

THE ALFORDS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The following particulars concerning this important offshoot of the Alford family has been drawn by compiler from a variety of sources. Savage's *Genealogical Dictionary of New England* contains information which was incorporated in the *Burke and Alvord Memorial* (1851) in the Public Library at Boston, U.S.A. From this the *Alvord Memorial* was taken, while a further result has been a comprehensive *Pedigree with Notes* by John Watson Alvord, of Chicago, 1897. The connection with Somersetshire was worked out by the Rev. R. Grosvenor Barlett of Corfe Castle; and to these gentlemen and also to the Rev. Frederick Alford of Talcottville, Mr. D.S. Alford of Lawrence, Kansas, and more recently to Mr. Samuel M. Alvord of Hartford, Conn., the compiler gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness.

The families bearing the name of Alford and Alvord, now spreading far and wide through the United States, had at least a two-fold origin. In 1634 one William Alford left London for the New World across the Atlantic, and somewhere about the same date two brothers, Alexander and Benedict Alford, with their sister Joan, "left Somerset for New England."

The Puritan motive for this emigration cannot be passed without notice. "Many Godly people being denied the free exercise of religion according to their own consciences did, under a Charter granted by King Charles ye first remove themselves into the Colony of ye Massachusetts Bay in New England that they might worship God without burthensome Impositions." "So we came", writes one of them "by the hand of God through the deeps having preaching or expounding of the Word every day for ten weeks"—so long was the voyage.

The most notable ships in which they sailed were the *Mary and John* of 400 tons—so small a vessel—and the *Mayflower*. In the former came Richard Vore, John Strong of Taunton, the Rev. E. Hewitt of Wraxall, and Thomas Ford of Somersetshire; and in the latter Edward Fuller; all of whom afterwards became connected by marriage with the Alfords.

The variation of spelling the name has already been shown to be of little importance, yet it appears as though, generally speaking, the Alfords sprang from Middlesex, and the Alvords—the Somerset pronunciation being at once recognisable in variation—from the western county.

We take first those of Middlesex origin:

William Alford, a member of the Skinners' Company, with his wife Mary Alford, left London in 1634, and, landing safely in America, settled in Salem, Massachusetts. Some mention of this family is made by Savage, but their descendants do not appear to have been very numerous, and no pedigree is available. Three of William Alford's children were baptised at Salem (where his wife "joined the Church" in 1636), viz., Nathaniel in 1637, Samuel in 1639, and Bellia in 1642. "He removed for a season to New Haven, and there had two or more children born before 1654." Returning to Massachusetts he settled in Boston, where he died in 1677, his will being dated the previous year.

Benjamin Alford, whom Savage names as a younger son of the above William Alford, was a merchant of Boston, Mass., and a member of the Artillery Company of 1671. He married Mary, daughter of James Richards Esq. of Hartford, and had several sons and daughters, whose births and baptisms are recorded between 1683 and 1694. Benjamin Alford was "a man of importance in Boston". His will is dated February 19, 1694, the Probate being 13 years later.

The Honourable Colonel **John Alford**, eldest son of the above Benjamin Alford, was baptised at "Third Church", Boston, 5 July 1685. He was a member of the Artillery Company at Charleston in 1714, "was one of the King's Councilors, and distinguished as founder of the Alford Professorship of Theology at Harvard, and for giving large sums to the Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians in North America". He married Margaret, daughter of Colonel Thomas Savage, and died "highly respected" in Charleston in 1761, aged 76.

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We turn now to the family of Somersetshire origin, of whose source there can be no doubt, although the particulars are somewhat confused.

The pedigree-table which precedes these notes, shows a few selected lines of descent from the Alexander and Benedict Alford, who left home in "the neighbourhood of Whitestanton and Chard in county of Somerset for New England". They were the sons of Thomas Alford, of Whitestanton, and Joane his wife. This Thomas Alford was the son, or the grandson, of the Rev. Alexander Alford, of Whitestanton, and Agnes his wife, who died, he in 1576, and she in the year following, their wills (see Appendix) being proved in the Court of the Archdeaconry of Taunton.

From these Alfords of Somerset came the American families here under consideration. The descendants of Benedict Alford are not very numerous, but those of Alexander Alford now number several thousands.

**Alexander Alford**, the elder of the two brothers who with their sister Joan "left Somersetshire for New England", landed doubtless in Massachusetts Bay, "came up from the Bay", and settled as "one of the early proprietors of Windsor, Connecticut", where his "home-lot" is indentified.

In 1646, October 29, he married Mary, daughter of Richard and Ann Vore, who, "born in England, came over with her parents in the *Mary and John*". By this marriage Alexander Alford had six sons and four daughters, some lines of his descendants being shown in the foregoing pedigree-table.

In 1661, selling his land at Windsor, he moved to Northampton, Mass., where he was "for many years a large proprietor, and an original member of the first Church". The record is extant of "Alexander Alvord's"—the spelling already changed—"lands, which he hath purchased, and which were granted to him by the town of Northampton, to him and his heirs and assigns to have and hold [*sic*] forever".

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FOOTNOTE

Whitestanton (spelt in various ways), Winsham, and Chard,—the latter a pleasant country town lying between the two former villages, the three parishes together forming the extreme southwest corner of the co. of Somerset—were for many generations the homes of Alfords, who held positions of respect and local responsibility, and were small landowners.

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In 1682 Alexander Alvord, excepting one other proprietor in the Northampton township, "had the largest number of rods for maintaining the common defence".

He died 3 October 1687. His will follows [spelling as found]:

"Alexander Alvord of Northampton in the Countie of Hampshire in the Massachusetts Bay in New England, May 23, 1687, weak in strength and well-stricken in years .... I comitt my soul to God yt gave it .... my body to be buried in comely manner, and as for outward estate—whereas my son John Alvord, my daughter Abigail wife to Thomas Roote, Mary Miller deceased, and Elizabeth Birt deceased, having received the full of their portions already, I only give as follows, viz.: twentie shillings. To Thomas Alvord and to his two sons Thomas and John twentie shillings to each of them. To my son Benjamin my old house joining to that which my son Willer lived in, together with that peice of land it standeth upon. To my son Jeremiah thirtie pounds. To my daughter Sarah thirtie pounds. To my son Jonathan twentie pounds. The rest of my estate I give to my son Ebenezer Alvord, viz.: my house, barne, orchard, pasture, meadow land, stock, household stuff, and all my estate whatsoever. My son shall not alienate any part of the lands, but make disposal of the same to the heirs of his body. My son Ebenezer to be sole Executor. My trustie friend Mr. Hawley to see this my Will accomplished, and to take special care of my unmarried children, to advise them in matching, and to have the oversight of them while they remayne in a single condition." Northampton, U.S.A., Reg. of Probate, I, 265.

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Benedict Alford, the younger of the two brothers who with their sister Joan "left Somersetshire for New England", is mentioned in 1637 as "of Windsor, Connecticut".

In that year an offensive war against the Pequots was declared, that tribe of American Indians proving troublesome to the settlers, and Benedict Alvord was one of a company of thirty from the Windsor "plantations". A decisive battle was fought on May 26, 1637, and the little army—from Windsor, Hartford, and Wethersfield—returned victorious. The names of those who fought are recorded: "Captain Mason, the very foremost of them all, and brave Sergeant Alvord," etc.

He then returned to England, doubtless for " his espoused Joan Nurton or Newton, who was of the parish of Broadway" about four miles from Whitstanon. While at home a purchase of cattle was made, and Benedict Alvord's signature also appears as a witness on a Deed executed in 1639 by Nicholas Nurton.

Crossing the Atlantic once more Benedict Alvord married Joan Nurton, 26 November 1640, at Windsor, Conn., where he had a grant of land, and where their five children were born. There, too, he died 23 April 1683.

Their son **Benjamin Alvord** was born 11 July 1647, and followed his father's early warlike propensities. An old tablet in the burial ground at New London bears the following inscription:

"Interred under this stone
is the body of
Colonel Benjamin Alvord,
who departed this life
August ye 12th. Ano. Dom. 1709,
in ye 63rd yeare of his age."

Their son **Jeremiah Alvord**, born 24 December 1651, married and continued the family as is shown in the pedigree table, the family names of Benedict and Alexander being carried down to the fifth generation.

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**Joseph Alvord**—we note the Puritan use of scriptural names—born at Northampton, Mass., in March 1697, was the second son of Ebenezer Alvord and Ruth his first wife, and grandson of the foregoing Alexander Alvord. He settled at Hampton, on a property he bought in 1730, carrying on business as a weaver, and employing a large number of hands. "He tore down the old house, and erected a large substantial mansion instead of it." "Mr. Alvord owned other estates." He married, 30 June 1730, Clemence Wright, by whom he had seven children. He died 1 January 1786, and was buried in the Northampton ancient burial ground.

Their son **Medad Alvord** was born 6 January 1738, and lived in Bridge Street, Northampton. He was twice married, but appears to have left only two daughters. He died in 1798, and was buried in the Northampton burial Ground.

"In memory of  
Mr. Medad Alvord,  
who died 15th May, 1798,  
in the 61st year of age.  
A man of common sense, strong mind,  
and good judgement, and a philanthropist."

The other sons of Joseph and Clemence Alvord left between them ten sons and five daughters.

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We now follow out the three lines of descent shown in the pedigree, Table XII, under Notes A, B, and C.

Note A.—Starting from Alexander Alvord of Windsor, Conn., who in 1646 married Mary Vore, we take the line of his eldest surviving son, Thomas Alvord of Northampton, Mass., born 1653, who married in 1681 Joanna Taylor. Their eldest surviving son, Thomas Alvord, born 1683, and afterwards of Middletown, Conn., married (secondly) Mary Strong, whose fourth son Seth Alvord, born 1714, of Chatham, Conn., married Elizabeth Spencer. Reuel Alvord, also afterwards of Chatham, born 1750, was the son of Seth and Elizabeth, and married in 1774 Hannah

Hall, whose second son James Hall Alvord, born 1781, married Lucy Cook, and was for forty years a Deacon in Winsted, Conn. The Rev. John Watson Alvord, born 1807, was their eldest son, and married in 1845 Myrtilla M. Peck, whose son John Watson Alvord of Chicago, Civil Engineer, born 1861, was the compiler of *Pedigree with Notes* published in 1897.

Note B.—Commencing again with Alexander Alford of Windsor, Conn., who married Mary Vore in 1646, through their eldest surviving son, Thomas Alvord of North Hampton, Mass., born 1653, who married Joanna Taylor, we now follow the line of his third son John Alvord, Assessor, of South Hadley, who was born 1685, and married in 1708 Dorcas Lyman. Saul Alvord, third son of the above John and Dorcas, was born in 1717, settled at Northampton, and married Martha Churchill. Their eldest son, another Saul Alvord, was born in 1753, lived at Bolton, Conn., and married in 1778 Eleanor Kellogg. Martin Alvord of Bolton, born 1788, was their son, and married, first Sophia Shepherd, and secondly Martha Burleigh Clark. The Rev. Frederick Alvord of Talcottville, Tolland Co., Conn., born 1828, married Susan Gridly Ely, and died in 1903, was a son of the above Martin, as was also Elijah Anson Alvord of Bolton, Conn., born 1825, who married Cynthia Ann Warner, whose son Samuel Morgan Alvord, born 1869, of Hartford, Conn., B.A. of Yale, is now a professor in the Hartford Public High School.

Note C.—Starting once more with Alexander Alford of Windsor, Conn., who married Mary Vore in 1646, through their son Thomas Alvord who married Joanna Taylor in 1681, and their grandson John Alvord of South Hadley, who married Dorcas Lyman, we take the line of Elijah Alvord of Hadley, the fourth son of John and Dorcas, born in 1719, "a prominent man in the town and Church," who married Hannah Judd. Caleb Alvord, his only son, of Greenfield, Mass., was born in 1751, and married Mary Murdock, leaving many descendants. His eldest son Elijah Alvord, born 1777, "an eminent lawyer" of Greenfield, Mass., married in 1805 Sabra Wells, whose son Daniel Wells Alvord, born 1816, became a member of the State Senate. Daniel Wells Alvord married (secondly) Caroline, daughter of Judge Dewey, whose son Charles Dewey Alvord was born in 1860, another son, Major Henry E. Alvord, "Soldier, Farmer, Statesman," dying in 1904.

In the Public Library at Northampton, Massachusetts, there is a bronze Memorial Tablet recording the names of those who from that town served in the various wars of their country. The following are included:--

"King Philip's War, 1676, Thomas Alvord."

"French and Indian War, 1722, Benjamin Alvord."

"French and Indian War, 1754 to 1763, Benjamin Alvord, Stephen Alvord, Thomas Alvord."

"Revolutionary War, 1775 to 1783, Eliab Alvord, Elisha Alvord, John Alvord, Samuel Alvord."

During the American and Spanish War in the Philippine Islands, the following are recorded:

"Manila, February 1899, Lieutenant Alford, Company I of the Kansas Regiment, killed.