

FINDING SARAH ALFORD

**THEY SHALL BE KNOWN BY THE COMPANY THEY KEPT
AND THE LAND UPON WHICH THEY LIVED**

First Part in a Series of Similar Articles

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Preface:

For the past ten years, I have been blessed with the privilege and opportunity of teaching the use of the computer for genealogical research to a class of seniors at my church in Decatur, Georgia. My compensation has been doubled each year and has come entirely in the form of satisfaction in seeing the excitement of others when they learn, often for the first time, the name of a long since departed ancestor.

My connection to the Alfords and AAFA is explained in the ensuing story: THE SEARCH FOR SARAH ALFORD, THIRD WIFE OF LODWICK, SR. I submitted this story to the Editor of AAFA ACTION, with the hope that how the information was found might be as much of interest to the reader as the fact that the identity of "Old Lod's" third wife is now known.

Soon to be completed and submitted to the Editor for consideration are one or more similar stories, each dealing with Alford mothers, wives or daughters, who heretofore have had little or no recognition.

The title of this series: "They Shall Be Known By The Company They Kept And Land Upon Which They Lived", has been my "trademark" in the aforementioned genealogy classes. Members of the class have heard it repeated many times because of my firm belief that understanding such can be crucial to success in genealogical research.

Finally, I believe that family genealogy should contain far more than birth, marriage and death records, often referred to as the matched, hatched and dispatched records. If we pass along true and meaningful stories and events to our descendants, they will appreciate that we took the time to put "meat on the bones" of their ancestors.

In the June 1989 edition of AAFA ACTION, James Alford, Houston, Texas, penned an article entitled "What's In A Name." Mr. Alford made several excellent points but the one that got my undivided attention was when he wrote, and I quote "...if you suffer from father side genealogy and never thought to study Mom's family, you are in for a surprise." I had been practicing Mr. Alford's genealogy philosophy for years but had never thought to express it in such simple terms. I had never met this Texan but knew that we were singing off of the same sheet of music.

I am not an Alford and my only credentials for writing about "Old" Lod Alford and third wife, Sarah, is that I was married to the beautiful Roberta Alford for 57 years before losing her in April 2010. Lodwick Alford, Sr., was Roberta's fifth great-grandfather and thus sixth great-grandfather of our daughters, Susan and Becky. Together, we researched Alfords for more than 20 years and made a special effort to learn about the Alford women...mothers, wives and daughters. We wanted Susan and Becky to know about all of their Alford ancestors and not just the men. Mr. James Alford was right on target when he reminded us of the importance of Mom's side of the family.

It took several years to work back through generations of Roberta's Alford line, documenting extant data on her grandfathers, Walton, Wiley, Collin, James, and Lodwick, including the wives and children of each. Lodwick was the most researched due to his many descendants and the efforts of AAFA to compile family data and share such with members. We found no consensus of opinion as to the maiden names of Lodwick's first two wives, Elizabeth and Susannah. However, after several years of research, we had no doubt, then or now, that they were the daughters of Robert and Susannah Crump Cade of New Kent County, Virginia. The Cades were in North Carolina before December 1739/1740 when Robert served on a jury. It is quite possible that Lodwick and his family came to North Carolina about the same time. It would have been a natural occurrence for that period.

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Lodwick's third wife, known only as Sarah, was believed by some Alford researchers to be the widow of his brother, Goodrich Alford who died in 1753 in Edgecombe County, North Carolina. Others were sure that he married a Rebecca Ferrell. The Ferrells were nearby neighbors, thus the speculation. The only documented evidence that Lodwick married a lady named Sarah was found in court documents which refer to 'Lodwick and his wife Sarah'. Heretofore, Sarah's full identity has been unknown. Even though Roberta's fifth great-grandmother was known to be Susannah, mother of Lodwick's son James, she still felt we should search for Sarah's identity for the benefit of those who did descend from Lodwick and Sarah. Following is the story of our long and, oftentimes, frustrating efforts to find Sarah and her origins.

Even though we knew that able Alford researchers had likely turned heaven and earth in their attempts to find a marriage record for Lodwick and Sarah, we reviewed all available extant records for both the county of their residence and those counties surrounding them. No documentation was found. However, we did find a valuable clue in a study prepared and published by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Affairs, a division of the North Carolina State Archives. In their "History of Marriage in North Carolina", an excellent overview, one paragraph appeared to best address the reason for failure to find a marriage record for Lodwick and Sarah: "Despite all attempts by the state and by the clergy to regulate and register marriages, an untold and inestimable number reportedly ignored the letter of the law. Ministers often solemnized marriages without licenses according to the customs of their denomination, but magistrates performed marriages on an oral assurance that banns had been read; and rural areas, where neither minister or magistrate was easily reached, people entered into marriages following their needs and traditions."

Recognizing that the only clue to Sarah came from land records, we turned to one of the oldest, and most important, admonitions given to all of us would-be genealogists: FOLLOW THE LAND! We did follow the land and that led us to other records and, ultimately, to the identity of Sarah. It was a long, long search but in the end we found what we believe to be the evidence sought to prove Sarah's parentage.

Readers of this story who descend from Lodwick, Sr., will likely recall that on numerous overviews at our AAFA Annual Meetings, Gil Alford would provide an update on one or more family lines and often mentioned that there was no new information on Lodwick's third wife. The aforementioned court records, which we found to be the sale of land in 1758, 1762 and again in 1765, when stated seller was Lodwick Alford and wife Sarah. Over the past 20 years, or longer, we have kept a chronology or time line on Lodwick. This time line included land sales or acquisitions made by Lodwick, Sr. He bought and sold a lot of land but the above 1758 sale was the first one found where a wife was named. The light finally came on! Sarah had brought the land to their marriage and had a say in its disposal. She likely had to agree to the sale. Unfortunately, that provided no direct clue to who she was before the marriage to Lodwick. We had to follow the land and find, if possible, how it came into her possession.

We learned from Edgecombe County Court records, Deed Book 6, pages 337 and 338, that Lodwick had actually owned the land in question for a few hours on June 24, 1752 when he acquired it from Robert Cade, Sr., paying 35 pounds "current money of Virginia" for 300 acres, more or less, on Marsh Swamp. He owned same land again in 1758. Witnesses to the original transaction were: Benjamin Haile, Elizabeth Jones, and Goodrich Alford. On that same date, April 24, 1752, Lodwick sold said land to aforesaid witness, Benjamin Haile, for 35 pounds. Five years later, on May 12, 1757, Benjamin Haile sold 300 acres, more or less to Sarah Smith of Edgecombe County, for 65 pounds current money of Virginia, "being the land Robert Cade took up and the said Benjamin Haile purchased from Lodwick Alford." The next year, September 8, 1758, Lodwick Alford and wife Sarah sold 282 acres, more or less, on Marsh Swamp to Thomas Gardner for 40 pounds Virginia money. We now knew that Lodwick had married Sarah Smith. But who was Sarah Smith? Was she widowed and her husband had been a Mr. Smith? Or was she unmarried and her maiden name was Smith?

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In January, 1762, the Court registered the sale of land by Lodwick Alford and Sarah, his wife, to Gabriel Parks, proven by oath of Chas. Wikkerson of 382 acres. No land description given in abstracted information.

Another sale of 150 acres by Lodwick and Sarah, his wife, was registered in January, 1762. Sale was to Charles Wilkerson and proven by Gabriel Parks.

Both of the above land sales were found in the Johnson County, North Carolina Minutes of the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions for January 1762.

Bute County records, Deed Book "A", page 187, states that Lodwick Alford, planter and wife Sarah Alford, sold 15 acres to Andrew Tanner of Edgecombe County, 26 April, 1765, 50 shillings, on Northside of Sypras (Cypress), Great Branch, part of Granville grant of 144 acres, March 1, 1762. Witnesses: James Alford, John Bishop, Lodwick Alford Jr. (?). April Court, 1765.

From the above dates, we concluded that Lodwick and Sarah Smith were likely married sometime between May 12, 1757 and September 8, 1758, probably in Edgecombe County. No official record has been found of that marriage. We were no longer looking for Sarah but Sarah Smith.

We continued our search by identifying neighbors of Lodwick and by pouring over tax, and or militia lists. Some lists served both purposes, tax and militia. The Quarter Session Court records were reviewed due to the fact that the Court often mandated that several neighbors be responsible for road and bridge building or repair. We assumed that persons so named lived close to each other and likely had sons or daughters needing a wife or husband. The lists became somewhat extensive but, ultimately, led us to an important discovery...Sarah Smith's family identity!

In the Granville County, North Carolina partial tax list of 1749, Robert Cade and Robert Smith are listed in the same district and, in 1750, John Alford is in a list taken by John Brantley. Julus Alford, William Smith, John Ferrell, Moses Smith, Lodwick Alford, Robert Cade and John Halford (Alford ?) were in a list taken by Lemuel (Samuel?) Lanier. On July 4, 1754, a list compiled by Osborn Jeffreys included Daniel Potter, Littlebery Woodlief, William Smith, Lodwick Alford (with three slaves and one taxable named Michael Smith), Jacob Alford and Julus Alford. On a later land transaction unrelated to Lodwick Alford, Michael Smith and Benjamin Haile were listed as witnesses. This and other similar lists confirmed that the Alfords and Smiths were neighbors over a long period of time. Was Sarah the wife or daughter of one of the Smith men noted above?

We prepared an alphabetical list of the surnames of the above, (and other neighbors, in effect, compiling a mini-census) and logged on to the internet using the web site Genforum.Com. We selected the forum for each surname. We skipped the letter "A" and starting with "B" inserted the word "Alford " and/or "Lodwick Alford" in the search box. No meaningful hits were made until we reached the letter "H" where we hit pay dirt. We found that Joseph Horton wrote his will in 1763 and died in Bute County in 1768. In his will Joseph Horton named his daughter Sarah, widow of William Smith. Witnesses to the will were none other than Lodwick and James Alford. Joseph Horton mentioned his several sons, including Samuel who was named Executor of his estate. It is of interest to note that one of Lodwick's sons, likely by Sarah, was named Samuel, often referred to as Lemuel. Sarah's brother, David, moved to Wake County and one land sale noted that his land bordered "Warren Alford's line."

Those interested in "mom's side of the family" will want to add their Horton connection if their Alford ancestor can be proven to come from one of Lodwick and Sarah's children, those born no earlier than 1757. We did not attempt to document the Horton line, other than Sarah and her brothers. Her mother's maiden name is unknown to me. She was not named in Joseph's will and it is probably safe to assume that her mother had died before her father, Joseph.