2008] there was mention of free database information. I'd like to also suggest that obtaining a library card from your local public library often puts many data bases at your disposal. While my library provides Ancestry.com only at the library facility I can access Heritage.com at home. I've obtained significant information about the Swetlands in this way. As a point of reference let me explain that I descend from Luke Swetland and Hannah Tiffany, my sixth great grandparents who settled in the Wyoming Valley in the late 1700's.

Gayle T. Baar, MS, MLS, Librarian



William Lee Messick, 1930-2008

This SFA member was raised in Wyoming, PA and retired in Palm Desert, CA for more than twenty years where he stayed active giving lectures about his book, *America's Fighting Presidents*. A warm, caring man, Bill was instrumental in obtaining a new grave marker for well-known ancestor Luke Swetland, and spoke at the marker dedication in the Forty-Fort Meeting House in PA. Bill was a retired Foreign Service Officer, and recipient of several distinguished medals.

## SFA TREASURER'S REPORT

by Priscilla Swetland

Beginning Balance after 2007 reunion: \$1,083.47

DONATIONS:	EXPENSES:
\$160.00 for Scholarship	\$98.99 Lore #43
\$320.00 for General Fund	\$69.80 Lore #44
1 Book of Stamps donated to Anne Kirby	

**Balance at end of 2007: \$1,394.68**

January to May 3, 2008:

DONATIONS:	EXPENSES:
\$100.00 for General Fund	\$55.86 Lore #45
\$18.08 refunded by A. Kirby to treasurer for supplies	

**Balance: \$1,456.90**

**\$575.00 FOR SCHOLARSHIP**

**\$881.90 FOR GENERAL FUND**



## Genealogy and Computers: "Insurance"

By Mark Harrison (Part 2)

(In March, Mark discussed how we can prevent our genealogical data from disappearing from our computer by regular maintenance and by keeping paperwork, software installation discs and passwords in a safe place. Here he explains ways to protect our computer and its data from security breaches and power fluctuations.)

Are you keeping everything out that would ruin you computer and data? All computers should have an anti-virus, anti-spyware and anti-spam program installed, kept up to date, and running. Perform manual scans often. If something out of the ordinary comes up, do NOT ignore it! Contact your computer person.

What kind of surge protection is best? Your computer and all hardware connected to it should be plugged into a good surge protector, not the kind you buy at a store for \$8-\$12. Those are nothing but extra power outlets. A good surge protector, like the APC SurgeArrest, should cost between \$50 and \$100. These units help protect against power company surges, dips, brownouts, and other power problems. And believe me, those power problems are constant, all-day problems, most of which you cannot see! Or, you can plug them into a UPS (uninterruptible power supply). This unit is like a car battery which is constantly charged from the power outlet, and then your computer runs off its batteries.



What about lightning? Although surge protectors may SAY they protect from lightning, lightning travels tens or hundreds of miles and is made of thousands or millions of volts. What's going to keep it from jumping a couple of inches or less and traveling on to destroy your computer? It's best to play it safe and just unplug your computer, peripherals and all cables.

Is your computer connected to the Internet? Make sure there is a HARDWARE firewall to protect it. Software firewalls are cumbersome, relying too much on the user to make too many unknown decisions. Hardware firewalls are made to set up and forget about. Some hardware firewall manufacturers are Linksys, Belkin and Sonicwall. Once your hardware firewall is in place, turn off all software firewalls running.

What are secure passwords? Make sure passwords for your computer, online sites and accounts are complex and secure. Do not use names, familiar dates, or common words. They are too easy to crack. Use different passwords for each site or account. Then if one password is breached, all of your others remain safe. Consider changing them regularly. Do not store them on your computer, but on a piece of paper in a locked safe.