

ENGLISH ORIGINS OF THE ALSTON FAMILY OF THE CAROLINAS

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A century ago, Alston ancestral research was beset by the usual genealogical betes noirs. In England., "the Alston family was moved to its uttermost ramifications by the appearance of certain 'next of kin' advertisements in the London papers having reference to the Odell property." These arose from the publicity given to the matrimonial and testamentary affairs of the penultimate baronet. These also nicely coincided with the family 'tradition' announced in 1901 that both John Alstons of the Carolinas derived from the Odell line. A flurry arose among the American Alstons, who naively imagined a collaterally descending baronetcy and the incident estates and unclaimed wealth.¹

Yorkshire barrister Lionel Cresswell vainly attempted to lay these rumors, remarking wryly that it was a wild goose chase: "Lest any Alstons cherish notions of 'rights' and 'wrongs' derived from paternal or maternal tradition it may be as well to note that all Alston property and estates of aforesaid are to-day in the possession of those properly entitled to them. He remarked of Groves' work that "relating to English genealogy [it] betrays a readiness to snatch at assumptions," although otherwise it "has every appearance of being sound, exact and critical where treading on home and safe ground." In fact, Cresswell noted a possible connection between John Alston of South Carolina and the Odells (pp. 14, 19, 238, 400), but wrote, "The evidence so far brought to light is insufficient to establish it."²

But while Cresswell's work was in press, the wanted proof was discovered. Commenting at the same time on "the crudities and errors" of Groves' work I Alexander Samuel Salley published the indentures of apprenticeship entered into by William Alston of Middlesex, gentleman, on behalf of his 13-year-old son John, and James Jones, merchant of Charles Town in Carolina, dated 16 May 1682. John had been baptized 25 Feb 1668/69 in Pavenham, Bedfordshire, son of William and Thomasine Brooks and grandson of John and Dorothy (Temple) Alston and great-grandson of Thomas Alston (baptized at Newton 16 Nov 1572) and Frances Blomfield. Through Dorothy Temple the South Carolina Alstons had acquired a royal descent.³

In 1961 my friend John Insley Coddington revisited the question of the origins of John Alston of Chowan County, North Carolina, concluding his ancestry "remains unproved".⁴ He wrote me the proof may lie in the papers of the Public Record Office. Four years later, the editor of the Journal of North Carolina Genealogy disproved several of Groves' assertions and wrote, "Unless conclusive documentary proof is found, either in England or America, the North Carolina Alstons and Alston descendants should not claim the Bedfordshire Alstons."⁵ But in the Plantagenet Ancestry, Douglas Richardson dangles the prospect of a royal ancestry once again. Being doubly descended from John Alston of Chowan County, I present this article to set the record straight and prevent further such building of sand castles.⁶

John Alston was baptized 16 Apr 1677 in Weathersfield, Essex, England, son of Solomon and Mary Alston. He married 17 Dec 1702 Mary, daughter of John Lambert, in Great Henny, Essex, and soon after appears in the Colonial Records of North Carolina (1:587), Page 64.

witnessing a power of attorney from Henry Baker of Virginia to Samuel Swann of North Carolina. He purchased acreage on Bennett's Creek in Chowan county in 1711, where his will was proved 2 Dec 1758. John and Mary Alston had ch Solomon (md Ann Hinton), Joseph John (md Elizabeth Chauncey, second Euphemia Wilson), William (md Hannah Kimbrough), Philip (md Winifred Whitmel), Elizabeth (md Samuel Williams), Mary (md Henry Guston, second William Seward), James (md Christian Lillington), Sarah (md Thomas Kearney), Martha (md Lemuel Wilson), Charity (md Robert Hilliard, second John Dawson).⁷

John's parents Solomon and Mary Alston had eight children baptized within a half dozen miles of Sible Hedingham, where Solomon's father William would die in 1699. In Great Yeldham, Essex: Solomon (5 Mar 1668), Sarah (19 Feb 1669), William (9 May 1671). In Weathersfield: Philip (22 Apr 1675), John (16 Apr 1677), Mary (16 Feb 1679), unnamed daughter (Apr 1681). in Gosfield.: Elizabeth (22 Apr 1685).⁸ In Public Record Office chancery suits, Solomon appears as a mercer in 1679, but soon turned to farming in Gosfield, and after Elizabeth's birth, moved his family 25 miles in the direction of London, to Havering atte Bower, where he appears farming as late as 1694.⁹

Solomon's father was party to a triple wedding on 28 Sep 1637 in Bocking, Essex. Three siblings married: John Alston to Johanna Maltwood, William Alston to Mary Greene, and Susan Alston to James Richardson. William and Mary had six children baptized in Toppesfield: William's executor Robert (24

May 1652), Mary (27 Sep 1638), Susanna (25 Sep 1641, md -- Blower), William (5 Feb 1643). Jemima (12 Feb 1644, md Thomas Furman), Solomon (18 Jul 1648). The will of William Alston, gentleman of Sible Heddingham, dated 5 Jul 1693, proved 5 May 1699, has never been noticed in print, since it has been rendered all but indecipherable through the action of mildew over the years. Following is a full transcript¹⁰

Wills and Administrations of the Minor Courts of Essex and Hertfordshire, 1697-1703 'Porter', Chelmsford Registry Commissary Court [FHL film 0094229, pp. 108ff]; abbreviations extended, spelling retained, transcription by DLK:

In the name of God Amen I William Alston of heddingham Sible in the County of Essex Gent being in reasonable good health of body & of sound & perfect mind & memory praised be almighty God therefore calling to mind the uncertainty of mans life here on earth and being desirous to settle things in order before I go hence and be no more do make ordain & declare this my last will and testament in manner and form following that is to say as touching such temporal estate as almighty God hath bestowed upon me here do order give and bestow the same as followeth Imprimis I give devise and bequeath unto my son Robert Allston & to his heires & Assigns forever All that my messuage tenement or farme lying & being in Wethersfeild in the said County of Essex with all the houses lands meadowes pastures profits Commodities rights members & appurtenances whatsoever thereunto belonging as they are now in the tenure and occupation of one William Simsonne or his assigns Item I give devise and bequeath all my Customary messuage or tenement

Page 65.

with all the lands meadowes pastures wayes easements rights members and appurtenances whatsoever thereunto belonging lying & being in Heddingham Sible aforesaid and also all my customary or Copyhold & freehold lands lying & being in Topesfeild in the said County of Essex With their and every of their rights members and appurtenances as they are now in the tenure and occupation of one William Hayward or his Assigns unto my lovinge son in law Thomas ffurman and Jemyma his now wife for and during the term of their two naturall lives & to the longer liver of them and after their decease To the only use and behoofe of their daughter Mary ffurman my Grandchild & to her heires & Assigns for ever Provided and upon the Condicion following That they the said Thomas ffurman my said son in law Jemyma my said daughter & Mary my said Grandchild or some of them or some of their heires Executors or Assigns do and shall give and faithfully pay or cause to be paid unto my daughter Susannah Blower or her Assigns the full summe of forty shillings of currant english mony yearly & every year during the term of her naturall life by ten shillings a payment at four the most usuall feastes or termes of payment in the year that is to say the feaste dayes of the Annunciacion of the blessed Virgin Mary Saint John the Baptist Saint Michael the Archangell & the nativity of our Lord Christ the first payment to begin upon the first of those four feasts which shall happen next after my decease And for want of such payment of the forty shillings a year my mind and will is and I do hereby give full power and authority & strength unto my said daughter Susanna & her assigns to enter into and upon a certain feild parte of the Lands now in the possession of the said William Hayward called by the name of Little Chare with the appurtenances & the same to have possesse & enjoy peaceably and quietly and receive and take the rents issues and profits thereof and to be fully satisfied & paid the said forty shillings [with all costs and damages that may issue] Provided alwaies Neverthelesse upon this Condicion following It is my will & mind that if in case my said son in law Thomas ffurman shall purchase and settle so good an estate of twenty poundes a year in messuages lands & tenements as my son Robert Allston shall agree unto and approve upon himself Jemyma his wife and Mary ffurman my Granddaughter & same to be paid the fourty shillings a year to my daughter Susan Blower in such manner and forme as I have given and bequeathed all those lands and tenements unto him and them now in the possession of William Hayward That Then my will mind & meaninge is and I give and devise full power and authority unto my said son in law Thomas ffurman or his heires or Assigns to sell settle & convey All the said messuage lands & tenements with the appurtenances pertaining thereunto whatsoever in the possession of the said William Hayward or his Assigns before in this bequeathed unto my said son in law Thomas ffurman and Jemyma his wife upon some person or persons by all the lawfull ways & means whatsoever and to such use or uses as the purchaser or purchasers sold with the same to be settled for the perfect sale thereof & for the purchasers full and perfect title & security Item I give unto my son William Allston two shillings and six pence to buy him gloves Item I give unto my son Solomon two shillings Item all the rest residue & remainder of my Goods and Chattels not hereby before by this my will given and disposed my debts legacies & funerall expenses & probate of this my will being first paid & discharged I give & bequeath unto my son Robert

Allston which said son Robert Allston I doe nominate and appoint to be sole Executor of this my last will & testament hoping that he will faithful] performe the same And I do pronounce this to be my last will & testament revoking & making void all other wills & testaments by me heretofore made In
Page 66.

witnesse whereof to this my present last will & testament being contained in these sheets of paper written on one side to every sheet thereof have set my hand & the first & last sheet thereof my scale this fifth day of July in the fifth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord & Lady William & Mary by the Grace of God King & Queen of England Scotland France & Ireland Defenders of the faith etc Anno Domini 1693 [witnessed by Francis Clarke and others; proved by executor 5 May 1699].

William's father John Alston was baptized 23 Dec 1576 in Newton., Suffolk, England., son of William and Margery (Holmested) Alston. John married Anne daughter of Thomas Cocherode and Anne daughter of Robert Mordaunt, and had eight children: L'Estrange [Robert Mordaunt of Hempstead had married Barbara daughter of John L'Estrange of Little Massingham, co. Norfolk] (married in Castle Camps, Cambridgeshire, 13 Jan 1653, Ann Lewis), wp 6 May 1681; Matthew, d testate Oct 1677; John (md Johanna Maltwood), wp 24 Nov 1658; Elizabeth (md Edmund Drury); William (md Mary Greene); Anne (md Francis Rowley at Brent Pelham, 28 Jul 1661); Susan (md James Richardson); Henry (md Elizabeth). Father John of Stisted, Essex, died testate, wp 26 Nov 1656."

John's father William Alston was born 1537 and died 9 Jan 1617/18 in Newton; he was the son of Edward Alston and Elizabeth Coleman. By Margery daughter of Henry Holmested and his wife the daughter of William Bendlowes, William had eleven children: William (md 1) Marian, 2) by license 29 Jun 1607 Ann (Neuce) Malyn, and d 5 Nov 1633); Thomas (bp Newton 18 Feb 1564/65); Edward (b Newton 1565, md 19 Apr 1596 Susan Brand and second Anne Ardley, and d'22 Jan 1617/18); John (bp 20 May 1567 Newton); Ann (bp 15 Aug 1568 Newton); Peter (bp 30 Nov 1569 Newton, Elizabeth Petlow and second Katherine Buggs, and d 3 Apr 1628); Elizabeth (md 29 Jul 1590 Ralph Northey); Thomas (bp 16 Nov 1572 Newton), md 28 Apr 1606 Frances Blomfield, and d 21 Jan 1619/20 [ancestors of the S.C. Alstons]; John [above]; Joseph (bp 9 Nov 1578 Newton); Margery (bp 6 Oct 1584, md 15 Oct 1601 Valentine Parker)."-

Edward Alston was buried 14 Nov 1592 in Newton; he was the son of William and Elizabeth (Simonds) Alston, and md 1) Elizabeth daughter of John Coleman, 2) at Newton 16 Dec 1590 Elizabeth (--) Bull, and 3) Christian, who survived him. He and Elizabeth had ch William [above]; Thomas (md Dorothy Holmested, and d 6 Jun 1614); Alice (md -- King) , William md second 12 Sep 1608 Parnell (--) Ellice, and Thomas md second at Newton 15 Nov 1579 Susan Gosse.¹³

Edward's father William was buried 30 Jan 1564/65 at Newton; he was the son of John Alston. By his wife (who d testate, we 30 Jun 1565), William had five ch: Edward [above]; William (md Alice and d testate, wp 16 May 1565); Robert; Anne (md -- Loder); Alice (md -- Kingsbury).` From the above, it will be seen that John Alston of North Carolina and John Alston of South Carolina are second cousins.

Page 67.

ENDNOTES.

1. Lionel Cresswell, *Stemmata Alstoniana* (Leeds, 1905) [FHL film 994084 item 51, p 285 et passim ; Joseph A. Groves, *The Alstons and Allstons of North and South Carolina* (Atlanta, 1901), p. 27.
2. Cresswell, pp. 340f, 399f.
3. South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, VI:114-16; Henry Bainbridge Hoff, 'The Temple Family of Stowe', *The Genealogist*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 123-128, which lays out the ancestry in fifteen generations from Dorothy (Temple) Alston to Edward III of England.
4. John Insley Coddington, 'Buford Turner ... and His ... Alston ... Connections', & *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 21ff, esp.
5. 24-26; 'Alston Genealogy', *Journal of North Carolina Genealogy* (Fall 1965), pp. 1527-30.
6. Douglas Richardson, *Plantagenet Ancestry* (Baltimore, 2004), p. 66.
7. Weathersfield and Great Henny par regs. NC land patents 26 Mar 1723, 263 ac head of Knotty Pine Pocoson adjoining Henry Baker; Bertie county deeds, sale 18 Feb 1736 124 ac to Thos Piland, witness Henry Baker. Groves, pp. 95f et passim.
8. Toppesfield, Great Yeldham, Weathersfield, Gosfield par regs; will of John Alston dtd 20 Feb 1755, N.C. State Archives; Cresswell, pp. 183, 186, 207ff, 213, 357.
9. Bridges 541 (Pasfield v Alston), Hamilton 271/21 (Pasfield v Alston),

Hamilton 595 (Alston v Alston: 22 Feb 1689/90 Solomon Alston of Havering, yeoman, v John Alston of Weathersfield, yeoman. About 7 or 8 years since Orator owed arrears of rent to one Chas Baker gent for the rent of a farm in Gosfield, and also 12 pounds to the deft. He made over all his stock of corn and cattle on the farm to the deft, who agreed to pay his debt to Baker. Orator understood the 12 pounds was included. Now, after this long interval, John demands payment of the 12 pounds), Hamilton 61/6 (1693, Elizabeth Chapman wid of Halsted v Wm Alston, son in law: "Wm confederates with Edw Ennyver of Grinstead gent and Solomon Alston of Havering [atte] Bower, farmer, brother to the sd William"), Hamilton 1/41 (5 May 1693, lengthy answer to Hamilton 61/6), Reynardson 451/156

(26 Feb 1693/94, Wm Ward of Halsted gent v Wm Alston of Havering Bower, draper, Edward Ennyver and Solomon Alston) continues Hamilton 61/6. Cf Cresswell, pp 183-186, 207f, 213. In Mead v Alston (p. 209), Solomon Alston describes himself as desirous of living at peace and avoiding suits at law; and being ignorant of matters of law and the nature of conveyances.

Page 68.

10. Wills and administrations of the Minor Courts of Essex and Hertfordshire, 1697-1703 'Porter', Chelmsford Registry Commissary Court [FHL film 00942291, pp. 108ff; par regs of Toppesfield, Bocking; Cresswell, pp. 21, 113, 119, 273.

11. Cresswell, pp. 21, 113, 119, 273; par regs Castle Camps, Cambs; Toppesfield. Essex, Brent Pelham, Herts; Newton, Suffolk; Bocking, Essex; Chancery cases Hamilton 552 (Alston v Crachrod), Hamilton 83/58 (Cratcherode v Alston), Cresswell, pp. 181, 209, 363f.

12. Cresswell, pp. 4f, 6, 11, 13f, 218, 273, 278, 299. 13. Cresswell, pp. 3-5, 22, 89-92.

14. Cresswell, pp. 3, 87-92, 218. Alstons resided at Newton, Suffolk, so early as Edward I's reign, when Alston of Stisted was noted (p. 358).