

THE GEORGE C. ALMYS (1252-9531-224) CELEBRATE 50TH

Mr. and Mrs. George C. Almy of Unadilla, NY, were honored last August 21 for their fiftieth wedding anniversary. A party was given by their children Richard and Nancy Almy (1252-9531-2241 and wife) of Warsaw, NY, Sandy and Bill (1252-9531-2242 and husband) of Otego, NY, and Robert Almy (1252-9531-2243) of Auburn, WA. About seventy friends and relatives attended the buffet and dance.

A magic show was provided by one of their twelve grandchildren, Richard Almy, Jr. (1252-9531-2241-1) of Averill Park, NY, "The Amazing Rick." Other grandchildren attending were Pam Almy (1252-9531-2241-3) of Midland, TX; Dustin Almy (1252-9531-2241-4) and Brendon Almy (1252-9531-2241-5) of Warsaw, NY; Jeffrey Burnham, Daniel Burnham, and Billie-Jo Burnham (1252-9531-2242-1, -3, and -4) of Otego, NY; Deborah Burnham-Decker (1252-9531-2242-2) of Unadilla, and Stephanie Almy (1252-9531-2243-2) of Auburn, WA.

Marge and George saw one of their four great-grandchildren, eighteen month old Alexandria Lynn (1252-9531-2241-31) of Midland, TX, for the first time. Other great-grandchildren attending were Nichole and Erin Decker (1252-9531-2242-21 and -22) of Unadilla.

George and Marjorie Sheldon were married December 24, 1938, in Schoharie, NY, but the party was given in August because of the uncertainty of the weather for a December get-together. George worked at Bendix in Sidney, NY, 39½ years, retiring in 1979. Marjorie worked at Bendix 21 years, retiring in 1978.



Mr. and Mrs. George C. Almy

GENERAL KNOWLTON (1252-9773-34) HONORED

General William A. Knowlton was recently named by the Department of the Army as The Honorary Colonel of the Regiment for the 40th Armor Regiment, the unit in which he first served as a Lieutenant in WWII. The symbolic headquarters is in Berlin, where "F" Company of the 40th is the largest tank company in the Army today.

EARLY WATER POWERED MILLS IN RHODE ISLAND

By Richard R. Almy

The following article was written by Richard R. Almy (1233-5143-242) of Front Royal, Virginia. I hope you find it as interesting as I do. Places and events are mentioned that I remember my father talking about many, many years ago. My father was born in 1873 in North Smithfield, near Slatersville, RI; and the places and events mentioned here were recent history to my father when he was growing up in that area. Although there is more geography and history in the article than genealogy, it should be of interest to all those whose genealogical lines came through this area because of marriages and other connections to the families and activities described in the article. Following is the article by Richard.

"Some 350 years ago Roger Williams paddled his canoe down the Seekonk River and thence up the Providence River to what is now Providence. This area had many streams and small rivers formed during and after the retreat of the great glaciers which had covered Rhode Island in ages past. As Providence grew and prospered from its commerce as a seaport at the head of Narragansett Bay, consideration was given to the possibility of establishing local industries to produce textile products previously imported from England.

"At Pawtucket, (meaning 'falls of the water,' to the Narragansett Indians) there was a very fine site for a water-powered operation. A sawmill was built at this site in 1671 by Joseph Jenks. Approximately 100 years later four enterprising Rhode Islanders joined forces with the objective of building a cotton cloth manufacturing mill at this location using English textile technology. Samuel Slater, William Almy, Moses Brown, and Smith Brown established the first textile mill in the United States at Pawtucket in 1793 using the abundant water power of the Blackstone River. The name of the firm was Almy, Brown, and Slater. William Almy was born the son of Job and Katherine (Slocum) Almy. He was a Quaker and married on June 4, 1789, Sarah Brown, sister of Moses and Obediah Brown. The establishment of this successful mill marked a turning point in the nation's history and made Pawtucket the 'Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in America.' After the establishment of the Slater Mill on the west bank of the river in 1793, this area expanded to include thirteen mills by 1817.

[Merwin F. Almy note: The above William Almy was No. 1408-9. He and Sarah had two

daughters, one died young and the other, Anna, married William Jenkins.]

"Several artists made pictures of this site. One is an oil painting, made circa 1850, titled *Pawtucket Falls and Main Street Bridge*. This shows the Falls at the height of its utility. The Slater Mill is shown up stream. To the left of Slater Mill in this picture is the Littlefield Manufacturing Company Mill. The large red building to the left is the Almy Building, in which the Slater Trust Company was first located. Next to the bridge on the left is the New Mill and directly across the river on the east is the Yellow Mill and Stone Mill. This painting was in an exhibition at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in 1986.

"The intensive development at Pawtucket resulted in a scarcity of labor and suitable factory locations on the Blackstone. The firm of Almy, Brown, and Slater decided to expand elsewhere. In 1806 they founded a company mill town, called Slatersville, in a farming area of the state on the Branch River twelve miles northwest of Pawtucket and west of Woonsocket. A broad road and common was laid out as the community center. Along the main street were the grocery, the dry goods stores, blacksmith shop, and school. The workers houses were mainly to the east and west. The mill buildings were to the south. Slatersville became a model for other New England mill villages. The original mill was built about 1815 and replaced about 1826 with a four story masonry one. John Slater, younger brother of Samuel, was resident representative of the owners here. There is an oil painting of Slatersville, circa 1860-1870, by an anonymous artist probably commissioned by the Slater family.

"In addition to the water powered industrial expansion north of Providence, there was a similar movement to the west. The country-side here gradually changed from all forest to scattered small farms. The main roads to the west were the Hartford Pike and the Plainfield Pike. Between these two highways was a hilly area with several small streams. These small rivers, while not carrying large volumes of water, did have rapid drops in elevation over short distances. Several of these were in what became the town of Johnston. The area was seen to have great potential as a source of cheap water power only about six miles from downtown Providence. What is now Thornton, the town seat of Johnston, was originally names

Simmons ville after United States Senator James F. Simmons who appears to have been the founder of the original textile mills in the area. What is now Simmonsville was then called Upper Simmonsville. An early settler in Thornton was one Major Thomas Fenner who built a house as a protection against the Indians the year after the burning of Providence and the death of King Philip, Chief of the Wampanoags.

"Cedar Swamp Brook passes through Upper Simmonsville and upon it in the early 19th. century were located five water powered textile operations. These were two mills built by Reuben Mathewson (the Chapel Mill and the Suckerhead Mill), the old Simmons Mill, the Print Works and the Randall Mill. The original Chapel Mill burned and was replaced by a three story stone mill.

"Senator Simmons built a very substantial four story stone mill on the west side of the road near the bridge over Cedar Swamp stream. Near the mill were three large stone residences and a number of other mill support buildings all built around 1830 or earlier. The land upon which this development took place was part of a 500 acre tract belonging to Samuel Randall. Mr. James Simmons married his daughter Eliza and settled down in the village to run the mill which had 55-60 looms. This was a complete textile operation which produced printed cloth. It represented a very large financial investment which included the building of two good sized water storage reservoirs up stream several miles, and a smaller reservoir near the mill. The storage reservoirs were named Simmons Upper Reservoir and Simmons Lower Reservoir. Each had a gate house in which was located a gate control so that water could be stored and released as needed during periods of low rain fall. By this means the mills could operate daily without a lack of water to turn the water wheels.

"In 1840 this location experienced a devastating spring flood on April 13th. Two reservoir dams gave way and much damage and loss of life took place. Two dwelling houses, a store, and other property was swept away. Eighteen people were drowned, fourteen of which were from two families. One was the newly arrived Whitmore family and the Angell family. John Hull, his wife and two others also died in this catastrophe. This flood was a severe economic blow to Simmonsville. Damage to the mills and reservoir was finally repaired and operations eventually continued.

"In 1844 Benjamin Pirce went to live in the village as superintendent and Mr. Simmons sold him a one quarter interest in the 'Old Mill'. Benjamin Randall owned another one quarter and Simmons one half. Around the beginning of the Civil War the A. W. Sprague Company bought the property. The mill fell into disrepair after the war and the Print Works burned around 1854. The chapel and Suckerhead Mills were acquired by William Almy and later by Benjamin F. Almy, Sr., who operated them during the Civil War period.

"The advent of steam engines for powering textile and other machinery and post Civil War economic depressions marked the end of Upper Simmonsville's water powered textile operations.

"All of the mills were abandoned with the exception of the Chapel Mill which was converted to a cider and vinegar factory by B. F. Almy, Jr. and continued to operate as such until 1922.

"There was one other old water powered mill which operated on the Pocasset River between Thornton and Hughesdale. This was originally the Almy Mill and was built by Sampson Almy in the 1840's. About 1860 it was purchased by the A. W. Sprague Company and renamed the Morgan Mill after old Amasa Sprague's wife's father, Mr. Young Morgan. The mill then produced wrapping twine. The superintendent of this operation was Mr. E. F. Luther.

[Merwin F. Almy note: The Almys mentioned above are Benjamin F. Almy, Sr., No. 1233-5143-2, and Benjamin F. Almy, Jr., No. 1233-5143-24, ancestors of Richard, the author of this article. Sampson Almy, is No. 1408-02.]

"There were other early water powered mills in Rhode Island which prospered for a number of years. All of these mills were comparatively small, however. There was a need for larger and more reliable power sources than those available on the relatively small streams in Rhode Island. The development of large steam driven Corliss type steam engines resulted in water power being replaced by the much more powerful steam power. The old mills went into gradual decline in the latter part of the 19th. century. The once flourishing old Simmons Mill together with seven acres of land sold for \$1,000.00. The age of water powered mills in Rhode Island had come to an end."

WILLIAM COMSTOCK ALMY (1235-4131-1)

The following article, with picture, was handed out at the 1988 Almy Family Reunion by Phyllis Mather Stearns (1235-4131-1114) as her contribution of a biographical sketch.

"William Comstock Almy, my great grandfather, was born in Providence, RI, on August 1, 1836. He was the son of Samuel Almy and Mary Winsor Comstock, a descendant of Roger Williams. He was the eldest of 3 children, having a brother Samuel, and a sister Caroline who married William Lloyd Bowers.

"His early education was in the Providence public schools. He then went into the jewelry business, receiving his apprenticeship with Richardson and Hicks. After a hiatus in the Civil War and travels, he returned to the business in Providence.

"He fought in the second battle of Bull Run in 1862, with Company A of the First Rhode Island Regiment. In 1863 he married Sarah Elizabeth Greene, daughter of Charles Coffin Greene and Sarah Ann Maquire.

"Following the War, and still in his 20's, he made several trips to California, adventuring and seeking his fortune. He went by way of Cape Horn but returned by the Isthmus, according to his obituary which appeared in the Providence Journal. It is not clear whether his wife accompanied him, but it is unlikely. Their first child was not born until 1870.

"At the age of 54, in 1890, he switched jobs and joined the Providence Highway Department. It would be interesting to know what that consisted of in those days. In any event, he remained there until the May preceding his death at age 79!

"He was a long time member and Captain of the Water Witch Company #6 of the Providence Volunteer Fire Department. A cup, commemorating his service is in the possession of my sister, Constance Mather Price, of Cleveland, Ohio. William C. Almy and his wife



Sarah had 2 children: Arthur C. Almy, my grandfather, and William F. Almy.

"At the time of his death in 1915, he lived at 223 Massachusetts Ave., Providence. The funeral service was conducted there by the Pastor of the First Universalist Church, Rev. Francis W. Gibbs. He was buried in Swan Point Cemetery.

"The portrait pictured above, by an unknown artist, is of William C. Almy at the age of 3½. It is believed that it was painted in Stonington, Connecticut, where his family lived for a time while his father was working on the Stonington RR. When I was a little girl, family legend has

it that upon learning that he was my mother's grandfather, I cried out 'Oh, but he's not old enough to be your grandfather!' The portrait is presently in the possession of another sister, Madeleine Anderson of Oberlin, Ohio. She exhibited it in the Allen Art Museum there as part of a collection of family portraits which she arranged as guest curator in 1980."

For the article on the art exhibit referred to above and information on other related Almys, see Newsletter No. 26 (April 1981), pp 3-4.

REVISION OF ALMY NUMBERS

Finding new descendants of William Almy occasionally requires renumbering. This happens when an older child is found in a family that has already received numbers. I recently found a new eleventh child of No. 1407-2 so that the old 1407-2A became -2B; -2B became -2C; -2C became -2D; and -2D became -2E. All those whose numbers start with any of the above six digits (1407-2A through 1407-2E) have been renumbered accordingly.

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. This help is most appreciated. I thank each and everyone of you.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Almy Number</u>	<u>Residence</u>
Adrian Lee Almy	1233-3252-311	New Mexico
Lee Almy Harris	1233-3252-431	Florida
Millie Almy	1233-4666-21	California
George C. Almy	1252-9531-224	New York
Duane K. Dye	1252-95A6-436	Michigan
William A. Knowlton	1252-9773-34	Virginia
Philip W. Almy	1407-1532-1	Rhode Island
Lois B. Almy	1407-1532-3	Rhode Island
Donald G. Almy	1407-1C74-31	California
Richmond Almy Day	1407-2551-2	Arizona

Your cousin (1408-3312-112),



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BE AWARE OF THE BEAUTY OF SPRING !