

SKETCH OF THE ALDERSON FAMILY

John Alderson, Sr., was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1699, and came to this country when twenty years old. The circumstances under which he left his native land were peculiar. His father, a minister of the Established Church, opposed with considerable violence a matrimonial connection he was about to make. To divert his son from this alliance he prevailed upon him to travel and furnished him with a horse and requisite funds. In a short time these means were exhausted, and he, without the knowledge or consent of his father, bound himself on board a vessel which brought him to America.

On arriving in this country, he was hired to a well-to-do farmer of New Jersey (a Mr. Curtis) for his "passage money." His conduct was such that he not only gained the esteem of Mr. Curtis, but married his daughter, Mary. The death of a daughter led to his conversion, and caused him to write his first letter to his father in England. He connected himself with the Baptist church, and we are told that "with his characteristic energy he began at once to preach." He received in reply to his letter sent his father, two volumes on theology, and a very kind letter. These books are still in the Alderson family.

He lived near Bethlehem Church, New Jersey, and then moved to Germantown, Pennsylvania, where he preached for a number of years. In 1755 he was sent by the Philadelphia Association as a missionary to Rockingham county, Virginia, and there organized one of the first Baptist churches in Virginia, the Smith and Lynnvile's Creek church, August 6, 1756. The members were driven by an Indian invasion in 1757 forty or fifty miles beyond the Blue Ridge, but rallied after two years and returned to their homes and church, which was admitted into the Philadelphia Association on October 12, 1762.

For about sixteen years he was pastor of Smith's and Lynnvile's church, when he removed to the county of Botetourt, where he labored nine years, when he was called to rest in 1781 at the age of 82. He was buried in the graveyard of his neighborhood, afterward abandoned and overgrown with tall oaks, with neither hillock nor stone to mark his resting place.

John Alderson, Sr., had seven sons and one daughter. The latter married a Mr. Orton and moved to western Pennsylvania. Of the sons, Thomas and John only came to Greenbrier, and a great granddaughter of his son, Curtis, Hester Ammen, who married 1st Rufus D. Alderson, great grandson of Elder John Alderson, Jr., and after his death married Thomas H. Alderson, grandson of Thomas, who was a son of Elder John A., Sr. After many years of active service in the Old Greenbrier church, she still lives at an advanced age, with her son, Rufus D. Alderson, in this county, retaining in full her vigorous mentality.

Source: Cole, J.R., History of Greenbrier County [W VA], 1917, Page 309