

Alderson

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George Alderson (1762-1805): Pioneer Kanawha Co., VA Settler

by David Fridley

George Alderson, eldest son of the Rev. John Alderson, Jr. and eldest known grandson of the Rev. John Alderson, was born 30 August 1762 in Augusta Co., VA. Little is known of his childhood in the Shenandoah Valley, but as a child he must have heard stories of the last of the Indian incursions from the West and the outbreak of fighting with the British to the East. As a teenager, George saw his father leave for extended trips over the mountains to the southwest, and he watched his uncle Thomas leave Augusta for war. By the late 1770s, George's father had decided to locate in the newly settled lands of Greenbrier, which he had visited a number of times. By age 18, George found himself in the remote wilderness of Greenbrier Co. The settlement being as small and dispersed as it was, one would have imagined difficulties in finding a mate, but the prominence of his father and the central location of their settlement evidently solved this problem. On 14 June 1781, George's father, the Rev. John Alderson, Jr.,

performed the marriage of his son to Sarah Osburn, daughter of John and Elizabeth (Claypool) Osburn, another early settler family of the Greenbrier region.¹

George did not follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps into the ministry, but he did pursue the more commercial and mercantile interests that the family had been involved in over the years. In addition to the spiritual drive to provide religious guidance in the sparsely-settled frontier regions, George's father, the Rev. John Alderson, Jr., also displayed a keen business sense for the value of land. As early as 1773, the Rev. John Alderson Jr. explored the valleys of the New and Kanawha Rivers in search of land. According to John's brother Curtis Alderson, in testimony to the Botetourt Co., VA court in 1802, in a suit between John Morris and the estate of James Campbell, deceased, "... in 1773 John Alderson, Joseph Carroll, William Morris [brother of John Morris], John Herd and deponent [Curtis Alderson] set out from Shenandoah County for New River below the falls, in search of vacant land, and went down as far as James Burnside's on Greenbrier, when they were joined by Archibald Taylor, Philip Cooper and Walter Kelly, and all together arrived at New River 6th April, and made improvements and set out to return home, and at Gauley they met James Campbell, Peter Shoemaker, and James Polly; William Morris and deponent went back with them."²

John Alderson evidently also understood the potential for some of the discoveries he made during his trips to the valley. According to his great-grandson, Col. George Alderson, who left several manuscripts on the history of the Alderson family,

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- 1 Some sources such as J.R. Cole's *History of Greenbrier County*, (ca. 1917) and Oren Morton's *A History of Monroe County, West Virginia* (1916), name Sarah's father in error as the Rev. Josiah Osburn, who came to Greenbrier from Hardy Co., VA. The will of John Osburn of Greenbrier Co., VA, dated 29 July 1806, names daughter "Sarah Alderson" (Ross B. Johnston, *West Virginia Estate Settlements*, Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore, 1985, p. 111.)
- 2 Chalkey, Lyman. *Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement in Virginia, 1745-1800*. Vol II, Baltimore: Genealogical Publ. Co., 1965, (reprint, orig. 1912), p. 68.

"[the Rev. John Alderson Jr.] organized and established other churches in the Greenbrier region and extended his labors to the Kanawha Valley as a pioneer in examining the country. On one of his trips there, in company with James Stroud, they struck camp in a bottom near the Burning Spring, they took a torch, went out to hunt camp wood, heard a bubbling, held their torch over it to what was the cause, the gas took fire and flashed up. Stroud became much alarmed and cried out 'God bless me we have found a powder mine and will be blown up!' John Alderson more calm and less excited attributed the flash to have been produced by some natural operation."³

This event likely took place in the early 1780s after John Alderson had settled permanently in Greenbrier. On his return to Greenbrier, John must have discussed the discovery with his friends and neighbors, including the Morris and Carrolls. By this time, son George had already begun to acquire tracts of land in the Greenbrier region near his home, and perhaps the story of the "Burning Spring" in Kanawha prompted him to look at the value of land in that region. In 1784, George Alderson entered 200 acres on "Lewis and Dickenson's survey in the Burning Spring Bottoms" in Greenbrier Co. (Kanawha Co. was organized in 1789), on the basis of a Treasury Warrant for 4,000 acres.⁴ This entry took place the same day that James Jarrett, on order of George Alderson, entered 200 acres "joining General Washington's land, and Lewis, and John Dickenson's in the Burning Spring bottom."⁵ Evidently, George wasn't the only one to recognize the value of this stretch of bottom land.

George Alderson remained very active in the acquisition of land in Greenbrier and Kanawha counties. By the time of his death, he had entered at least 7,000 acres in present-day Monroe, Greenbrier, Fayette, Nicholas, and Kanawha counties, including 1,000 acres along Glade Creek in Fayette county and over a thousand acres on the Elk River just north of Charleston. He did not always acquire the land on his own; available records show several land entries with partners Andrew Donnally and William Morris, and George entered land for his

uncle Thomas Alderson on Twentymile Creek in present-day Nicholas Co.⁶ George's father-in-law John Osburn also actively participated. Osburn's land lay adjacent to George's on Muddy Creek, near the Greenbrier settlement, as did his land on Glade Creek in Fayette Co. In 1785, John Osburn entered 100 acres for George on Elk River, next to his own property.⁷

George Alderson and his family lived on the land at Burning Springs Bottom, where George is listed together with James GEARRET (Jarrett) as taxpayers on 428 acres in 1787.⁸ This list of taxpayers was collected in preparation for the organization of the Kanawha settlements into the separate county of Kanawha in 1789. The first court of the new county was held 6 October 1789 at Charleston, and Thomas Lewis, Robert Clendenin, David Robinson, George Alderson, Leonard Morris, and James Van Bibber presided as "Gentlemen Justices" of the new court.⁹ Through family and business ties, these men dominated the economic and political scene of the new county.

The Founding of Charleston

George Alderson also played a prominent role in the founding of Charleston, the present capital of West Virginia. Located at the confluence of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers, the site was first settled as Fort Lee but was later acquired by George Clendenin. It rapidly became the nexus of the Kanawha settlements and a major stop for Ohio Valley migrants, and it was soon formally incorporated as a town; according to a passage in *Trans-Alleghany Pioneers*: "The Legislature then (December 19th, 1794) enacted that 'Forty acres of land, the property of George Clendenin, at the mouth of Elk River, in the County of Kenhawa as the same are already laid off into lots and streets, shall be established as a town, by the name of Charles Town; and Reuben Slaughter, Andrew Donally Sr., William Clendenin, John Morris Sr., Leonard Morris, George Alderson, Abraham Baker, John Young, and William Morris, gentlemen, are appointed trustees.' Surely no set of men ever had such a 'corner' on public offices as these few gentlemen who first settled about Char-

3 Col. George Alderson (1789-1871) of Fayette Co., WV. Around 1856 or 1860, he wrote an article for the *Southern Literary Messenger* about the Alderson family history, but the manuscript was found among his papers after his death, and it is not known if it was ever sent or published. It was later transcribed by Joseph Newman Alderson, the noted Alderson family historian of Alderson, WV.

4 Helen S. Stinson, *Land Entry Book, Greenbrier Co., W.Va.*, 1984, p. 122.

5 Stinson, p. 122.

6 Stinson, pp. 153, 155, 157.

7 Stinson, pp. 147, 160, 172.

8 "Kanawha Co. Land Book 1787," in *Kanawha Valley Genealogical Society Journal*, Sept/Oct, 1991, p. 71.

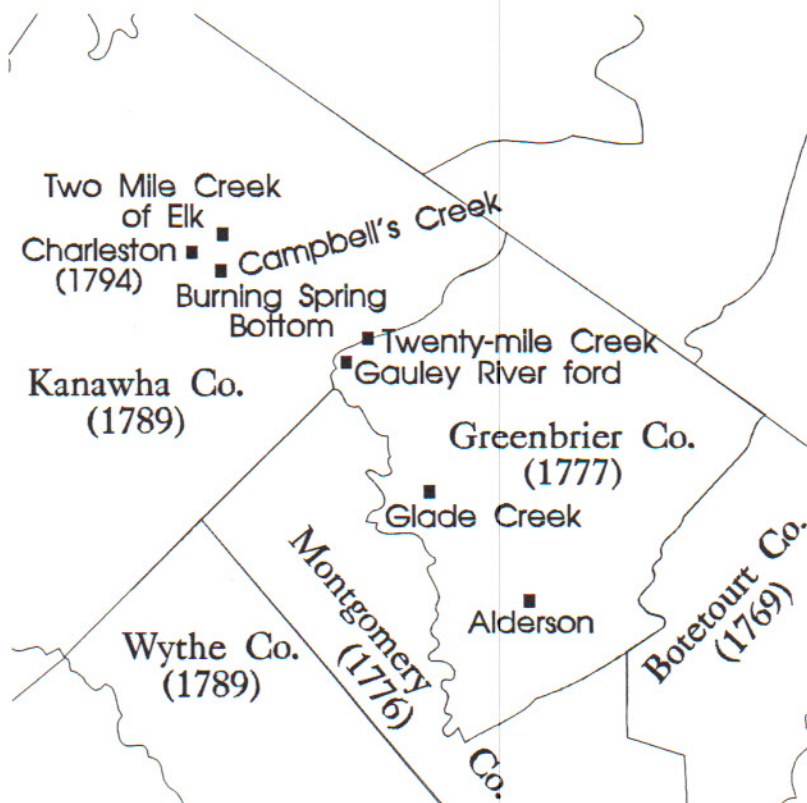
9 "List of Delegates to the Virginia Assembly from Kanawha County, from 1790 to 1863," compiled by Dr. J.L. Miller, *Virginia Historical Magazine*, Vol. VIII, June 1901, p. 415.

leston."¹⁰ George Alderson owned land in the new town, and he donated a lot on which the Kanawha County Courthouse was erected.¹¹ George continued to serve as Justice through 1795, when he was also appointed Sheriff of Kanawha County, a position which was reaffirmed in 1797.¹²

George Alderson's influence in Kanawha derived from his extensive land holding, including choice areas on which both natural gas and brine wells were discovered. This naturally led to the development of salt works, which George established along with his brother Joseph. Salt being in short supply in the frontier regions, it became a lucrative business. He also ran a store, catering to local settlers and to travellers down the Kanawha River. According to Col. George Alderson, "Besides his little mill and blacksmith shop he kept a store. This writer was present (a lad) when he purchased of A.M. Land of Greenbrier, some ten or twelve hundred dollars worth of goods, put them in his wagon and gave his brother Joseph as security, for payment in salt, which he expected to make on his land, affirming that he had no doubt of its being obtained in abundance, which has proved true by the enterprise of David and Joseph Ruffner to whom he sold his home of two hundred acres shortly before his demise. Without the ability to make a title, one half the land being encumbered by a Trust Deed to William Griffy and George Fitzwater, the other half by a title bond executed to his brother, Joseph Alderson for the payment of the land debt, which he did by selling to Land two hundred acres of land on Elk River, originally owned by George and sold to Joseph Alderson, who took the bond to secure himself. George Alderson deceased soon after this sale to D. and J. Ruffner, calm in his bed as related to this writer by his wife and daughter."¹³

Death of George Alderson

It is not known what disease befell George Alderson at such a young age. He made his will in May 1802, when he was yet 39 years old, and he was dead before his 43rd birthday. He left his estate



Western Virginia, 1790, showing locations of George Alderson's land transactions and residences.

to his wife and children, but named his brother Joseph Alderson as executor along with his son John. His will reads:

I George Alderson of the County of Kanawha & State of Virginia, being in perfect health and sound mind do this thirteenth day of May 1802 make this my last Will and Testament (to wit)

I will and desire that All my Just debts and funeral Charges be paid and satisfied.

I give and bequeath to my beloved Wife Sarah Alderson all my lands & Tenements Goods and Chattles Whatsoever I may die possessed of during her life.

I give and bequeath to Mary Alderson my oldest daughter one Certain Tract of Land containing One hundred and Twenty Eight Acres more or less lying on the North side of Elk river being the lower end of a survey purchased by me from Wil-

10 *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers*, p. 301. The town was named by George Clendenin for his father Charles Clendenin; it was officially changed to Charleston in 1818.

11 W.S. Laidley, *History of Kanawha County and Representative Citizens*, Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1911, pp. 1013-1014.

12 "Kanawha County, (W)VA Land Records—Book A," in *Kanawha Valley Genealogical Society Journal*, Sept/Oct, 1991, p. 78.

13 Col. George Alderson, *Southern Literary Messenger* Mss.

liam Griffith & now leased to Thomas Jopling to her and her heirs forever.

I give and bequeath to my son John Alderson one half of the Tract of Land I now live on from the Mill Creek upwards being the upper end of the Old survey to him and his heirs for ever.

I Give and bequeath to my daughter Catharine Alderson one half of a Tract of Land lying in Greenbrier County on Glade Creek to her and her heirs.

I give and bequeath to my son Levi Alderson the other half of the Glade Creek to him and his heirs.

I also will to said Catharine and Levi all my entries of Land on Guyandott river to be equally divided between them.

I Give and bequeath to my son George Alderson the lower end of the Tract of Land I now live on with all the Buildings & Improvements thereon to him & his heirs forever.

I Give and bequeath to my son Joseph Alderson a tract of land containing six hundred acres on two mile Creek a branch of Elk river with all its Appurtenances to him and his heirs Forever.

Provided that any or either of my Children should die or that I should in my Lifetime dispose of any of the lands herein before willed, in either case It is my Will that my Children should all be equal in the remaining lands to be divided by Valuation; & should Salt water be found on the Old Tract so as to make salt the profits arising there from shall be equally divided between all my Children. I make and ordain my Wife Sarah Alderson & my brother Joseph Alderson, John Reynolds & my son John Alderson Executors & Executors of this my Will; And I do hereby disannul all forever wills by me made & declare this to be my last will & Testament; In Witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name & afixed my seal the date aforesaid.

Published & pronounced to be his

Last Will in presents of Us George Alderson (seal)

G. Christain

his
William X Bowman
mark

John Campbell

At a court held & Cont.^d for Kanawha County
June the 12th 1805

This last Will and Testament of George Alderson deceased was presented in Court & proven by the Oath of Gilbert Christian and William Bowman, Two of the Witnesses thereto and the same is Ordered to record. A Copy teste A. Donnally CKC¹⁴

At George's death, wife Sarah was left with a young family of six children. Her eldest daughter Mary had already left home, having married James McClung in 1803. Her son John was only 19 years old, and the youngest son was not yet five years of age. Col. George Alderson related that "Joseph Alderson as soon as he heard of his brother's death hastened to Kanawha to attend to his brother's business, which he found much embarrassed. Before he set out this writer advised and besought his father, Joseph Alderson, not to confirm the sale to the Ruffners but hold on to his title bond as he had as good a right to the salt property as they; however when he got to Kanawha he compromised with D. & J. Ruffner and through his kindness to them and respect for the acts and memory of his brother, confirmed the sale, by their advancing fund to lift the trust bond for his part of this land. After indulging them a long time he brought suit on their bond and recovered judgement at common law. They enjoined the judgement in the Chancery Court at Staunton, where they were again defeated and had to pay a large sum in the way of principal, interest, damages and costs. Joseph Alderson brought his brother's family to Greenbrier, consisting of his wife, two daughters and five sons, and his papers among which this writer found a writing drawn by George Alderson and signed with his name in which he regretted his convivial habits and formed a resolution to conquer them, in which he declared himself successful.

"Be that as it may he left a respectable family. Polly, now a widow, who married James McClung, John, Joseph and James O., who became an energetic Baptist minister, George, Caty and Levi, the eldest and youngest still living (1856). Joseph, George and Caty died without issue. John lately deceased was a well doing man and left a good estate, educated his children well, most of whom are consistent and well doing members of the Baptist church."¹⁵

Sarah and the children returned to Greenbrier before 1810, as the census shows no Aldersons in Kanawha county in that year. With several chil-

14 Deed Book C, Kanawha Co., WV, Kanawha County Courthouse, Charleston, WV, pp. 30-31.

15 Col. George Alderson, *Southern Literary Messenger* Mss.

dren yet minors, Sarah's oldest son John apparently decided to shoulder the responsibility for them. In October 1811, "George Alderson and Levi Alderson, infants and sons of George Alderson, dec'd, voluntarily came to Court and chose John Alderson as guardian. Court appoints John Alderson guardian of James A. Alderson, another infant of said George Alderson dec'd who is under age 14 years."¹⁶ The settlement of George's estate took considerable time, and a number of his assets were not disposed of until many years later. In 1818, George's family, including "John, Levy, James Osburn Alderson, Mary and husband, James McClung, heirs and representatives of George Alderson, and Sarah Alderson, widow of George" deeded 180 acres of land in Nicholas County, "on the old Kenawha road, three miles on the south side Gauley Mountain, part of the survey patented to George Alderson, Andrew Donnelly, and William Morris, 402 acres, 13th August, 1795" to John Bilbrow, son of William Bilbrow of Botetourt County.¹⁷ The omission of sons Joseph and George and daughter Catherine perhaps indicated that they had already transferred their rights in the estate, had left Greenbrier, or had died.

Family of George and Sarah (Osburn) Alderson

1. John ("Captain Jack") Alderson, b. 1 May 1786, Greenbrier Co., VA, d. 13 May 1856, Monroe Co., VA. Married 15 August 1815, Monroe Co., VA,¹⁸ Frances Alderson (14 Oct. 1783-13 Sept. 1856), daughter of John's great-uncle Thomas Alderson. John and Frances are buried at the Old Greenbrier Baptist Church in Alderson, Greenbrier Co., WV.

2. Mary Alderson, b. 13 May 1787, Greenbrier Co., VA, d. 13 May 1870, Nicholas Co., WV.¹⁹ Married 15 March 1803, Monroe Co., VA, James McClung.²⁰ James died in 1824, and Mary remained a widow until her death in Nicholas Co. in 1870. She is buried at the Mt. Lookout Cem., Mt. Lookout, Nicholas Co., WV, where numerous other Alderson de-

scendants, including the McClung, Evans, and Dietz families, are buried.²¹

3. Joseph Alderson, b. ca. 1788?, Greenbrier Co., VA. In the 1810 census of Monroe Co., VA, three males, age 16-25, were listed in the household of Sally Alderson, b. 1784-1794; Joseph is likely the second son based on the order of mention in his father's will. He was not named as choosing a guardian in 1811, indicating that he was 21 year of age or more. This narrows the date of his birth to 1784-1790. Joseph died without children.

4. Catherine Alderson, b. ca. 1791?, Kanawha Co., VA. The 1810 census of Monroe Co. places her birth between 1784 and 1794, but she did not choose a guardian in 1811 nor was mentioned as heir in the deed of 1818. Catherine died without children.

5. George Alderson, b. ca. 1793?, Kanawha Co., VA. The census indicates that George was born between 1784 and 1794, but as an "infant" in the guardianship proceedings in Monroe Co. in 1811, he would have been younger than 21, placing his birth after 1790. He was not mentioned as an heir in the deed of 1818. George died without children.

6. Levi Alderson, b. ca. 1795, Kanawha Co., VA,²² d. after 1870, Monroe Co., WV. Married 19 Feb 1820, Monroe Co., VA,²³ Clemency Alderson (ca. 1795-after 1870), daughter of Levi's great-uncle Thomas Alderson, and sister of John's wife Frances.

7. James Osburn Alderson, b. Oct. 1800, Kanawha Co., VA,²⁴ d. 18 April 1832, Greenbrier Co., VA. Married 1825, Greenbrier Co., VA, Abigail McClung, daughter of Joseph and Jane (Cavendish) McClung, b. 1805, d. 23 July 1868. James Osburn was ordained as a Baptist Minister in 1830 and served as the third pastor of the Greenbrier Baptist Church. According to the History of the Old Greenbrier Baptist Church, "during 1831, his missionary endeavors in Greenbrier Association resulted in approximately a hundred converts, whom he baptized. In spite of failing health, he continued to preach in disagreeable weather and difficult circumstances until two weeks before his death."²⁵

¹⁶ Order Book A, Monroe Co., VA (Jan. 1811-Oct. 1813), Monroe County Courthouse, Union, WV, p. 131.

¹⁷ Lyman Chalkey, *Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement in Virginia, 1745-1800*, Vol. II, pp. 253-254.

¹⁸ Monroe County Marriages, F2 J1534.

¹⁹ Although Mary's age in the 1850 Greenbrier Co., VA census (age 62) is consistent with her date of birth in 1787 as recorded on her tombstone, she would have been only 16 years old when she married James McClung in 1803. Could Mary have been born earlier, as there is no firm record of a birth between George and Sarah's marriage in 1781 and John's birth in 1786? As eldest children, John and Mary were evidently named after George's father and mother.

²⁰ Monroe County Marriages, F1 J305.

²¹ Helen S. Stinson, *Nicholas Co., WV Cemeteries*, p. 172.

²² 1850 Monroe Co., VA census, age 55; 1860 Monroe Co., VA census, age 62, 1870 Monroe Co., VA census age 74.

²³ Monroe County marriages, F3 J2046.

²⁴ *History of the Old Greenbrier Baptist Church, 1781-1956*, 175th Anniversary Edition, Alderson, WV, 1956, p. 9.

²⁵ *History of the Old Greenbrier Baptist Church, 1781-1956*, 1956, p. 9.

His widow Abigail remarried on 10 May 1834, in Greenbrier Co., to her cousin Robert McCutcheon,²⁶ son of Jones and Mary (McClung) McCutcheon.

The short life of George Alderson belies his accomplishments of just twenty years. Early pioneer of Kanawha, land owner, merchant, salt manufacturer, miller and farmer, George played an important role in the establishment of modern Kanawha County. His early salt work, built on the plentiful brine and natural gas of the region, gave impetus to the rise of Charleston as an industrial center; this transformation was further spurred by the implementation of steam engines in 1824 to operate the brine wells in the Kanawha Valley. The rich raw material base laid the foundation for the extensive chemical and glass works now concentrated in the Kanawha Valley. Although the Alderson family left Kanawha, the fruits of their efforts there survive.

More on British Roots

Susan Sharp of the Alderson Family History Society of the U.K. has responded with some fascinating research and musings about John Alderson's ancestry. I had sent Susan a copy of the research done by Achievements Ltd. of Canterbury, England in the 1970s concerning the ancestry of the Rev. John Alderson. One hypothesis that they advanced was that John was the son of John Alderson (d. 1721) and Alice (Milner) Alderson, and that the elder John was possibly the son of Anthony and Alice (Alderson) Alderson of Cogden. No definitive proof of this connection has been advanced, and Susan has been kind enough to look the material over for her comments. She writes:

"Let's first consider the perhaps dubious efforts of Achievements Ltd.:

Obligation and Inventory of John Alderson of Keld, 1722

The obligation was made by Alice Alderson, John's widow and Edmund Milner (probably Alice's brother) of Scarr House, yeoman. It was witnessed by Richard Alderson, Miles Alderson, Christopher Alderson and Edmund Milner. Alice Alderson signed with a mark.

The entry in the parish register reads: John Alderson of Keld, householder, buried 31 May 1721.

Fortunately, I've spent some time recently reading the Muker Manorial Records, so it is interesting then to find the following entry there:

- 11 April 1722. Edmund Alderson only son and coheir (has a sister?) of John Alderson deceased admitted tenant of a messuage and tenement with appurtenances in Keld. Yearly customary rent 9s 61/2d and fine of 1d.

The fine of 1d which was the sum paid to the Lord of the Manor by an incoming tenant confirms it was from father to son here.

Some earlier entries may also be of interest:

- 3 May 1712. John Alderson on surrender of Richard Harker admitted tenant of 3 parcels of meadow called Intacke with appurtenances in Keld etc.
- 26 April 1714. John Alderson, only son and heir of George Alderson deceased admitted tenant of a messuage and tenement with appurtenances in Keld etc. (George Alderson of Skeughead buried 30 September 1714 at Muker.)
- 7 May 1717. John Alderson, on surrender of John Collinson, was admitted tenant of a Firehouse (*i.e.* dwelling house!) called Chamber with a cowhouse, a yard at the west end of the other cowhouse thereunto adjoining as now divided, one close of meadow called Towtill adjoining of it, one garth and a little peice (!) called Pickhill with appurtenances in Keld and Meucar [Muker].

It is possible of course that there may have been two John Aldersons in the small hamlet of Keld, but I rather think that the entry of 1722 must apply to the descendants of John Alderson of Keld who died 1722!

Cogden Connection

There were a string of Anthony Aldersons in Cogden and the family were probably quite well to do and apparently owned, by lease, quite a bit of land.

I have an abstract of the Will of Anthony Alderson of Cogden, 1712/13 (Anthony Alderson of Cogden buried 18 February 1713 at Grinton.)

26 "Early Greenbrier County Marriages," *Journal of the Greenbrier Historical Society*, Vol. V, No. 2, 1988, p. 56. The marriage was performed by the Rev. John Spotts.

"To my grandson Anthony Alderson just now of Cogden, everything but Anthony to pay my son John's eldest daughter one guinea immediately after my decease."

However, in the continuing saga, is there room in the family for a black sheep I wonder? According to Bishop Gastrell's *Notitia*, 1714-1725, one of his visitation cases in Catterick Deanery was the charge by Hauxwell Parish in 1718 that "Anthony Alderson of Cockden did fornicate with Margaret Calvert there".

So, back to the gravestone in Grinton churchyard. There was a third name on the stone and that was:

"Thomas Clarkson, great-grandson of John Alderson buried 1906"

So it was the Clarkson family who put the stone there as late as 1906. John's son Henry only had (7) daughters so the male line was not continued. It is possible therefore that the Clarkson family still have family documents/Bible for John Alderson and Henry Alderson which would support the information given on the stone and they may well be able to establish the truth of the baptism of "John son of John bap. 20 October 1700".

Baptist Connections

I have been unable to find any evidence that the father of [the Rev.] John Alderson was Church of England and I would discount that theory for the time being. It is interesting that Americans differ from us in the use of the term "Minister." Here it is a term used when referring to a non-conformist priest!

Fieldhouse and Jennings in their learned book *A History of Richmond and Swaledale* say "Baptists played very little part in the religious life of the area although there were a few anabaptists in Grinton Parish at the end of the 18th century, and about 80 in Richmond in 1821 when they were said to be on the increase."

At this stage I feel it better not to become involved in the other non-conformists in Swaledale at that time.

Now I must tell you about my visit to Dr. Williams' Library in London. Dr. Daniel Williams (1643-1716) was a Presbyterian Minister of the type whose faith developed into Unitarianism. He bequeathed his extensive collection of books and manuscripts for public use and it has become more commonly known as the "Dissenters' Library." It is now a private library, but they kindly gave me free admission for one day.

Firstly then, Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) was of Horslydown, Southwark and wrote a total of 43 books. His two most popular were *A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors* and *Gospel Mysteries Unveiled or an Exposition to the Parable*. He was at times cruelly persecuted and also ridiculed in the stocks for his beliefs but survived to a good age. His works were very popular with the Hollis family.

Hollis Family

Thomas Hollis was for more than 60 years a member of the very first Baptist Church in Pinner's Hall, London. He is described as being a man of unbounded liberality to benevolent and religious enterprises. He died, I think, in September 1718.

His son, Thomas, was baptised in 1680 when he was 20 years old. He is described as a sagacious and successful merchant in London who used his wealth to sustain and extend education and religion, and was said to support every noble cause. He sent over a Library of valuable theological books to the Philadelphia Baptist Association!

Thomas Hollis and his brother John gave the Baptist Church of Massachusetts £135 for repairing their Meeting House. Thomas Hollis also founded a Professorship of Theology in Harvard University with a salary of £80 per year and an Exhibition of £10 per year to ten scholars of good character—four of whom should be Baptists. Six years later he founded at Harvard on Maths. Donations of the Hollis family continued to enrich Harvard for nearly a century and exceeded £6000.

When Thomas died in London in 1731, a sermon was preached in Harvard "Upon the News of the Death of Thomas Hollis."

Thomas Hollis also erected 2 churches at Rotherham (U.K.) and Doncaster and also established schools there. He also contributed to the building of an Almshouse at Sheffield!

Still with me? I've written letters to both Harvard University and the Philadelphia Baptist Association, but will perhaps be lucky if I get a reply.

There is a definite connection between the Hollis family and the Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield areas of the West Riding of Yorkshire [about 25 miles south of Leeds]. It was interesting then to discover a manuscript in Dr. Williams' Library, dated 1715 and listing the main areas of dissent in Yorkshire in 1715, and as you see the West Riding has the biggest share. (There were no Aldersons listed amongst the Ministers named):

West Riding. Attercliff, Aldborough, Burroughbridge, Barnsley, Billhouse near Peniston, Bingley near Bradford, Bradford Dale, Doncaster, Greenhill near Rippon, Halifax, Heckmandwith, Howden,

Horton, Rippin (sic), Knaresborough, Leeds, Mixenend, Northrowthram, Pontefract, Pudsey, Pickering, Rotherham, Sheffield, Selby, Stanington near Sheffield, Swandale, Topcliffe and Wakefield.

East Riding. York, Beverley, Cottingham near Hull, Dewsbury, Garsdale near Sedbergh, Hull, Swanland, South Cave, Warely.

North Riding. Malton, Northallerton, Scarborough, Thirsk, Whitby.

On the intuitive side, I was interested to see that [the Rev.] John Alderson named one of his sons Benjamin. Benjamin Alderson is a name we have found often repeated in the Leeds and Holbeck area. However, perhaps as our Alderson researcher says, he perhaps came from York. I fancy though he may yet be found around Rotherham, Doncaster or Sheffield. Incidentally, have you considered that he may not have been baptised? If he were and the family followed the Hollis tradition, then perhaps he was not baptised until he was about 20!"

• • •

Susan's letter raises and answers several questions at the same time:

- If indeed there was only one John Alderson of Keld, then the John Alderson who married Alice Milner is not the son of Anthony and Alice Alderson, but the son of George Alderson, who was buried at Muker in 1714.
- John and Alice (Milner) Alderson could not be the parents of the Rev. John Alderson, since son Edmund was listed as the "only son" in 1722. Nor would they appear to be the parents of the John Alderson who was buried in the Grinton churchyard in 1778, aged 78 years.²⁷
- An Anthony Alderson of Cogden did have a son name John Alderson.
- The works of Benjamin Keach that the Rev. John Alderson received from his father in England (as listed Evert's biography of 1881), may indicate that his father was not Church of England after all; indeed, he may well have been an early "Dissenter"!

This research opens up some interesting avenues of enquiry. The case of John's Yorkshire roots is strong, but the story seems far from finished!

Special thanks to Susan Sharp for her time and effort in putting this information together.

Query

Need information on the parents of Thomas Wesley ALDERSON, b. 25 July 1879, Missouri, son of James William ALDERSON, b. 15 January 1840 in England, immigrated to the US in 1846. James married Sarah Ellen BASQUE(?), b. Unoft, Illinois, on 24 Sept. 1874 in Belton, Cass Co., Missouri. Am seeking information on the parents of James ALDERSON and additional specifics on Sarah Ellen.

Laura Bechard, 4743 Loki Ave., Boulder, CO 80301

New Members

I am pleased to welcome four new members who have joined since January. **Bill Zellers** of California is researching his Alderson line which descends from James Campbell Alderson (b. Oct. 1861) of Missouri. He welcomes any assistance on his line and can be reached at 5530 Via Dos Cerros, Riverside, CA 92507.

Nancy Hoag of Montana is a descendant of Richard Alderson (d. 1699) of Virginia's "Northern Neck" through Reuben Alderson of Tennessee and Marion Co., IL (see *AR&B*, December 1990). Her address is 114 Hitching Post Rd., Bozeman, MT 59715.

Laura Bechard of Colorado is a descendant of James William Alderson, b. 1840 in England, who immigrated to the US in 1846 (see Query for details).

Jeff Alderson of Wisconsin descends from Thomas Alderson through his son James Alderson and grandson James Harvey Alderson, who left WV and went to Missouri. He lives at 16218 Plank Rd., Union Grove, WI 53182.

Welcome all to the Alderson Cousins!

27 See "Grinton Baptism: John of Virginia or John of Reeth?" *AR&B*, September 1991, pp. 8-9.

Album

Photo

This month's photo was contributed by Charlotte Warner of Frazier Park, California. Charlotte's ancestor, Ibby Withrow Ruby, was the daughter of David and Jane (Gwinn) Withrow; David was the son of Robert and Jane (Alderson) Withrow. She writes the following:

"Your picture of Samuel H. Withrow in the latest issue prompted me to get out the enclosed picture of Ibby Withrow, my great-great grandmother. Ibby was a niece to Samuel H. Withrow [December 1991 newsletter] and only four years younger, being the daughter of Samuel's eldest brother David Withrow (c. 1792-1872) and his wife Jane Gwinn. Comparing their pictures I find a resemblance, especially the mouths.

The Ruby and Withrow families both moved from Virginia to Ripley Co., Indiana—the Rubys about 1821-25 and the Withrows sometime after 1830. After Ibby and Andrew were married, they settled on a 40-acre farm in Johnson township, Ripley Co., where Andrew built a house for 25¢ (nails for the door) and their first three children were born. In 1845, along with their parents and other family members, Andrew and Ibby were among the first settlers of Adams township, Mahaska Co., Iowa. They all settled on what became known as "Ruby Row." Andrew was a farmer in section 26 until about 1894 when he moved to Oskaloosa.

Andrew cut down a cherry tree and built Ibby a bureau out of the wood. It is still in the family. I obtained possession of it when I inquired about this story which had been told to me by my mother. It turns out that my mother's youngest sister had owned the bureau. She died, and my uncle remarried, and they lived in a trailer park. The bureau was a bit large (it's 45" tall and measures 42" by 19", the wood a full one-inch thick) and had been given to the second wife's daughter. I can tell just how it was passed down by the mover's writings on the back—from Iowa to Kansas to Seattle to

southern California where I located it less than 50 miles from my home!

Other stories: Back in (West) Virginia, Ibby was bitten by a copperhead snake. They slit a live chicken and put [the liver?] on the bite to draw out the poison. Every year when the weather was hot that spot itched and broke out.

When Ibby's son Sanford died (at age 11 months in 1852), she was so broken up that her husband said, "We'll go back to Indiana." She said, "No, you pulled my nose off to get me here, and you'll not drag me back by the ears."

Andrew Ruby was afraid of kerosene lamps and wouldn't have any. They used candles. Finally they got a bracket kerosene lamp and hung it in the kitchen—but no one was to carry it around. They continued to use candles everywhere else. They had to do chores before dark! Andrew wouldn't allow his family to use a pitchfork to put hay in the horses' trough for fear of putting out their eyes, yet he would gather up an armful of hay with a lighted pipe in his mouth!"



Ibby Withrow Ruby, age 72,
ca. 1888

(Photo from Charlotte Warner,
g-g granddaughter)

Selected Census Records: Missouri 1900

Family	Sex	Relation	Date of Birth	Birth Place	Comments/Notes
Benton Co., MO					
Alderson, Albert	m		Dec. 1870	MO	
Rosa	f	wife	July 1875	MO	
Lloyd	m	son	July 1896	MO	
Lillie	f	son	July 1898	MO	
Buchanan Co., MO					
Alderson, James	m		May 1883	MO	
Alderson, John	m	boarder	April 1878	MO	boarding with Nanie Atchison
Alderson, Laura B.	f		July 1853	MO	is this the widow of David John Alderson?
Pearl D.	f		July 1886	MO	
Lottie	f		Sept. 1888	MO	
Callaway Co., MO					
Alderson, Althea	f		April 1887	MO	living with Hugh Marshall
Cass Co., MO					
Alderson, George G.	m		July 1849	KY	
Rachel A.	f	wife	Jan. 1844	MO	
Chestnut	m	son	March 1878	MO	
Leona	f	dau	March 1881	MO	
C.E.	f	dau	1875	MO	
Alderson, Amp?	m		Dec. 1866	MO	
Ida	f	wife	July 1875	MO	
Roy	m	son	July 1893	MO	
Elmer	m	son	Nov. 1898	MO	
Shadown, Joseph	m	father-in-law			
Alderson, Andrew A.	m		Dec. 1864	MO	
Annie L.	f	wife	July 1867	MO	
Flossie	f	dau	Aug. 1895	MO	
Elizabeth J.	f	mother	Feb. 1838	MO	
Butts, Susie A.	f	sister-in-law	April 1869	MO	
Alderson, Benedict	m		Sept. 1860	MO	
Sarah (L?)	f	wife	Oct. 1860	MO	
Jennie F.	f	dau	July 1890	MO	

continued on next page

Cass Co., MO, continued

Alderson, Edgar	m	step-son	Jan. 1892	MO	with family of Raymond Hill
Alderson, James D.	m		Oct. 1870	MO	
Mary	f	wife	March 1870	IL	
Esther	f	dau	Oct. 1898	MO	
Alderson, John E.	m	boarder	Jan. 1858	KY	boarding with Isaac Dye
Alderson, Louisa J.	f	widow	Mar. 1821/23	KY	widow of P.H. Alderson
Alderson, Sarah	f	widow	Nov. 1861	TN	widow of James M. Alderson
Oscar C.	m	son	March 1883	MO	
Joseph C.	m	son	Nov. 1884	MO	
McAnnally, Elizabeth (two boarders)	f	mother	Jan. 1822	VA	

Crawford Co., MO

Alderson, Elizabeth A.	f		Jan. 1842	KY	
Garrison, William T.	m	son	Dec. 1871	MO	
White, Ethel	f	g-dau	Aug. 1888	MO	

Davies Co., MO

Alderson, Richard H.	m		April 1845	IL	
Nancy	f	wife	Aug. 1846	OH	
Kincaid, Nellie	f	ward	Jan. 1887	KS	

DeKalb Co., MO

Alderson, William	m		Feb. 1847	VA	is this the son of John Alderson (b. 1812), son of John "River Jack" Alderson (b. 1783)?
Viola	f	wife	March 1869	IL	
Ethel	f	dau	Nov. 1889	MO	
Thomas W.	m	son	March 1891	MO	
Marshall C.	m	son	Aug. 1893	MO	

Many thanks to Helen Boswell, who contributed this listing. Most of the families shown here have not been positively identified; if any reader has further information on these families, please write and I will print the information in the next issue of the newsletter. Thanks!

Editor's Corner

This issue marks the end of our third year of publication. In this period of time, I have been very fortunate to meet and correspond with many of you, and I have been constantly grateful for the support, both financially and editorially, that you have given me. Without readers, this newsletter would have long since folded!

Enclosed with this month's issue is a renewal notice for those subscriptions due to end with this issue. Even though I have computerized as much of this operation as possible, errors have still crept in. If any one receives a renewal notice in error, or has not gotten a response from me on a specific request, or has not received all the newsletters due, please let me know and I will correct the situation immediately.

Also, in the next issue I plan to provide a complete listing of all members along with their line of descent and addresses so that other members can easily contact them. If you do not want your address printed, please let me know before mid-June, and I will exclude it from the listing. I must admit that I am unclear of the ancestry of a num-

ber of members, so if you have not sent in a pedigree for your line, please submit one so I can incorporate your line in the Alderson database.

The Alderson history is progressing well. I have scanned nearly 90 pages of Helen Boswell's compilation into the computer and have begun to organize it into chapters and subchapters. I hope to flesh out this excellent backbone with further articles such as those on George Alderson and Ibbey Withrow in this issue, so, again, if you are interested on compiling such information on your own line of research, please let me know and I will send you the relevant portions of the draft history.

I look forward to the fourth year of *Alderson Roots & Branches*. There remains an enormous amount of information yet to share among Alderson researchers, and I welcome any and all contributions from readers. Did you just do a census search of a county? Have you recently found a reference to Aldersons in a county history you searched? Have you come across family groups you were unable to place? There is space waiting for all of these items in the newsletter!



Alderson Family History Society

The Alderson Family History Society is a British organization devoted to the study of the Alderson family history. Though primarily oriented to family lines in Britain, the membership includes Americans and undertakes research on American and other lines of interest. The Society publishes a newsletter—appearing in February, June, and October—which presents family histories and biographies, research guides and results, organizational news and projects, queries, and other interesting and useful material.

For those interested in subscribing to the AFHS newsletter, the annual fee is \$14 airmail, \$12 surface mail, payable by check to Mr. John Alderson, 133E Alameda Drive, Tempe, AZ 85282.

Alderson Roots & Branches

is a quarterly newsletter of *Alderson Cousins*, the family association devoted to research and discussion on the history and genealogy of the Alderson family, particularly the family of John Alderson, Sr., born 1699, Yorkshire, England, died 1780, Botetourt Co. VA.

Editor: David Fridley

Contributions in form of articles, photographs, vital records, Bible records, and other Alderson memorabilia are welcome. All material accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope can be returned. Suggestions, contributions, and research queries can be addressed to David Fridley, *Alderson Roots & Branches*, 817A 18th Ave., Honolulu, HI 96816.

Subscriptions are \$7.50 per year (\$13 international) for four issues and run from the June to March issues, including any back issues for the year. Back issues from Vols. 1 and 2 are available at \$1.50 apiece. *Checks or money orders should be made payable to David Fridley.*

Thank you, and Happy Hunting!