

Mississippi "Alford" Land Records

Summarizing the data in the accompanying land article the 160 documents involved about 80 different "Alfords." The land was in 29 different counties and was claimed through ten different land offices. There was a total of about 15,300 acres of which 160 acres was for a military warrant and 3,250 acres was homesteaded instead of purchased. Speaking of homesteads—records show that only about 40 percent of homesteads begun actually make it to completion and the issuance of a patent. Homesteading, which began in 1862, had pretty stiff requirements and most folks could not meet them. About ten percent of the public land did go to homesteads. The homestead act was repealed in 1972. The land office in Jackson did most of the Alford land records issuing 4,591 acres with Mt. Salus a close second with 4,434 acres, and Washington third with 3,103. Yazoo County has the distinction of having the most Alford land with 2,022 acres. Pike is next with 1,560 acres followed by Hinds with 1,322, Tallahatchie with 1,231, and Franklin with 1,156 acres.

Land records can be both interesting and informative. Although "land" has been the subject of about a dozen previous articles in this quarterly (see the box below)—we have not scratched the surface. There are many different kinds of land records and that has never been the subject of one of our articles. It is not the subject this time either. This article is primarily to introduce an accompanying article on Mississippi land records. In fact, an in depth article would probably take most of any single issue of the quarterly. Those interested in the subject should see Patricia Law Hatcher's "Locating Your Roots, Discover Your Ancestors USING LAND RECORDS." It is available from www.amazon.com if it is not in your local library. Pat Hatcher is an Alford descendant. The following is information she provided us in 1983.

"My Alford ancestor is Elizabeth Alford and I know very little about her other than her name. She married Samuel Gregg who was born in Ireland and came to settle in Loudoun County, Virginia. Their first child was born in 1743 and their last in 1763. After her death he married Mrs. Esther (Tobin) Dixon and he died in 1803. From this information I would estimate that she was born in 1720, married in 1741 or 42 and died between 1763 and 1803. The source for this information is a book by Howard L. Leckey titled Tenmile Country about pioneer families in Greene County, Pennsylvania. He cites a Gregg family Bible which I have been unable to locate. Several of the families in Loudoun County were Quakers who came from New Castle County, Delaware. There are Alfords in Delaware, perhaps she is tied to them. She is the Elizabeth Alford Gregg in the DAR lineage books.

"I should also mention that on the other side of my family I have received information that Martha 'Patsy' Alford married John Houchin. The dates given are incorrect and two generations appear to have been confused. I do not know their source. My records indicated "Orford." The location would be either Amherst Co, Va or Warren County, Ky and the time frame 1720-1840. I am interested in any information which would shed light on this."

—Patricia Law Hatcher

Back to our subject. The accompanying article on Mississippi land records deals with public land made available from the United States by cash sale or by homestead. Unlike the original colonies and early eastern states that used the metes and bounds survey method the public lands used the rectangular survey system.

In preparing this piece I found it fun to let my imagination run wild thinking about what was happening at the time and place of these events. Remember there were few roads, no railroads, no electric lights, telephones, etc. The earliest land

record is from 1826 and there are many from 1840 and 1841. **These dates are the date the president of the United States signed the certificate. Much would have taken place before this date.** In Mississippi where the land came from the Indians the first step for the government was to settle any Indian claims. Next came the surveys to lay out the land. The first step in doing the surveys was to establish a base line and meridian.

Mississippi land records depend on, and the land is surveyed, from four meridians as follows:

1. The **Washington Meridian** adopted in 1803 with the initial point at latitude 30-59-56, longitude 91-09-36. It is in the lower southwestern part of the state and is an extension of the St. Helena Meridian in the Florida parishes of Louisiana. Should not be confused with the Washington Land Office which was opened the same year.

2. **St. Stephens Meridian** adopted in 1805 with the initial point at latitude 30-59-51 and longitude 88-01-20. It is located in Alabama and runs from the northern tip of Mobile bay.

3. **Choctaw Meridian** adopted in 1821 with initial point at latitude 31-52-32 and longitude 90-14-41. It runs generally up through the east central part of the state.

4. **Chickasaw Meridian** adopted in 1833 with initial point at latitude 35-01-58 and longitude 89-14-47.

Once the basic survey was done the "land opening" was announced. Local land offices were opened to sell the land. After most of the land was sold the office

Land Record Articles in *AAFA ACTION*

(As this is being written back issues are available for all but the first listed.)

Issue	Page	Title
15	54	GA Land Records of Jones County, GA
36	47	Wisconsin Land Records Before 1908
37	44	Arkansas Land Records Before 1908
38	47	Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales
41	36	Georgia 1827 Land Lottery
42	24	Some Kentucky Land Transactions
43	67	Alabama Land Records Before 1908
53	12	Research - Some Alford Records for Rockingham Co., VA
56	90	Research - "Alford" Land Records in Michigan
64	016	Louisiana Land Records
68	012	Florida Land Records
68	017	Minnesota Land Records
68	018	Ohio Land Records

You will probably remember from your history that unlike most states that were settled from east to west, much of the settlement of Mississippi was from west to east. Mississippi was established as a territory in 1798 and as a state in 1817. At the time most of Alabama was still in the hands of Indians. By then, we already had Alford's in Mississippi. In a listing of "Inhabitants of the Natchez District - 1810" we found Feral Alford of Claiborne and Warren Counties with one white male over 21, five white males under 21, one white female over 21 and two white females under 21. We recognize this Ferrell and Phebe Alford from Georgia. In a list of "Inhabitants of the Natchez District 1816" we found Hutson in Wilkinson Co., Pheba in Claiborne Co., and Jacon Alfred in Amite Co. The latter was most likely Jacob Halford. In 1816 Mississippi, other than the Natchez district in 1816 was a David Alford in Madison Co.

was closed and responsibility for the area moved to another land office. Here are the Mississippi land offices that our ancestors visited to make claims for their land:

Washington 1803 (not to be confused with the Washington Meridian which was also established in 1803.)

“Washington, is a small town in Adams County, Mississippi (USA) close to Natchez. It was the location of Jefferson College, which was attended by Jefferson Davis.

“History: The town of Washington’s namesake is George Washington. Originally settled by Colonel Andrew Elliot and John Foster. The seat of the territorial legislature was moved from Natchez to Washington on February 1, 1802, and stayed here to 1817. The Constitutional Convention of 1817 met here in the Methodist Meeting House. Clear Creek Baptist Church, erected in 1825 and one of the oldest churches in Mississippi, is located in Washington. Washington was the state capital until it moved to Jackson.”—Wikipedia

Most of my kin who lived in and around Pike County went to Washington for their land office business. It was the only land office for about 15 years. Today Washington is little more than a wide-spot in the road on US 61 not far from where it intersects with US 84.

Augusta 1819 is known as New Augusta today and is located in Perry County about 140 miles to the east and south of Washington. It was located near the Leaf River where it is joined by the prominent Tallahala Creek.

“It is recorded that traders made regular trips to people living near the river bringing with them supplies from Pascagoula. Legend says that one of these traders buried his profits, several thousand dollars in Spanish coins, near the banks of the Leaf River. The coins were later found about 1854.”—Wikipedia.

Remember, when our ancestors went to Augusta to do business with the land office there were no real roads or railroads.

Jackson 1819 AAFA met in Jackson in 1991. It is now the state capitol and well known. When the land office was established there folks did not come to it via Interstate 55 or the IC railroad as they do today. However, it was near one of the better known routes of that day—The Natchez Trace. It was also on the Pearl River that gave access to the gulf.

Mount Salus 1827 You are not likely to find Mt. Salus on the map today even though it was one of the more popular land offices. Today we know it as Clinton. I don't know why they would establish a land office so close to the one in Jackson, but they did.

“Clinton, founded in 1823, was originally known as Mount Salus. Mount Salus was also the name of the home of Walter Leake, third governor of Mississippi, which was located in Clinton and built in 1812. It is supposedly the first brick house built in the United States. In 1828, the name was changed from Mount Salus to Clinton in honor of Dewitt Clinton, the former governor of New York. The first major road through Mount Salus/Clinton was the Natchez Trace.”

Columbus 1833 What we know as Columbus today was a trading post as early as 1783. Columbus was founded in 1821. It is located on the Tombigbee river which is a major north-south water route running from Mobile Bay, and via a waterway today, connecting with the Tennessee river. The Columbus Land Office was used by our Alford's from 1846 to 1859 and serviced mostly those of Carroll and Lauderdale counties. All the Alford's

who used this land office were named James, John or Julius. One John Alford, an exception to the Carroll-Lauderdale Co connection was John Thompson Alford who settled in Lowndes Co. He was a distant uncle of Ann Alford, and AAFA member who lives in Columbus today.

Chocchuma 1833 I found this to be an interesting name and not a Mississippi place with which I was familiar. I found it at www.holcomb.org as one of the *vanished villages*.

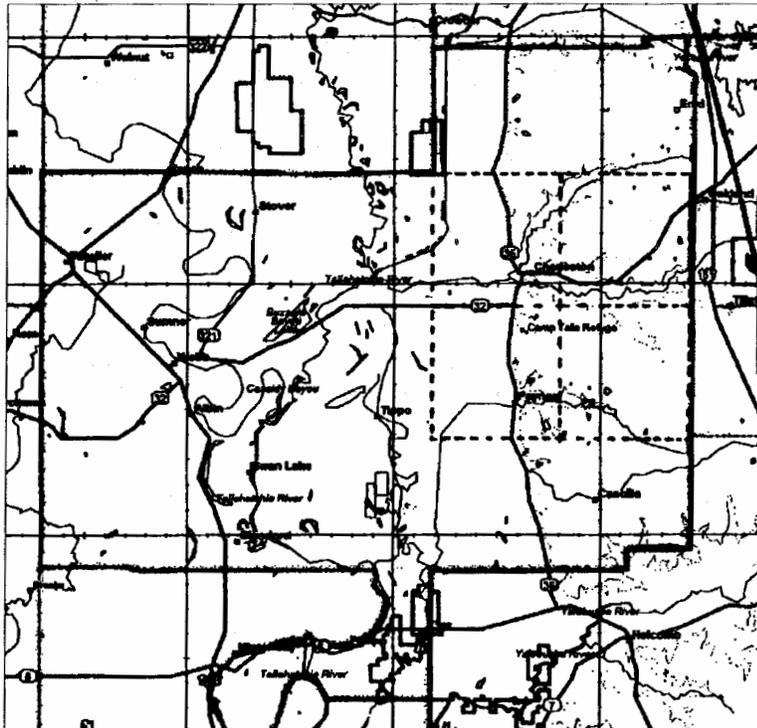
“The village of Chocchuma (in Lots 11 and 12 of Section 19, Township 22, Range 3 east) on the Yalobusha River grew up around the U.S. Land Office (1833-40), which was charged with selling off Indian Lands after the removal of the Choctaws.

“Its name (translated Red Crawdad People) recalls the powerful Chakchiuma Indians, who were believed to have come from west of the Mississippi River and once lived along the Yazoo, Tallahatchie and Yalobusha rivers....

“In 1835, the bustling little town of Chocchuma had five businesses, a saloon, three hotels (one known as the Planters Hotel) and five boarding houses to serve the eager land-buyers who flocked to the area. Keel boats large enough to carry 300 bales of cotton plus passengers plied the Yalobusha. Fortunes were founded, risked and lost in the fever of land speculation.

“In ‘*Indians and Pioneer of Old Eliot*’ Henry Heggie quotes a resident of Chocchuma who describes the homes in Yalobusha country as crude and rough. They were made of rough-hewn logs and had one to two rooms, rough floors, window shutters instead of glass, roofs of boards, chimneys of sticks and mortar and wide fireplaces with no mantles. They were furnished with chairs, tables and beds made of hickory. The chairs had seats of cow or goat hide.

“In 1842, the land office moved to Grenada and Chocchuma gradually died out. Today, there is no evidence of the early presence of the town, about three miles southwest of Holcomb, described by J.C. Hathorn in his ‘History of Grenada County’ as sitting on the last ridge of land before the river fell away into the lowlands of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta.”



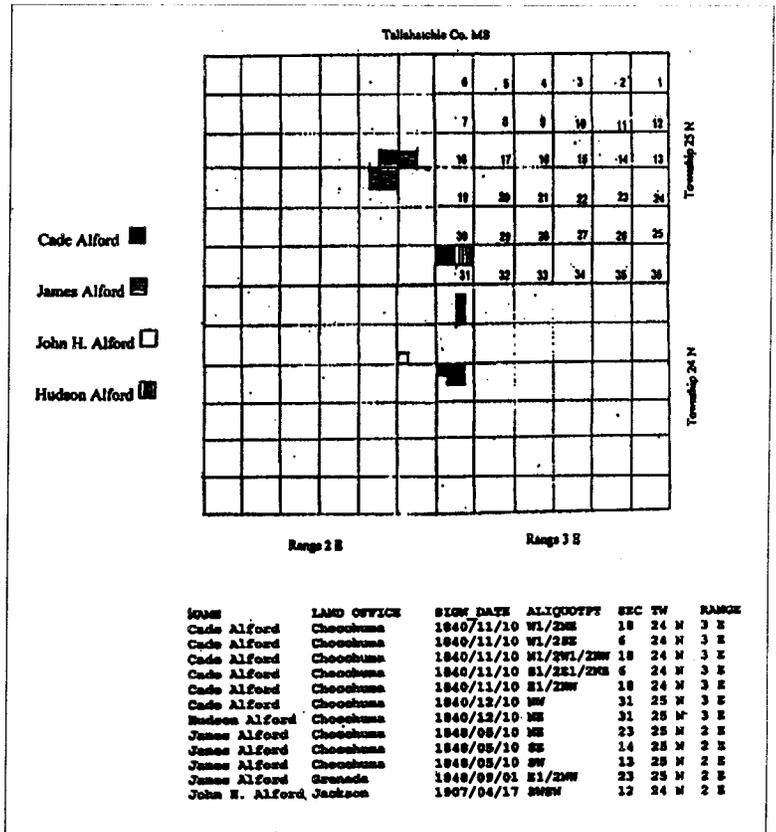
Tallahatchie Co., MS - Alford townships (dotted lines)

Three or four Alford kin used the land office at Chocchuma and they are the family featured in the genealogy in this issue. Cade Alford from North Carolina traveled to Mississippi via Tennessee and Alabama. They settled in Tallahatchie Co where Cade and son Hudson received their certificates for land in 1840, son James got his in 1848, and grandson John Hudson in 1909. Because of the relative simplicity of the rectangular survey system it is easy to plot the locations where their land was situated on a map. Many types of maps include township and range identification. Section lines usually appear only on local maps. However with the knowledge that the standard layout of a township is in 36 sections one mile square numbered from the top right corner to the bottom right corner weaving back and forth it is easy to locate the sections involved.

The map shown to the left is an approximation of where the four “Alford” townships were located in Tallahatchie Co. The

map includes, near the bottom, the area in which the Chocchuma land office was located. Cade and his son's land was in four different townships: T24 - 25N and R2 -3E. Cade's land acquired in November 1840 in township 24 N range 3 E was just to the south east of Charleston in it's early days. It is one of the two county seats. In December he received a quarter section in township 25 range 3 E which was even closer to Charleston. Son Hudson had an adjoining quarter section. Son James' land was just to the north of Charleston in township 25 N range 2 E. His land seemed to be better situated "water wise" than his father or brother.

Shown in the illustration to the right is a rough representation of the four townships with the lands purchased by the Alford's plotted in their respective sections and townships. Cade received land in sections six and 18 township 24N range 3E. That is the bottom right township and from the section numbering in the township in the upper right township you can see that section six is in the top left corner of the township in the lower right. In November 1840 Cade received two different pieces in section six. All of his is plotted in solid black. First listed was the western 1/2 of the southeast quarter. Then there was the southern 1/2 of the eastern 1/2 of the northeast quarter. That created a piece a quarter section (quarter mile) wide extending vertically for three-quarters of a section (mile). Then a mile to the south in section 18 he got three pieces: the western 1/2 of the northeast quarter; the northern 1/2 of the western 1/2 of northwest quarter and the eastern 1/2 of the northwest quarter. Then in December that year Cade received the entire northwest quarter of section 31, township 25N range 3E. Note that in addition to the land purchased from the government some of the Cade's sons bought land locally.



Alford lands in Tallahatchie Co., MS

Son Hudson Alford also acquired land in December 1840. His was the adjoining northeastern quarter of section 31, township 25N, range 3E. It is shown with vertical stripes.

In 1848 son James received four pieces of land in township 25N, range 2E. That is the top left quarter of the illustration. His plats are shaded with horizontal stripes. In section 13 he had the entire southwest quarter. In section 14 he got the adjoining entire southeast quarter. In section 23 he received the entire northeast quarter and finally in the same section he added the adjoining eastern 1/2 of the northwestern quarter.

Almost sixty years later Cade's grandson John Hudson Alford received the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter in section 12, township 24N, range 2E. His is the smaller square not shaded.

Pontotoc 1836

"Pontotoc is a city in Pontotoc County, Mississippi, United States. The population was 5,253 at the 2000 census. It is the county seat of Pontotoc County.

"The famous outlaws Jesse & Frank James and their notorious gang once hid at an old

house that was used as an Union Army hospital during the Battle of Harrisburg or Battle of Tupelo. The house was located at a crossroad in east Pontotoc County, near the Lee County line.”—Wikipedia

Our only record of an Alford using the Pontotoc land office was William Alford of Webster Co. in 1898.

Grenada 1842 Grenada took over the responsibility for the Chocchuma land office when it closed in 1840. The only Alford known to have used it was James Alford of Tallahatchie Co. in 1848.

Paulding 1860 Paulding, which is in Jasper County, was also not a popular land office for the Alfords. The only record we have for an Alford getting land through Paulding was Warren F. Alford of Lauderdale Co. in 1861.

Don't fail to also see the article with details of Alford Mississippi Land records and the Cade Alford genealogy.

Ⓐ

(Continued from page 63, Cade Alford Family Wills)

instrument of writing, filed in my office on the 4th day of February A. D. 1925, purporting to be the last will and testament of J. H. Alford deceased, late of Tallahatchie County, in said State; and said witnesses, having been by me first duly sworn, on oath say:

That the said J. H. Alford, on the 18 day of April, 1922, the day of date of said instrument, at _____ freely, and without any restraint or undue influence known to them, signed, published and declared said instrument to be his last will and testament in the presence of the said subscribing witnesses; that the said testator was then of sound and disposing mind, and more than twenty one years of age; that they, the said deponents then and there, at the special instance and request, and in the presence of the said testator and in the presence of each other, subscribed and attested said instrument as witnesses to the signature and publication thereof; that said testator at the time of said attestation by said deponents was mentally capable of recognizing, and actually conscious of, said act of attestation; and that they, the said subscribing witnesses, were, at the time of said attestation competent witnesses under the laws of the State of Mississippi.

A. C. Harrison
T. E. Wallace

Filed for record on the 4th day of February, 1925 and recorded Feb. 18, 1925.

D. S. Henderson Clerk

[Note: My copy of the will of John Hudson Alford was typed, and there are indications that it could have been taken from an original that was handwritten.]

To find out more about the lives and families of the people who left these wills, look for the genealogy of the descendants of Cade Alford elsewhere in this quarterly.

Ⓐ