

Alexander Marshall Alford, Young Confederate Soldier

One of Winston County's early settlers was Alexander Marshall Alford. He was born 1 Mar 1849 in Troup County, Georgia son of Spire Warren Alford and Caroline Missouri Cotton. Alford's destiny was originally meant to be Texas. The family moved to Daingerfield, Texas in the 1850s but soon his father and a brother and a sister died of fever. Caroline then took the young Alexander and the rest of the children back to Georgia where they lived with her father, William G. Cotton.

Alexander Alford was a young man when the Civil War came to Georgia, but he proudly did his part for the Lost Cause. He enlisted as a Private in Company B of the 27th Georgia Infantry, Home Guard at West Point, Georgia on 29 Mar 1864 at the age of 15. Family legend holds that one of his duties was helping guard the bridge at West Point over the Chattahoochee River. He was furloughed at the end of the war in May of 1865.

Alford married Frances Elizabeth Shank on 1 Nov 1874 in Troup County, Georgia. Frances was daughter of John Alexander Shank and Sarah Ann Hogan. Alexander and Frances moved to Winston County in January of 1880 and entered land on what is now National Forest land near the end of the road to the Houston Recreational Area. Here, he cleared some land and built a log house and set about raising a family on his little farm in the Winston County wilderness.

Alexander and Frances Alford's children included Celestia Odessa (1874) who married George Marlin Wilson; Daisy Frances (1879) who married John H. Blake; and John Warren (1884) who married Amy Cleopatra Tidwell.

While Winston County was well known for its Unionist sentiment during the war, Alford was one of many of the new ex-Confederate settlers who proudly voted the Democratic ticket. Alford regularly attended reunions of Confederate soldiers and was a Winston County delegate to the Confederate Reunion in Biloxi, Mississippi in 1930. The family still has the original delegate pin and medal he wore.

Alford's granddaughter, Myrtie Alford Hunter, related the story of when Alexander was traveling to one such Confederate reunion. He stopped and asked a farmer if he could stay the night on his property and at first the farmer resisted because he was tired of being bothered by tramps. But when he saw Alford's Confederate pin, he had an immediate change of attitude and said Alford was welcome to stay as long as he wanted.

When Alford got older he applied through the Probate Judge of Winston County to be placed on the rolls of Confederate pensioners from the State of Alabama. His application was approved in the late 1890s and he received a small pension from the State for over a decade. However, by 1912 the rolls of needy ex-Confederates had grown so large it became a burden on the State Treasury. About that time, the State engaged ex-Confederate General F.S. Ferguson to personally review the pension rolls. Each Confederate pensioner was responsible for supplying witness affidavits to his service while Ferguson sought service records from the War Department in Washington.

Alexander Alford was too young to enlist in the regular Confederate Army in 1864, but the struggling Confederacy was hungry for as many recruits as they could get. Those too

old or too young to serve in the regular army were assigned to serve in local so-called Home Guard, State Troops, or State Militia organizations. Such was the case for Alexander Alford. The 37th Georgia Infantry unit he belonged to was a Georgia State Militia organization. Alford's father-in-law, John Alexander Shank was born in 1816. Shank was too old to serve in the regular army, but he did his part when he enlisted in Company K of the 2nd Georgia Cavalry at LaGrange, Georgia.

In 1913, the State of Alabama adopted strict rules for pension eligibility. In addition to providing affidavits, the pensioner also had to have a clean record of service from the War Department. Regular army Confederates were ineligible if they had deserted, took the oath of allegiance to the Union, or otherwise had been not honorably discharged. Those who served in the Home Guard, State Troops, or State Militia organizations were ruled not eligible for a pension. Alexander Alford, like hundreds of other Alabama ex-Confederates, was unceremoniously dropped from the pension rolls.

Like so many other deserving ex-Confederates, Alford thought this was unfair. He had proudly served the Confederacy just like the other battle-scarred veterans. Despite his service, his disadvantage was that he was only 15-years-old and enlisted in the Georgia State Militia. Alford immediately applied for reinstatement and spent over the next 20 years attempting to get his pension back. He wrote the Winston County Probate Judge, Cullman attorneys, Congressman William B. Bankhead, and State Senator B.J. Cowart to press his case. One of the last letters he received was dated 1932 where Charles E. McCall, Assistant Examiner of Accounts, Alabama Pension Commission explained all the details of why Alford was not eligible for a pension. Alford died 23 March 1934 a few days after his 85th birthday which ended his quest to have his pension reinstated.

Alexander Alford's son John Warren Alford married Amy Tidwell. Her father, Isaiah P. Tidwell was a Private in Company F of the 29th Alabama Infantry. He has a CSA monument in the Pleasant Hill Cemetery near Houston. Alford's father-in-law, John Alexander Shank, was a member of Company K of the 2nd Georgia Cavalry. He has a CSA monument in the Union Grove cemetery between Double Springs and Natural Bridge.

On a beautiful Spring day in April of 2008, one of Alexander Alford's great-grandsons drove to the top of the Houston Baptist Church Cemetery and carefully set a new CSA monument in honor of his ancestor's service. It had been 74 years since death had claimed Alford and terminated his long quest for official recognition for his Confederate service. That oversight was corrected and now Alexander Marshall Alford has his own CSA monument provided by the US Government. At last, Alford has the recognition he deserved. He has joined the ranks of hundreds of other Winston County Confederate Soldiers.

[submitted by Robin Alford Sterling]