

# MARTHA ANN YAGER ALFORD

1831 KY - 1918 MO

See also the biography of her husband, Thompson Thornton Alford

## RALLS COUNTY RECORD

NEW LONDON, MISSOURI.

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 1918.

### MARTHA ANN ALFORD.

Back in the old Kentucky state, near the historic town of Danville, lay the farm of Nancy and Fielding Yeager. The quaint old home stood amidst the giant forest trees and blue grass pastures in the garden green thyme and lavender; in the yard blossomed marigolds and sweet williams. The pinnacle of happiness is attained when the music of children's voices is heard in the home.

An epochal event in this family was the birth of the first girl baby on an autumn day, Sept. 28, 1830. She was christened Martha Ann. The morning life of this child was made beautiful by the parents training her in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In 1850, Mr. and Mrs. Yeager, with their family of three boys and two girls, came to Missouri and purchased a farm about four miles from Madisonville and nine miles north of Vandalia or what is now Vandalia. Martha Ann, now a comely young lady, soon captivated the affections of a handsome young man, Thos Alford, whose father's farm was

near Elk Lick Springs. The young man's perseverance won the heart and hand of the fair lady and they plighted their troth at the marriage altar July 25, 1851.

Life was now before them with its songs, its blue skies and seriousness. It was their privilege to lay the corner stone of the fireside on a farm that Mr. Alford purchased adjacent to Mr. Yeager's farm. Here the young people toiled and spun, sowed and reaped; with the years came three children, Betty, Field and Nannie to bless and honor the home.

While peace was dominant in the home life; the national life was disturbed and unsettled and at last the inevitable came to pass—the cry of war was heralded unto four corners of the nation. Little did they realize that the clear sky would be overshadowed; that so much blood would be sacrificed to the God of war or the God of selfishness and misunderstanding. At once Mr. Alford shouldered his musket and marched forth to fight for the confederate cause, the cause he so unflinchingly defended to the end.

Mr. Yeager went in company with Mr. Alford; he was killed. To see her husband and brother march into the dangers of war was not a moment to be lightly met; only those who have had their hours of anguish can realize its meaning. But Mrs. Alford sent her soldier husband away with a smile, a God speed and an outward calm gained only with a close communion with God, the protector of mankind. The wife and mother then took up the duties of life with a determination to do and to win. All went passing fair until the enemy upon a wintry night set fire to her home. She managed to carry a mattress out and lay it upon the ice carpeted earth, and this she placed the children and stood a silent witness to the conflagration of her home and its contents. No murmurings, no complainings were uttered. "Life is a battle why not meet it stocially," she mused. The little family now took up their abode with the father and grandfather, Mr. Yeager. In a short time a message came which read: "Capt. Alford wounded somewhere in Mississippi, come at once and bring the children." Mrs. Alford started out upon her perilous journey. Her father took her, the children, her sister Fannie and a Mrs. Whitman from Perry in his covered wagon to Hannibal where they were to take the steamboat for the south.

The difficulty for southern people to travel was overcome by Mr. Jesse Armstrong, a merchant of Hannibal and a Mason friend.

Could we give a detailed account of this journey it would read like a story of the sages of old. By and by the city of New Orleans was reached, from here Mrs. Alford proceeded to Jackson, Miss., where the confederate camps were located. She traveled by rail thence by stage coach through the shadows of the great pine forest. Under the cover of night, two stage coaches met, a conversation ensued, one of the speakers Mrs. Alford recognized as her husband. It seemed that God was the guiding spirit in uniting them in this accidental manner; though Capt. Alford had started out to meet his wife. They felt with the Psalmist, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wing." Their baptisms of fire and blood vanished before their joy as the mist before the sunshine.

Mrs. Alford nursed her husband back to strength and health then she returned to Missouri. War is uncertain at best, Capt. Alford was wounded again. Again the wife was summoned. Just six weeks intervened before she reached her husband's side; he had lain all this time in a barn without any attention

whatever, but her skilled fingers, her loving ministries and prayers brought him back to normal health.

Mrs. Alford's ability as a diplomat was of untold value to her. Twice on these two trips she ran Federal blockade; once in crossing the Mississippi river into the Mississippi state to reach Federal territory to take the train for St. Louis; the other incident we do not know accurately. At last the war closed, Capt. Alford returned to his home, they took up life now with greater wisdom, a deeper sense of responsibility. Again they laid the corner stone of the home on the same farm. They were charter members of the Hays Creek Christian Church. Into the home now came the youngest child of Mrs. Alford, our Dr. Lee, who ministered so tenderly unto his mother through her declining years.

Thrift wisely pursued, brought a full measure of material goods. Kindheartedness and gentility brought her a full measure of friends. The family circle was her great passion, training, serving and loving. Her hospitality was expressed most beautifully. Relative, friend, rich, poor, old or young, alike received a welcome. Strangers knocked at her doors and were taken in. The ministers made Mrs. Alford's home theirs. So it was all through life. Service was her watchword, those who serve love or those who love serve. Just a

few days prior to her death she wished to do a little kind service to her husband. God seemed to have granted Mrs. Alford an unusual blessing, for over sixty-six years she walked side by side with her husband.

At the age of eighty-eight years, on Wednesday afternoon, March 20, 1918, Mrs. Alford was translated from her earthly home to the land beyond.

The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Chinn at the home on Friday afternoon. A large concourse of friends and relatives paying their respects to a beloved friend. Flowers, symbolical of love, surrounded the coffin and covered the fresh earth mound that was made in the Vandalia cemetery.

Gone we say; no only departed unto a perfect life, her spirit lives in the hearts and lives of those whom she served and loved.

To the dear Capt. Alford who is so lonely and heart broken, we pray he may be comforted by his Master's words "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted."

Those attending the funeral from a distance were Field Alford and family of Perry; Miss Bess Evans, Hannibal; Jesse Ellis and wife of Elsberry; Dr. and Mrs. W. T. Waters, Mrs. Yeager, New London. Mrs. Alford leaves her husband, four children and one sister, Mrs. Fannie Ellis of Vandalia. To these relatives we extend our sympathy.

**AAFA NOTES:** Martha's birth year is 1830 in her biography and on her death certificate, but 1831 on her gravestone and on the 1900 census.

Her maiden name is sometimes spelled Yeager, but on her father's gravestone he is Fielding Yager.