

February 15, 1994

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GIL, THIS IS YOUR COPY OF
A LETTER I'M SENDING PAM.
I'M SENDING YOU A COMPLETE
PACKAGE OF WHAT I RECEIVED
FROM WASHINGTON.

Dear Pam,

You probably recall the article I penned which ran in the journal about five years ago [Volume III, Number 2; September 1990] called "The Lost Graves." I have received some information from the National Archives in Washington which has a bearing on the ultimate fate of my ancestor, Spire Warren Alford and two of his children.

To refresh your memory, Spire moved to Cass County, Texas from near West Point, Georgia in the early 1850s. In 1854, he and his two oldest children (Marcilius and Partha Ann) died from some sort of fever. His widow, Caroline M. Cotton Alford, commissioned a rock wall to be built around the graves of her husband and two children. Most of a century later, the wall was mostly disassembled and the graves have become lost. The subject of my article was some history, some letters, and a description of a latter day search for the graves which to this day remain undiscovered.

Recently, I became aware that this same Spire Warren Alford traveled to Montgomery, Alabama and enlisted in Captain Robinson's Company of Denson's Regiment of Alabama Infantry. The date was 23 May 1836. For the next three months, Spire was a Private from the State of Alabama in the Creek Indian Wars. He was mustered out on 18 July 1836. For the most part, the Indian Wars in Alabama were fought around 20 years earlier with Andrew Jackson in command. A few minor skirmishes broke out near Opelika in eastern Alabama during 1836. It was then the remaining Creeks and Choctaws were rounded up and removed to Arkansas and Oklahoma. Spire W. Alford may have taken part in the Indian removal which effectively opened up all of Alabama to the white settler in the 1830s.

Although I am not yet sure, the reason Spire moved to Texas in the first place may have been due to his military service. The Federal Government may have given him some land in Texas for his service. Indeed, according to records I received from the National Archives, Spire's widow, who was already a pensioner, filled out an application for "Claim of Widow for Bounty Land."

Information on the application includes these words [my comments are in brackets]:

State of Alabama,
Chambers County.

On this 3rd day of December 1904, personally appeared before me, S.D. Furrsett, Notary Public within and for Randolph County and [the] state aforesaid Caroline M. Slaughter, aged 88 years, a resident of Welsh in the County of Chambers, in the State of Alabama, who, being duly sworn according to law, declares that she is the widow of Spire W. Alford, deceased, who was the identical Spire W. Alford, who served under the name of Spire W. Alford as a Private in ... Ala. Vol. Infy, ... in the ... Indian [War] 1836-8; that her said husband enlisted... She further states that the following is a full description of her said husband at the time of his enlistment, viz: ... sandy hair; blue eyes; fair complexion, and by occupation a farmer. She further states that she was married to the

said Spire W. Alford ... in the County of Troup, and in the State of Georgia, on the 12th day of January, 1838 [according to records received from the court house in Troup County, Georgia, the year was actually 1837] by one Young, who was a Magistrate; and that her name before her said marriage was Caroline M. Cotton; and she further states that prior to her marriage with said soldier, neither of them had been married; but that since the death of said soldier she was married to one Lawson Slaughter [this marriage occurred 1 Nov 1860 in Troup County, Georgia]; and that her said husband Spire W. Alford, died ... in the State of Texas, on the 23rd day of July, 1854 and she further declares that the following have been the places of residence of herself and her husband since the date of his discharge from the Army, viz: Iowa, Texas, and Alabama. She makes this declaration for the purpose of obtaining the bounty land (or the additional bounty land) to which she may be entitled under the act approved March 3, 1855, and hereby appoints, with full power of substitution and revocation, William E. Moses, of Denver, Colorado, her lawful attorney to prosecute her claim, and to receive and receipt for any bounty land warrant or warrants which may be issued to this applicant. She also declares that she has heretofore made no application for Bounty Land ... and that she is a pensioner of the United States ... and that her residence is the town of Welsh, County of Chambers, and State of Alabama, and that her post office address is Welsh (Chambers County) Alabama. [Caroline (her mark) Slaughter].

Accompanying this application was documentation attesting to its correctness:

State of Georgia,
County of Troup

On this 1st day of February, 1906, personally came before me, Walter L. Turner, a Notary Public in and for the County and State aforesaid, Pleasant G. Cotton, aged 82 years, a resident of Harris County, Georgia, and whose post office address is West Point, Georgia RFD #7; also William H. Cotton, aged 84 years, a resident of Troup County, Georgia, and whose post office address is West Point, Georgia RFD #2, who, being by me first duly sworn according to law, depose and say, each for himself and not for the other: that they were well and personally acquainted with Caroline M. Cotton and Spire W. Alford, who were married on the 12th day of January, 1838, and that they were present at said ceremony. Signed, Pleasant G. Cotton and William H. [his mark] Cotton. ... Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1st day of February 1906, and I certify that the above and foregoing was read and fully explained to the affiants before they affixed their signatures thereto. Walter L. Turner, Notary Public. My commission expires April 1907.

These two legal papers were included in the package I received from the National Archives. Caroline died just over a year after the date on the document above. She died 20 Feb 1907.

In addition to these papers were supporting documentation in the form of personal letters from the 1850s. I have transcribed the letters below. As before, my comments are in brackets []. The actual spelling is preserved to capture the flavor of the original; however, punctuation and some capitalization has been added to aid readability.

This first letter was written to Spire W. Alford from W.L. Alford. I'm not sure exactly how they are related. Gil can help out in that department.

West Point,
June 25th 185[3? 4? original year was cut off in the archive copying process]

Dear Cosin Spire, Father received a letter from you with witch give us mutch pleasure to here from you & your famly. I sopose you are mutch please with that country, par [Pa?] sais he will be ther next fall if he lives. Tell cousin Carline [Caroline] mother sais [to] save her a churn full of butter and milk by the time she gets there. I sopose all you want

is par to help you kill deer. Tell Bud [Buck?] I want to [see?] him very bad & tell them all howdy for me, and Mr. Palmores [Palmer's] folks to. Tell Bud sweet boy that I wish I was there to be with them all the time where we could go to school all the to getter [altogether] and every Saturday kill deer & bears. I am clerking for Mr. Bass & Matthews yet. All the children sends there best love to you all and mar [Ma?] to. We are all well at this time and I hope we will continue so till [until] we get to Texas. Any how the spiritual [reaping] is about to run people distracted. I never saw the like sence I was born. I hav nothing more new to tell you. I must close my letter by saying, right soon.

Direct your letter to West Point to W.L. Alford, [Junior?], [Signed] W.L Alford.

The next letter was written by Joseph A. Palmer and addressed to his "brother" in Texas. It is undated, but written after Spire's death, probably late 1854 or 1855. It also mentions some other Alfords.

Dear brother ... As to ourselves we are all upe & about but some complaint. Your mother's health is feble. The old lady had a hard spell last spring of the colramobus [?] but she has gotten over that. Emily's helth is not good. Pleas & Liz and ther family is well. Babe & Hampe [?] & ther familes was well some two weeks sins. Pleas & Liz was upe to see Babe & Hampe at that time. Hamp's wife has a son a bout a month old. Babe has miscarried one this summer. Lou is well and is expecting to marry about the first of September next. Dr. Hatchett is the man she expects to marry. She is making her wedding coat & baking the goodnugs [?]. The Dr is a very clever young man.

Thomas Cotton & family was well the last that we hered of them. Our croupes are verry sorry. It will push the county to make brid[?]. The health of the neighbors are good. No sickness that I know of. Unkle Lod & his family that is here are well. Wm & Whit Alford in Texas has bin verry sickly but they wer better the last that we hered of them. You mother sayes you moust give the Williamsons & the Dennises her love & respects for what they done for you & your family while sicke & she hopes they will still be you friends. Tell Ruben Williamson I wont him to write to me the particklers of Spier's death what he said while sicke about death & eternity. I would gladly write more but my paper is full & I moust. Write me soon I will write to you again soon. Emily sinds you & children hir love. Fare you well.

J.A. Palmer.

The last letter is the most touching. It was sent to Spires's widow, Caroline just days after the author learned of the death of Spire Alford and his two oldest children. Unfortunately, it was unsigned, so we have to guess about the author.

Santown, Georgia
August 18, 1854.

Der Caroline, we received your letters on yesterday. We wer glad to here frome you but that gladness was made sorrow by the sad intelergence that we here of your deplorable and forolone condition. We had hered of you misfortions by a letter that Stephen Word wrote to [Jarrell Hogg] a fews days before we got your letter, but when we received your letter confirming the fact we could but shed the tere of sorrow & the symphitetick grone that the afflicting hand of providence had fallen so heavily on your family. But O how true the words of the poet:

Death rides on every passing breeze,
And lurks in every flower.
Each season has its own disease,
Its peril every hour.
Our eyes have seen the rosy light
Of Youths soft cheek decay,

And fate descend in sudden night
On manhoods middle day.

Man is borne but to die but O who has learnt the fact Death is but the gate to endless joyes or endless Wo. But O how we dread to enter there. At the great distance which seperrates you from us, we can do you no good by cermingling our ters with yours, but be you assured that we would gladly ensircle you & your three litle children [three children survived] in our arms & bathe your cheeks with our teres & bare you upe with our prares & console you with our advice & point you to him who has promised to be the husband to the widder & the farther to the orphan. To hime only can you looke for helpe & surport.

I feel sorry for Spier. O Spier, you have been the object of my prares & my anxiety, but thou hast gone. Gone where we will see thee no more. Sleepe thou on. We will not molest thee as we pass around your grave. We will shed a tere & thinke of thee fare fare away. And thou Marsilious who was about to enter into manhood to stay thy mother's declining years. But a lass a lass, thou too art laid in the grave. Hard, hard is it to give thee upe, but the Lord gave & the Lord has taken away. Blesed be the name of the Lord. But O that brightest flower, that lovllest forme, Parthiann, that bright entilect, that lovliley smile, how we would have like to have retained thee to have chered us with thy sweet music & to have hered thy soft foot steps across the roome & to have had thee to set by our side & joine us in sweet converse. But O it chills the blood in our veines to thinke of thy rosy cheeks being pale & cole in death & thy lovliley forme being shrowded with the winding sheet. But O hopes springs upe in our brest that we shall see thee againe. Me thinkes I see thy anjelick forme as it flyes through unlimited space & again encerke thy little brother who had bin but five dayes in the spirit's land. There you & hime sing that selestial song & as we tred the path around your grave, we will feel the sweet zephures of thy golden wings fanning our pathway & as we sleepe on our pillow, we will feel thy sweet kifs on our cheeks. Soon, soon we will joine thee on that happy land. And pore nightlin [Caroline?], what shall we say for you? You have seen many upes & downs in this life. May we not hope that thou art at rest. Rest on then; soon, soon, your companion (Dorcas) will greet you where parting will be no more.

You requested that we should advise you what to do. As to myself, I don't feel able to advise you, but I would say to you to let Sippy Alford to administer on the estate and wind it upe as soon as possible. It would be well to associate your name with his in the administration & become gardiane for the children yourself. As to what will be best for you to do, stay there or come backe to Georgia, we can't say which will be best. You can be the best judge of that matter yourself. Your mother & Emily & Lou say that you moust come backe to Georgia. Your farther sayes if you come backe, you nor your children shall never suffer while he lives. Pleas talks like he would go after you if it was nesersary. It is a matter that you should consider well before you decide. As to your farming, I surpose you could do better in Texas. As to enjoyment, I surpose it would be best here with your relations.

The letter runs out at this point. I wish I could say for sure who the author is. It is not Caroline's father because he is referred to in the letter. I'm guessing it is Caroline's brother or uncle. Or was it some of the Alford kin?

The remainder of the package from the archives contains four full pages of the itemization of the "Sale of the Property of Spyre W. Alford, Dec." dated 12 December 1854.

The package from the archives doesn't reveal very much new information, except for confirming Spire W. Alford's participation in the Creek Indian Wars in Alabama. However, the personal letters possess a humanity and capture an emotional reality which still can be felt even though they were written over 140 years ago.

Alfords who appear on a microfilmed copy of the Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the Creek War from the State of Alabama include:

- ✧ **Burrill Alford**, Darby's Company, Denson's Ala Inf
- James W. Alford**, Gunn's Company, Webb's Battalion, Ala Mtd Mil Inf
- Jefferson Alford**, Patrick's Company 4th Ala Mtd Vols, McMillions 1 Vatt'n
- John W. Alford**, Gunn's Company, Webb's Battalion, Mal Mtd Mil Inf
- ✧ **J. Alford**, Robinson's Company, Denson's Ala Inf
- ✧ **L.F. Alford**, Robinson's Company, Denson's Ala Inf
- Spire W. Alford**, Robinson's Company, Denson's Ala Inf

Were the J. Alford and the L.F. Alford who served with Spire in the same company closely related to him? Was J. Alford Spire's brother James? Gil may have information on the other Alfords.

I received the package on Spire by first filling out NATF Form 80. The forms can be ordered by writing the **General Reference Branch (NNRG-P), National Archives and Records Administration, 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20408**. After I received the forms, I filled them out with as much information as I had on Spire and mailed them off. It took about two months, but it was worth waiting. They charged me \$10, but it saved me a trip to Washington and the information was well worth it. I encourage the descendants of the Alfords mentioned above to send for their records in a likewise manner.

Maybe this will be of interest to the readers of the journal. I am sending a copy of the entire package and a copy of this letter to Gil. He may be able to add a few footnotes to some of the other Alfords mentioned in the letters. Also, between the two of you, feel free to reinterpret any of my transcriptions of the letters. Some things I had trouble making out.

Kindest Regards,



Robin Alford Sterling

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO
PEN A FEW LINES ~~ABOUT~~ ABOUT
THESE OTHER ALFORDS. I'M
WEAR IN THE AREA OF THE
OTHER ALFORDS MENTIONED.