

The May House, Davidson Co., TN

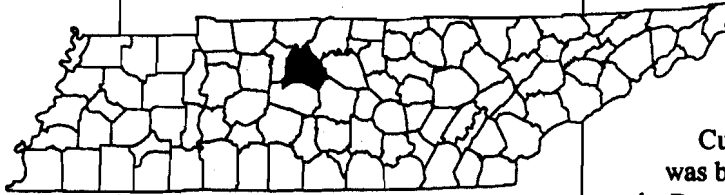
Sent by Carol Hughes Gipson, #724

From *A Past Remembered* by Paul Clements (Nashville, TN: Clearview Press, 1987), pp. 116-118.

This book contains a collection of Antebellum Houses in Davidson Co. TN.

"In early 1780 John Brown arrived in the Cumberland wilderness [of Tennessee].... In 1786 he was granted a 640 acre tract of land about eight miles south of pioneer Nashville on the west fork of Mill Creek, near the main trail which led through the forests of southern Davidson County. From the earliest days of the region's settlement, there had been a handful of fortified outposts known as stations, but in the middle 1780s ... the number of stations dramatically increased and a fortifica-

tion called Brown's Station was built on John Brown's land. A number of families lived safely for a time at Brown's Station, but in the spring of



1788 the terror of Indian warfare came to the outpost on Mill Creek.... [After several massacres and attacks,] Brown's Station was abandoned by the survivors who moved to a stronger fortification closed to Nashville.

"The Indian wars lasted until 1795, and in that year John Brown sold most of his grant to John Cockrill, who made his home about two miles west of

Nashville. The Mill Creek land, which probably included the station, stayed in the Cockrill family until 1807, when 272 acres were sold to John Alford, who had been serving as a soldier in the Revolutionary War when John Brown had journeyed to the

Cumberland region.. Alford was born in northern Virginia, on the Pennsylvania border, but had moved to the central part of the state by the time of the revolution. He had remained there until 1806, and by the time he and his wife, Elizabeth, came to Davidson County, Tennessee, he was already forty-six years old, and most of his nine children were grown. **John and Elizabeth Alford** lived on the west fork of Mill Creek until she died in 1822, and he remained there until his own death in 1837, after



which James F. May paid thirty dollars an acre for 172 acres, which may have included the site of Brown's Station.

"James Francis May was a member of one of Tennessee's most prominent families. In 1786 his grandfather, James White, founded Knoxville, which became the first capital of Tennessee.... [His mother, Mary McConnell White] married Dr. Francis May, and in 1806 they moved to Nashville.... James Francis May, the third of five May children, was born in 1812 and was only five years old when his father died in 1817 at the age of forty.

"In 1820 young May's widowed mother married Judge John Overton, an old family friend who was among the wealthiest and most powerful men in the region.... James May and his four brothers and sisters moved to John Overton's plantation, *Traveller's Rest*, which was located about two miles from where Brown's Station had been built, and during the years in which James May was growing up there, Judge Overton continued to treat him as a son, although a half brother and two half sisters were born to young May's mother. In 1833, just after James reached the age of twenty-one, Overton died, and in 1837 James May took over the management of the Overton plantation....

"[In 1834, James May married Eliza Perkins.] James May was probably still living at *Traveller's Rest* with his

growing family when he bought the Alford place in 1837. The fine two-story brick house into which the family moved may have possibly been built by John Alford, but it was probably constructed by James May soon after his purchase of the property. The new farm would not receive James May's full attention until 1841, when his half brother, John Overton, reached the age of twenty-one and took over his late father's plantation, and when he relinquished management of the Overton estate. James May was not yet thirty years old and was one of the area's most promising young men.... He and Eliza had four children, and a fifth child would soon be born on the farm, which was the home of around thirty family slaves....

"[In 1843 James May was killed in a carriage accident.] A son was born to Eliza May near the time of the tragedy, and she named the child after her husband. Young James Francis May spent his early years in the house which had been built by his father, but after his mother died in 1854, James, his brother and two sisters went to live in Williamson County with an older sister who had married the year before....

"[During the War Between the States, the May] farm was ravaged by Federal foraging detachments which descended on the neighborhood. The war came to an end, and by 1870 the widowed Ann [May] Ewin was sharing the house on Mill Creek with her child, with her

unmarried older sister, White May, and with her younger brother, William....

"After staying in the May family until 1888, the house was subsequently owned by James C. Bradford, and after its purchase by William Granberry in 1909, the *May House* remained in the Granberry family for over seventy years."

AAFA NOTE: John B. Alford was b. in Frederick Co., VA, on 8 May 1760, the son of William and Leticia Alford. John and Elizabeth Bibb were m. 2 March 1783 in Amherst Co., VA [McDonald, *Some Virginia Marriages 1700-1799*, Vol 19, p. 1—see Booklist]. John d. 24 April 1837 in Davidson Co., TN.

We have an 8x10 color photograph of the gravestone of Elizabeth Bibb Alford, wife of John Alford. The engraving reads:

Elizabeth Alford
was born in Amherst
City, Virginia, Nov
the 20th 1758 died in
Davidson County
Tennessee
July the 4th 1822

The gravestone is in the Alford Cemetery on the Granberry Farm, Hill Road, Brentwood, TN. The photo includes an old fence and building in the background. If anyone would like a color xerox copy of this photo, please send \$2 to AAFA. ♦



Write a biographical sketch of an "Alford" you know. We'll print it in *AAFA ACTION* and preserve the memory for the future.