

The Ghost of High House

The following is a verbatim transcription of a typewritten document, available from the AAFA Library.

This narration of The Ghost of High House, as was related to and to the best of his memory was written by Robert Hoke Williams, son of William Adolphus "Dolly" Williams and Carcilla Williams, Grandson of Robert E. and Peminah Alford Williams and Great Grandson of Nathaniel Green and Nancy Liles Alford, and Great Grandson of David and Temperence Stevens Williams.

NAME REFERENCES

DAD AND/OR FATHER

William Adolphus "Dolly" Williams
GRANDFATHER OR GRANDPA

Robert E. Williams

GRANDMOTHER OR GRANDMA

Peminah Alford Williams

DAD'S PARENTS

Robert E. and/or Peminah Williams

AUNT

Roxanna Williams

HALF SISTERS

Purniney, Emma or Roxie

HALF BROTHERS

William Ladd Williams

GREAT GRANDFATHER

Nathaniel Green Alford

GREAT GRANDMOTHER

Nancy Liles Alford

HIGH HOUSE

This legendary old house once stood on the left side of High House Road, just West of Cary. It dominated the landscape by being 2 story, with high ceilings and full balconies, standing on a hill and is believed to have been built by Tingnal Jones around 1760-1765.

Some people say it resembled the Jones House, which now stands on Highway 54. One legend says the two houses

were built by brothers. If this is true, High House was built by Tingnal Jones, the father of Fanning Jones.

Fanning Jones, Tingnal Jones' son, lived here until 1822, moving to Tennessee, after turning over his property to a Raleigh lawyer, (Wake County Deed Book 5, Page 340). Nathaniel Green Alford purchased the House and 1200 acres of land in 1833. (Wake County Deed Book 11, Page 176).

The house was later occupied by the Williams' family and abandoned early in this century, around early 1900.

THE GHOST, OR MYSTERY OF HIGH HOUSE

Before the occupation of High House, by Nathaniel Green Alford and wife Nancy Liles Alford, and the Williams family, located in Western Wake County, just beyond Cary, North Carolina, was the scene of petty women, fast horses, and plenty of spirits, which I have been told by my Dad. This house was built several years before the Revolutionary War of (1775-1781), and was the gathering place of the sportsmen of that time. Horse racing and whiskey were plentiful, and as will be at such gatherings plenty of fist fights and shootings were displayed at times.

There is a legend that two men were in love with the same girl and one day while attending a horse race, one of the men in a fit of anger, during a quarrel with the girl, grabbed her and strangled her to death before he could be stopped. Why and how the house became haunted has never been revealed, unless by this act.

The house was so named because it was situated on a hill, and as the

architectural designs of that period called for, the main body of the house was connected to the Kitchen by a walkway.

It was set back by about four hundred feet from the road with a few Oaks in the front. The backyard contained one house for the house slaves, and during my Dad's time, Uncle John and Aunt Jennie, held the honor of being the servants for the family. Between Uncle John's house and the Orchard was a big well and water trough for watering the horses that was not to be placed in the stable lot. Beyond this was other houses for other slaves. My Dad was reared in these surroundings, and before he reached the age of his fifteenth birthday (1865), had to assume the responsibility of running the plantation, on account of his Father's (Robert E. Williams' death, December 11, 1861).

At High House, upon my Dad's plea, General Sherman placed a guard at the house, around 1864-1865. The Yankee soldiers had free run of the plantation, but not once entered the High House.

My Dad's first recollection of the Ghost of High House was when he was a small boy about eleven years of age (1861), just before the Civil War (1861-1865), and he heard the older people talk of seeing the Ghost, who appeared as a woman at different times on the plantation. The first time that he saw the Ghost, was one Sunday evening when his parents were attending church services, and he, with a few of the little slaves, were out in the Orchard gathering apples. He looked up in the direction of the main house and saw a woman walking in the yard. He, feeling sure it was his mother (Peminah), Dad told the boys they should all go to the house as his parents had returned from church. When they got to the house, there was no one to be

got to the house, there was no one to be found, and it was sometime later before his parents came in from church. The boys were all excited and at once told their story of seeing the Ghost.

Grandpa made light of it, and dismissed it at once, he being a man who did not believe in "Tommie-Rot", as he always put it. The next time my father saw the Ghost, he, with several of the colored children, were playing in the yard one summer evening at dusk. This Ghost appeared a few steps from them, opened the gate and walked over towards the race track. Dad at once ran to tell Grandpa and to get him to follow. As they came out of the house, the colored boys said, "It, the Ghost has just vanished". Another instance my father well remembered was the time Grandpa had gone to Fayetteville, N.C. with the supply team, and they were away several nights. One night as the family were in the workroom quilting comforts, Dad, with his two colored boys, were over in the corner playing a game, when all of a sudden a sound in the upstairs room directly overhead attracted their attention. The room became very quiet, the sound overhead was as if a big chicken was flying around in the room. Grandma sent Dad and the two colored boys out to Uncle John's to get Uncle John and some of the colored men to go upstairs and investigate. Upon their investigation they could not find any sign of any disturbance in any of the rooms. When Grandpa came home he was told of the story, but as usual he always made fun of the Ghost. As times went on, it wasn't very long before Grandpa himself, came face to face with the Ghost. One evening just as he got in from a ride over the plantation, it was cotton picking time, and there was several high piles of cotton out in the back yard. This Ghost walked through the Hallway, stuck her head in the door and turned and went upstairs. Grandpa, thinking it was his daughter trying to scare him, picked up

a small stick of wood which was lying on the fireplace hearth and pitched it at her, but the stick landed on the floor and the Ghost went on up the stair steps. The Ghost appeared to have her face covered over with cotton. Grandpa then called to her, whom he thought was his daughter, to come back into the room. The Ghost paid no attention to him and went upstairs. Grandpa, being a very strict man, in a loud voice called and demanded that she come back down the stairs. My Aunt was in the Kitchen, but hearing Grandpa call, started in the main part of the house. Grandpa had gotten out of the chair and was at the foot of the stairway when he saw his daughter Roxie coming into the dining room. He at once realized his mistake, and knew she couldn't possibly have gone up the steps leading above. He then asked where Grandma was, his daughter Roxanna replied that she was in the kitchen, then he went upstairs but could find no one. By this time Grandma had left the kitchen to come into the main part of the house, to see what the matter was. She met him at the landing of the steps and he told her of the story. Grandma, right off, said it was the Ghost, but Grandpa just didn't want to give in. He made out as if he still thought it a trick. Grandpa was as stubborn a person as could be found anywhere, and when he said there was no Ghost, well there was not and nobody could make him believe any other way. As time marched on, as it surely will, he was riding horseback over to Raleigh one day and on the way over he noticed a rider ahead of him. Thinking it was one of the girls on the adjoining plantation, he speeded his horse up, but as he approached within hollering distance he didn't see the horse or rider. Knowing there was no road leading off the main road at that point, he first thought she had turned off into the woods, but as the woods were not very thick, he knew at once if a horse had turned off in that section, it could plainly be seen. This surely put Grandpa to thinking, and speeding up his horse, he lost no time in getting to

Raleigh. On his return home, he told Grandma all about it, and then in order to make sure, rode over to the adjoining plantation and inquired if any of the girls had been out riding the premises that day, being assured that one of the girls had been out riding, Grandpa then had to confess even to the neighbors that he was beginning to believe in the Ghost.

Grandpa died (1861) a few months before the Civil War, and my Dad doesn't recall of any time during the Civil War that the Ghost appeared.

Dad married a girl (Sarah Louisa Olive) in 1873 in the community, and they moved to Raleigh in 1880 where he secured employment with the Seaboard Railroad, taking Grandma with them, leaving his sister Roxanna and brothers, Nathaniel and Robert Elbert in the home. My father lost his wife many years later (1885) and with his four children (Purniney, Emma L., Roxie H. and William Ladd) returned to High House, with plans to go back farming. He had only been to High House a few days when one night my half sister (Emma or Roxie) woke Dad up to get a drink of water for her. Dad went through the dining room and opened the door leading out onto the back porch. My half sister had just taken the dipper in her hand, and was drinking water when she screamed and grabbed my father around the legs and cried, "Look, Papa, there is a woman standing in the yard." Dad standing and looking at the woman, the years gone by flashed through his mind. He then took his daughter by the hand and drew her back into the house. Closing the door he told her it was no woman, it was only Bruno, the shepherd dog. He quieted the children and sat up for the remainder of the night. He was one glad man when daylight came. The next morning he got the children out of bed, gave them breakfast, and then loaded up the wagon and with the children returned to Raleigh.

Williams, daughter of John Williams), and got a job as boilermaker for the Seaboard Railroad at Raleigh, and as the years went by, he gave up his job with the Seaboard and moved in 1901 to Biscoe, N.C., a very small town.

A good friend of his, since boyhood got him to come and work for the Aberdeen and Asheboro Railroad. During visits, Dad and mother made back to Raleigh to visit their people, I, being a kid, would stay in Raleigh with the other children, and mother and Dad would make the rounds back over the old place, visiting with their people, and consequently, I knew nothing of the Ghost until I became a grown boy.

I was about thirty years of age (1930) when I saw the site of the old place for the first time. I stopped over one day to see my half brother (William Ladd Williams) who at that time lived in the vicinity of the High House, and he drove me over to where the house once stood. All that was left of the old place were big rocks used for the chimney and pillars of the house. A short distance away was the Family Cemetery where my Great Grandfather (Nathaniel Green Alford) and Great Grandmother (Nancy Liles Alford) along with other members of the family, and also a few of the slaves, were buried. As I walked around the place, we were thinking of the Ghost and I felt as if I was there living in the past, and believe me, I was on the lookout for the Ghost of HIGH HOUSE. ❖

It was announced at the 1989 meeting that AAFA would no longer issue membership cards bearing an expiration date and that cards would be effective for an indefinite period. Members who desire replacement cards may request them from the Missouri address. Identify the specific family members for which cards are required.

Elijah Alford, Jr., 1757-1832

Revolutionary War Claim

Extracted from the microfilm "Summary of Revolutionary War Pension File," MICRO COPY 804-31, MA CT, Pension # R-92. Notice that the claim was rejected. If "need" was a requirement for a pension, it is probable that it was determined he really did not need the pension.

Elijah enlisted as a minute man in October 1771 and marched to Boston 22 April 1775. He served in Captain Thomas William's company, Colonel John Patterson's regiment. He remained in service the balance of the year.

He enlisted in Captain Moses Ashley's company, Colonel John Patterson's regiment, and marched to Montreal. He was at the Cedars on the St. Lawrence River and was captured by the British and Indians.

He resided in Becket, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, and later moved to Portage County, Ohio.

His claims were rejected and no pension was granted.

Biographical Sketch

Based on data contained in The Higleys and Their Ancestry an Old Colonial Family, by Mary Coffin Johnson. Note that this is the ancestor of one of AAFA's newest members, #395 James Allen Alford, Jr.

Elijah Alford, Jr., the oldest son of Elijah Alford and Hannah Higley, was born 13 April 1757; married 11 October 1779 to Olive Higley, the widow of his cousin, Michah Higley, who met his death by accidental shooting the preceding December. They united with the Becket church, 12 March 1786. He was a man of sound,

substantial character and about the beginning of the present century was useful in church matters and prominent in public affairs. He served the town of Becket (Berkshire County), Massachusetts, as surveyor, 1805; as juror, 1806; and was on the committee for visiting and inspecting schools. On 3 September 1807 he was chosen deacon of the Becket church.

On 2 May 1811 he and his wife Olive were prominent among the eleven individuals who, with Colonel Benjamin Higley, the son of Olive Higley by her first husband, formed a church organization in Becket, which was afterwards established permanently at Windham, Portage County, Ohio; on their removal there, later in the season, he was made its first deacon. It is now known as the First Congregationalist Church of Windham, Ohio.

Four months afterward, Mr. Alford says, in a letter addressed to Judge Erastus Higley of Castleton, Vermont, bearing date August 30, 1811: "I have now begun my journey with my family for the wilderness of New Connecticut, having exchanged my land for land in Township No. 4, in the 6th range of the Connecticut Western Reserve. I have 1167 acres of land in the aforesaid township."

The emigrants arrived at Windham after a long and perilous journey in carts, on the 12 October 1811. Mr. Alford with his family settled on lot No. 57. Here he and his wife brought up a family; many of their descendants still reside in the same locality, well-to-do and highly respected citizens.

Deacon Elijah Alford died at Windham, Ohio, 11 April 1832. His wife, Olive (Higley) Alford, died 16 September 1827 aged seventy-three years. They were interred in the Windham cemetery. They had children, all born in Becket (Berkshire County), MA. ❖