

# Peter Spencer Barraclough Sunderland



Later in this volume I have included a little about my paternal fifth-great-grandfather, Henry Tufts the younger (1746-1831). (Nowadays we would append “Junior” to his name since his father was also Henry Tufts.) Throughout the thirteen original colonies Henry Tufts the younger earned a distinction as “most infamous Revolutionary War deserter,” among other dubious achievements. This was on my father’s side of the family tree.

Peter Spencer Barraclough Sunderland (1737-1827), however, buried at Fort Amanda in western Ohio, was my *maternal* fifth great-grandfather. He gives some dignity to the family’s record during the Revolutionary War. I don’t know any details of his service record except that he fought at Bunker Hill, ironically in the same state (Massachusetts) and at the same time that Henry Tufts was nearby and evading being pressed into such service, burning his way out of Salem jail, and avoiding being hanged for his crimes up to that point.

My great-grandmother, Peter Sunderland’s great-great-granddaughter, was Margret Effie Alice Sunderland, seen in the two photographs in the foregoing article, Fading Photographs.

From the *Daily Herald*, Dayton, Ohio, February 17, 1902:

## A BIT OF HISTORY

Ft. Amanda, near here, is the last resting place of probably one of the greatest heroes of Bunker Hill and the very last man to leave the trenches in that memorable fight, Peter Sunderland...

By the time the British had made the third charge up the grade the powder supply in the fort had become exhausted and the Americans were obliged to fight with gunstocks, clubs and stones. Mr. Sunderland, after exhausting his own supply of ammunition, picked up three guns of wounded comrades, only to find that each of them had been discharged. He raised the fourth gun when a British soldier aimed a blow at his neck with a sword. A quick turn of the gun caused the sword to strike directly in Mr. Sunderland’s mouth, cutting each cheek halfway to the ear. Again the British soldier struck, and again the blow was partially parried, causing the sword to cut through the wall of Mr. Sunderland’s abdomen; but at the same time the “fourth gun” which luckily proved to be loaded, was discharged into his antagonist and the bayonet on the gun was thrust through him killing him instantly. The

fate of this warrior seemed to check the other soldiers for a moment, and Mr. Sunderland, who was the last man to leave the fortification, escaped to the swamps below, where he found a man, woman and baby. Sunderland bound a large handkerchief about his abdomen, and the two men and the woman swam across the pond, but the babe had to be pitched from one to the other at the deep places.

On the opposite shore Mr. Sunderland lay concealed in the bushes for three days, steadily growing weaker, the man and woman having sought safety in flight. His comrades came back daily to search for the wounded, but he could not make them hear, owing to his exhausted condition. On the third day he attracted the attention of his comrades by breaking some sticks and was rescued.

He came to Ohio about 1817 and settled on land near Dayton. Soon after this he came to Ft. Amanda where his son, Dye Sunderland, entered land that is still owned by the Sunderlands.

Peter Sunderland and his wife are both buried at Ft. Amanda, where a monument marks their resting place.

You are probably trying to imagine, as I am, how Peter Sunderland managed to hold his face together for the several days from June 17, 1775, until his rescue and until receiving the medical attention he certainly needed. Did he lose teeth, or did the blade of the British sword pass neatly between them? What did his face look like from then on?

There is some sketchy record that he married Sarah Dye in 1767. Some records show that he was the father of six children before his marriage to his second wife, Catherine Holman. What happened to end the marriage with Sarah is unrecorded. (She lived until 1827.) Then there is further record that he married Catherine Holman in 1778, scarred as he was, and her name appears on their joint grave marker at Ft. Amanda in Ohio. She is accepted in the family tree as my fifth-great-grandmother. There are records showing that he was the father of nine children after 1778, one of whom, a son, was given the name, Dye Sunderland (born in 1794).

Peter's son, Francis (1784-1835) is counted as my maternal fourth-great-grandfather.

I try to imagine being one of his children or grandchildren and gazing upon his healed but probably grotesque face. I'm grateful, though, for the sacrifice that he made for our country.

## A BIT OF HISTORY.

### Incident Regarding a Great Hero of Bunker Hill.

Peter Sunderland the Last Man to Leave the Trenches in a Memorable Fight.

Ft. Amanda, near here, is the last resting place of probably one of the greatest heroes of the battle of Bunker Hill, and the very last man to leave the trenches in that memorable fight, namely, Peter Sunderland, the great-grandfather of ex-County Treasurer J. B. Sunderland and C. P. Sunderland, of Spencerville.

By the time the British had made the third charge up the grade the powder supply in the fort had become exhausted, and the Americans were obliged to fight with gunstocks, clubs and stones. Mr. Sunderland, after exhausting his own supply of ammunition, picked up three guns of wounded comrades, only to find that each of them had been discharged. He raised the fourth gun when a British soldier aimed a blow at his neck with a sword. A quick turn of the gun caused the sword to strike directly in Mr. Sunderland's mouth, cutting each cheek half way to the ears. Again the British soldier struck, and again the blow was partially parried, causing the sword to cut through the wall of Mr. Sunderland's abdomen; but at the same time the "fourth gun" which luckily proved to be loaded, was discharged into his antagonist and the bayonet on the gun was thrust through him killing him instantly. The fate of this warrior seemed to check the other soldiers for a moment, and Mr. Sunderland, who was the last man to leave the fortification, escaped to the swamps below, where he found a man, woman and baby. Sunderland bound a large handkerchief about his abdomen, and the two men and the woman swam across the pond, but the babe had to be pitched from one to the other at deep places.

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