

THE UNTHANK/ONTHANK CONNECTION WITH THE ALMY FAMILY

Last October I received a most interesting letter from Paul S. Onthank, Sr. enclosing pages from "The Onthank Family" by Arthur H. Onthank. This book presents very convincing circumstantial evidence that the Unthank/Onthank name in America today descends from John Almy (No. 148). I suggest you refer to the genealogical charts in the January 1977 or July 1977 issues of the Newsletter. Following is a brief summary of this Almy connection.

Mary Unthank, who married Job² Almy (14) in 1663, was the only child of Christopher and Susanna Unthank. Job Almy died in 1684 and Mary Unthank Almy, widow, was left with eight children from age 17 down to one year old. (Three of Job and Mary's children had died in infancy.) The next year Mary married Thomas Townsend who became step-father to the Almy children.

John (148) was the eldest son, age 8, at the time of his father's death. To this son, Job left in his will of 1684, all his property in Portsmouth, RI, only reserving the best room for his wife Mary while she was a widow. This John Almy disappears from all records after this will.

Christopher Unthank/Onthank, Mary's father, had sold all his property by 1684 and also disappears from all records thereafter. Christopher, Susanna, and Mary are the only known Unthank/Onthank immigrants to America. However, in 1724 a John Unthank/Onthank was taxed in Framingham, Massachusetts, then a frontier town about 35 miles north of Providence, RI. A George Unthank/Onthank was also taxed in Framingham that year. There is no known record anywhere else of John and George Unthank/Onthank, the name being spelled both ways. Who were they? and how did they suddenly appear in Framingham? Here is how "The Onthank Family" book explains it.

"The most logical answer is that Christopher Unthank/Onthank and his grandson, John Almy, who took his grandfather's surname, left Rhode Island together to settle in the outlying area of Framingham, probably some time after 1685. By then, John Almy had a step-father, whom he may have resented. By then, too, his grandfather, Christopher, had disposed of all his real property in Providence and was free to move. Possibly by then Christopher's wife, Susanna, had died and had been entombed in the part of the Providence lot which they had reserved for that purpose. That reservation, made in 1680, becomes significant. Christopher, probably saddened at the loss of his wife, and footloose to get away from surroundings which then meant little to him, may have been ready, even eager, to find a new atmosphere."

"What more reasonable than in that mood, Christopher would agree with his daughter, Mary Almy Townsend, to adopt her unhappy eldest son, John, and strike out for new ground? This would yield two desirable results. First, it would give Christopher Unthank/Onthank a line of succession for his name and family, through his grandson, John, who would take his name. Second, it would provide Mary, his daughter, with a home and property, with which she could more safely and easily raise her remaining family of seven children; namely, the property which was willed to eight-year-old John Almy and which he would transfer to his mother, his then guardian."

"A strong buttress to this assumption is the continued use of both surnames, Unthank and Onthank, by John and George and the latter's children. It will be recalled that Christopher was so called, indiscriminately, in the Rhode Island records."

"Another interesting, although not conclusive, clue of corroboration is that, according to one Family researcher, John Almy Onthank had a wife named Barbara; her last name and other information about her are missing. George Unthank/Onthank named his daughter Barbara, possibly after his mother. Christopher's wife was Susanna. In later generations both names, Susanna (or Susan for short) and Barbara, were favored in the Onthank Family."

"All things and conditions considered, therefore, it will be accepted in this history that John Almy Unthank/Onthank was the grandson of Christopher Unthank/Onthank; that he took his grandfather's surnames; that he settled at Framingham soon after 1685; and that he was the father of George Unthank/Onthank, who was probably born about 1700, when his father, John, would have been 24 years old."

There is other circumstantial information presented in the book, such as occupations, and continuance of names, which is very convincing in support of the above assumptions. Knowing that John (148) disappeared from all records, and after reading this book, I believe that persons that descend from this John Unthank/Onthank are direct male descendants from our William (1) Almy ancestor.

VEDA AND MERWIN ALMY CRUISE TO SOUTH PACIFIC

On 7 January 1987, Veda and I flew to San Francisco, CA, where we boarded the cruise ship MS Royal Viking Sky for a 41-day cruise to the South Pacific. Our first port of call was Honolulu, HI. Although we have been to the Hawaiian Islands before, we went on a new, very unique and exciting tour that is not part of the usual tourist activity. One of the many interesting stops on this tour was at the estate of Senator Hiram Fong's son where we made our own leis out of freshly picked flowers (orchids, etc.). We also sampled many exotic fruits that were grown in their orchards.

After Honolulu, our next port of call was port of Suva in Fiji where we went on "a visit to Orchid Island." From the port of Suva we rode a bus through the countryside to Orchid Island, which had been constructed to present Fiji in miniature. There we saw their traditional songs and dances, native animals, and extensive gardens of tropical plants and flowers.

Our next two ports were Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand. Our land tours included these cities and the surrounding countryside. The full day excursion from Auckland through the dairylands of the Waikato Valley was outstanding. In the rugged hills of Te Kuiti is one of New Zealand's most fascinating attractions -- the Waitomo Caves. These caves are the home of the luminescent glowworm, which attract visitors from around the world.

Our next ports of call were Sidney, Melbourne, and Perth (Freemantle), Australia. We were supposed to view the America's Cup Races, but we arrived a day late. (Skipper Dennis Connor was not supposed to win the cup back in just 4 races.) But we enjoyed the tours in and about all these cities and we did see the America's Cup boat facilities and the boats that were involved. Also, in Sidney we got to pet koala bears, emus, and kangaroos, and feed black swans.

Our cruise took us next to Bali and then on to Sandakan in Borneo. At the latter we went to the world's largest rehabilitation center of the orang utan, "man's closest cousin." The walk through the dense Borneo jungle and having the orang utans come up to you was a very exciting experience. The cruise ship then took us to Manilla in the Philippine Islands and to Hong Kong, which ended our 41 days. We stayed in Hong Kong for four days and three nights before our flight home. Although this trip was very fascinating and exciting, it was good to get back home.

CHRISTOPHER MATTHEW PRATT (1407-1532-2111)

Deborah and Stephen Pratt of Carver, MA, are the proud parents of Christopher Matthew Pratt who arrived on 1 January 1987. Needless to say, he has created happy grandparents (Charles C. and Marcia L. (Almy) Pratt) and great-grandparents (Charles B. and Marion E. (Williams) Almy) on the Almy side of his ancestry. Congratulations to Deborah and Stephen on their new family member.

A SIMMONSVILLE SAGA

By Richard R. Almy, Sr. (1233-5143-242)
of Front Royal, Virginia

(This article appeared in serial form in the Providence Journal-Bulletin Newspaper, starting in the issue of December 11, 1985. I have permission from both Richard and the newspaper to run his article in the Almy Family Newsletters. This is the third installment, continued from page 3, Issue No. 49, January 1987.)

At the age of about ten years I was assigned certain daily chores. One of these was to milk the cow which supplied a bountiful supply of milk, usually ten to fifteen quarts a day. At first we had a Holstein cow which was a high producer but later my father bought a registered Guernsey which gave a richer milk and excellent cream. In those days none of the milk was pasteurized and it tasted much better than today's product, at least to me. My other regular duty was to go down to the mill before sundown and start the water wheel which drove the electric dynamo which supplied electricity to our house and garage. All of this equipment had been purchased and installed by Dad. This job involved rotating a large metal wheel mounted on a vertical threaded shaft attached to the gate which fed water to the water wheel when it was in the raised position. As the wheel was turned it gradually raised the gate. As more and more water entered the water wheel (which was located in a deep pit in the mill basement) the wheel would begin to turn and drive the dynamo through a system of pulleys and leather belts. When it had reached full speed an electric knife switch was closed by hand to connect the generator to the wiring that led from the mill to the house.

After I had performed this start up job many hundreds of times, one evening I got a little careless. I reached above the gate wheel to close the switch handle, but instead of grasping the switch handle my hand slipped off and contacted the copper switch blades. My left hand was still on the large metal gate lifting wheel. The result was an instant flow of 100 volts of direct current from my right arm across my chest into my left arm and hand and to ground through the metal wheel, gate shaft, and water wheel. This flow of current paralyzed my muscles so I couldn't move either hand momentarily. By great effort I mustered enough strength to partially overcome the paralysis of my right hand enough to get it off the switch and break the flow of electricity through my body. It was a close brush with disaster, however, as in a few seconds more I would probably have blacked out and died. Needless to say after this experience I had a lot more respect for the power and danger of electricity. I never had the nerve to tell my parents of this narrow escape.

It was not necessary to return to the mill late at night to shut down the water wheel. My father had another "Rube Goldberg" automatic gate closer. He had another alarm clock which was set each night at the desired closing time. When the alarm clock went off the winding knob rotated, lifted a gate holding a large glass agate in a sloping runway so that the agate rolled down the runway and released a trigger holding the water gate open (I have forgotten the exact mechanism) the gate closed and the generator shut down. It was a quite ingenious arrangement and a good example of early (if somewhat crude) automated machinery. However, it worked without fail during my experience.

There was an unforeseen problem with Dad's early hydro-electric plant. Every spring eels would migrate upstream in New England streams and then return down in the fall. I could never figure out just how these eels got upstream by the dams, but they did. When they came down in the fall was when difficulties arose. The water intake pipe to the water wheel was protected by a screen consisting of wooden slats arranged vertically with an opening between slats of approximately one inch in width to keep out leaves, sticks, and eels from getting into the water wheel which was in a steel casing in the wheel pit in the mill basement. All too frequently on fall evenings at home the electric light bulbs would start to get dim and in a few minutes they would go out entirely. This was an unfailing sign that eels had gotten into the water wheel and gotten jammed between the wheel and casing with the result that the wheel stopped turning. There was nothing to do but change to candles or kerosene lamps for the rest of the evening. An examination the next day would show that a broken or dislodged wood slat in the screen had allowed eels to enter the water wheel. The latter had then to be taken apart and the dead eels removed before again running the power plant. This was obviously a messy and time consuming operation. It could be avoided by carefully maintaining the wood screen to be sure it was in good condition at all times so that eels could not squeeze through the slats. The villagers near the Mill were always glad to have any whole or cut-up eels that we removed from the water wheel. They considered them to be great delicacies.

Living in the country naturally involved being associated with a variety of pets and other living creatures. My Uncle Howard who lived in the former General Bliss house next door was interested in hunting and had a number of Beagle dogs, and a fox hound named Don II, and a miscellaneous collection of cats. At one time Uncle Howard's population of dogs and cats peaked at twenty one each before declining as a result of protests and complaints from his wife. I had a dog named Towser (you may recall) and a tame crow (unnamed). One of my father's workmen had climbed a tree to remove it from a nest and I had raised it. Crows will eat most anything with no apparent regard to the type, age, or condition of the food. They make excellent pets and are quite intelligent as birds go. They have great admiration for shiny objects which they collect and hide in high places. My Mother had problems with my crow stealing her things. Sometimes on nice days she would take her sewing outside in the yard to make or repair clothing. Her work basket contained thimbles, scissors, needles, etc. all bright and shiny things coveted by "Crow." I remember one day it swooped out of a tree, grabbed her gold thimble from the basket, flew up to the house roof and deposited it in the gutter. We had to get a long ladder to reach the gutter and retrieve it. Another incident involving my pet crow occurred at my grandfather's funeral in 1911. The funeral director had come out from Providence with a horse drawn hearse to transport the casket to Swan Point Cemetery. The gentleman was dressed in formal attire including a tall black stove pipe hat. He was supervising loading the coffin into the hearse when suddenly and without warning "Crow" made a spectacular crash landing on his top hat which was knocked off and fell to the ground. Needless to say he was somewhat flustered following what was certainly a unique experience for him (and possibly world wide) in the funeral profession.

Unfortunately my crow met an untimely end while still quite young. My father had the house painted and many flies and other insects became stuck in the wet paint. Our bird was seen eating some of these and a few days later he became obviously quite ill and died. We assume that lead poisoning from the paint was the cause.

(To be continued.)

BIRTH OF GREGORY PAUL ALMEY

Received the good news from Fred and Joyce Almey of Cardiff, Wales, that their son Clive and daughter-in-law Sue were the proud parents of Gregory Paul Almey who arrived 28 January 1987. He joins his 3-year old brother Gareth David (see p. 1, Newsletter No. 37). Congratulations again to Clive and Sue.

SENATOR MICHAEL B. FORTE

On December 23, 1986, Republican Governor DiPrete of Rhode Island named Democrat Michael B. Forte to a seat on the Family Court. Michael is the husband of Patricia Almy Forte (1407-1426-122). Congratulations to Michael on his new position.

ALMYS STORES GOING OUT OF BUSINESS

All 17 stores remaining in the New England chain of department stores known as Almys Stores, Inc. had going out of business sales during March. Several of the outlets, such as Freeses, Edgar's, R.H. Whites, and Star Stores, carry their original names. The chain will close in May because the parent firm, Stop & Shop Companies, Inc., decided to liquidate because of poor profit margins.

CELIA M. (ALMY) LAKE (1407-2512-3)

Celia M. (Almy) Lake, 91, of New Bedford, MA, and widow of Albert E. Lake, died 28 December 1986. Celia was born 24 February 1895 in Somerset, MA, the daughter of Peleg and Bella (Boyd) Almy. She married Albert E. Lake in Fall River, MA, on 22 August 1923. They had no children. She leaves one nephew, Thomas B. Almy (1407-2512-21), who sent me the newspaper obituary.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Following is a listing of those cousins who have sent in contributions, since the last issue of the Almy Family Newsletter, to help defray the costs of printing and mailing these Newsletters. This help is most appreciated. Many thanks to each of you.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Almy Number</u>	<u>Residence</u>
Mrs. Arnold L. Hayes	11A3-3111-242	Rhode Island
Helen I. Beamer	1232-1218-322	California
Millie Almy	1233-4666-21	California
Hulda (Almy) Freda	1233-4668-11	North Dakota
Stephen O. Almy	1235-5792-113	California
Mrs. Richard J. Almy	1252-9532-744W	New York
Philip W. Almy	1407-1532-1	Rhode Island
Lois B. Almy	1407-1532-3	Rhode Island
Donald G. Almy	1407-1C74-31	California
Thomas B. Almy	1407-2512-21	Massachusetts
Mrs. L. Wesley Almy	1408-6524-11W	New Mexico
Stephen B. Brown	Onthank descendant	Kentucky

Your cousin (1408-3312-112),



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Have a terrific Spring!