

William C. Alford of Hancock County, OH

Submitted by Judith A. Morreels,
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Among the stream of emigrants contributed to Ohio during her formative period by the famous Empire state of the Union, none did more in proportion to their means in aiding development and progress than the family which bears the name at the head of this sketch. Zina and Aurilla (Orton) Alford were originally from York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, respectively, but subsequently lived for twenty years in Steuben county, New York. In 1848 they removed to Hancock county, Ohio, where Mr. Alford became the owner of sixty-five acres of land, to the cultivation of which he devoted the later years of his life. At an earlier period he learned the tanner's and shoemaker's trades, which constituted his principal occupation for a number of years. Zina Alford was always looked upon as an honest, industrious man, who wronged nobody, attended strictly to his own business and enjoyed general neighborhood esteem. His death occurred in 1882 and it was a general remark by those who attended the obsequies that the community had lost a good citizen. William C. Alford, son of the above mentioned and the subject of this biography, was born in Steuben county, New York, August 18, 1815, and grew up during the residence of his parents in that eastern community. He picked up such learning as could be obtained by irregular attendance at the district schools, but as soon as he arrived at manhood the parental roof was abandoned for a contest with the world on his own account. His first location was in Pennsylvania where he remained one

year and then concluded to try his fortunes across the Ohio border. Two years were spent in Franklin county, followed by a residence of eight years in Marion county, and the year 1848 found him in Hancock county, Ohio, which was destined to be his permanent abode and the theater of all his future life's activities. He made a purchase of eighty acres of land in Big Lick township, and the cultivation of this property has ever since absorbed the chief part of his time and energies. At the time he took possession his land was in its virgin condition, not only unimproved, but wild and woody as only Ohio land could be before the white man's ax and saw had made their appearance. But all things yield to labor and persistent determination, and as the years went by another and another of Mr. Alford's acres emerged from their primeval condition until he had a farm that any agriculturist might well be proud of. The beautiful pastures and well tilled fields were ornamented by all the buildings necessary for comfort and utility, to say nothing of a neat residence for the home of the family. Mr. Alford was never much of a politician, nor did he care for office as such, but at the solicitation of his neighbors he consented at different times to serve as township clerk, supervisor and school director. Before coming to Hancock county, Mr. Alford became acquainted with Miss Rosetta Palmer, whose birth occurred in New York in 1826, and to this lady he was married in 1845. This union, which continued in mutual affection and esteem until Mrs. Alford's lamented death in 1892, was productive of eleven children, of whom the following named seven are living: Sarah C., Byron C., Frederick O., Aurilla J., E. F., C. A., and Electa. C. A. Alford, the last mentioned son on this list, graduated at Oberlin College, and is now an attorney in Duluth ranking well at the bar and giving promise of future distinction.

Mr. Alford, besides the general popularity secured to him by his genial and affable manners, enjoys the reputation of being one of the most skillful hunters in the state. From early years he was always fond of outdoor sports, especially those connected with gunning, and this taste has not diminished with the passage of time. For forty years he has not failed to take an annual hunt in the northern part of Michigan, and many are the stories he is able to tell of his adventures in the north woods after big game of all kinds. He has been especially successful in bringing down the fine deer which roam over the forests of the upper peninsula, and one of these noble animals was shot by Mr. Alford weighed two hundred and twenty-five pounds. This was an unusually magnificent specimen, but only one of the many obtained by Mr. Alford during his frequent forays into the forest. He loves all kinds of hunting and fishing, and ranks as an expert in many lines, being well known far and near by the sportsmen who frequent the woods in season. While on one of his hunting trips this modern Nimrod met with an adventure which came near proving his last. While crossing a ravine on an elevated log he lost his balance, and fell through, his feet catching and holding him suspended in mid air. For a while death by hanging, with the usual process reversed, seemed imminent, but Mr. Alford managed to untangle himself from this scrape, as he had from many another during his adventurous career. ♦

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