

## **THOMAS ALTMAN**

1820 – 1889

## **MARTHA (GREEN) ALTMAN**

1824 - 1881

Thomas Altman, oldest of the children of Sampson and Sarah (Ivy) Altman, was born in Wayne County (now Ware County), Georgia, January 20, 1820. He may have been named after his paternal grandfather, Thomas Altman, mentioned previously. While Thomas (son of Sampson), was still a young child, his parents moved from Georgia to the then Territory of Florida, where the new country had been thrown open for settlement. At that period, Spain had formally ceded it to the United States by treaty ratified in 1821. It was not until March 3, 1845 that Florida officially became the 27th state to join the Union.

When the Altmans moved to Florida, it was only a few short years after the First Seminole Indian War (1817<sup>a</sup>1818). For many years the Indians had been allowed by Spain to occupy their Florida lands in peace, but when pressure was brought to bear upon Congress to have them removed to new lands west of the Mississippi, they rebelled and resisted the move. Many conflicts followed as the population increased and settlers began taking up the land. In 1832 and 1833 treaties were made wherein the Indian chiefs agreed to exchange their Florida lands for equal territory in the western part of the United States, where other southeastern tribes were being settled in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma).

An American Indian tribe, the Seminoles were formed in the 18th century by splitting away from the Creek Indians. They occupied the territory of northern Florida and fought the United States bitterly in 1817-1818 and under Osceola in 1835-1842.

The Seminoles, who removed to Indian Territory after the treaty was signed by their leaders in 1832, became one of the Five Civilized Tribes. However, a strong sentiment against removal suddenly developed and other members of the tribe, led by Osceola, refused to recognize the treaty, and fled into the Florida swamplands.

Osceola was a Seminole American Indian leader in the Second Seminole Indian War. He was born in Georgia, son of an Englishman father named William Powell; his mother was a Creek Indian. In 1808 he moved with his mother into northern Florida. When the U. S. Commissioners negotiated with the Seminole chiefs the treaties of 1832-33 for the removal of the Seminoles to Arkansas, Osceola seized the opportunity to lead the young warriors and declared to the U. S. Agent that any chief who prepared to remove to the west would be killed, and this threat was later carried out.

The efforts of the United States to enforce the treaty brought on the Second Seminole War which lasted seven years (1835-1842). Although the Indian war cost the lives of 1,500 United States soldiers, it resulted in the removal of all but a few hundred Seminole, whose descendants continue to live in Southern Florida to this day.

At age 17, Thomas Altman, volunteered, along with his father, Sampson Altman, for military service during the Second Seminole War. At that time he was living with his family in Hamilton County, located in the north of Florida and bordering on the state of Georgia and Thomas County, not far from where the Altmans once lived.

Hamilton County's borders are formed by the Suwannee River on the south and the Withalacoochee River on the west. Suwannee County's northern boundary line borders Hamilton County's southern boundary line and is the source of the famous lines in a song, "Way down upon the Suwannee River..."

When Thomas Altman joined with his father that summer in signing up to fight the Indians, there were no doubt other friends and kinsman from their county and community who also volunteered. The group probably traveled by horseback to Mineral Springs, Florida, where they all reported for duty on June 16, 1837. Thomas and his father signed up for six months duty, they were enrolled, and next appear on a company muster-out roll at Fort Gilliland, Florida on December 18, 1837, where they were honorably discharged.

A few years later, when he was about 22, Thomas married Martha Green, daughter of John, called "Jack" Green. Their marriage is recorded in the marriage records of Hamilton County, Florida. (Some researchers have erroneously reported Martha to be the daughter of Daniel Green, a Revolutionary soldier.)

Thomas and Martha (Green) Altman were the parents of ten children, seven sons and three daughters, all of whom were probably born in Hamilton County, Florida, near Jasper, the county seat. They were:

- 1) Mary Ann Susan, b. 1843; md 1st, Miles C. Hunter, and 2nd, James D. Hunter.
- 2) William Lewis, b. 1844; md. Mary Hunter, daughter of William M. Hunter.
- 3) Sampson, b. 1846; md Mary "Mollie" Dampier, daughter of William A. and Jane McCall Dampier.
- 4) John, b. 1848; md. Mollie Raulerson.
- 5) Sarah Jane, b. 1849; md. Robert R. Fewox, moved to Texas. In her old age, she returned to Georgia to live with her daughter and is buried at Sugar Hill, Georgia.
- 6) Joshua, b. 1850; md. Henrietta Hatcher, daughter of John Hatcher.
- 7) Rufus, b. 1853 (died young)
- 8) Joseph L., b. 1855; md. Eliza Irvin Clark, daughter of Thomas and Martha (Law) Clark; moved to Texas. Thomas Clark was from Jefferson Co., Georgia.
- 9) Priscilla Ann, b. 1857; md. 1st, Rufus Dampier; 2nd, William Sullivan. Reuben, b.1869; md. 1st, Heloise Duncan; 2nd, Augusta L. Wooding; 3<sup>rd</sup>) Vista Clark.

On April 29, 1851, at age 31, Thomas Altman appeared before Ira S. Rouse, a justice of the peace in Hamilton County, Florida "to make a declaration for the purpose of obtaining bounty land to which he was entitled under the Act granting bounty land to certain officers and soldiers who had been engaged in the military service of the United States." This Act was passed by Congress on September 28, 1850. After being duly sworn, Thomas stated under oath that he served as a private in the company commanded by Captain John Alford in the 2nd Regiment of the East Florida Volunteers, commanded by Colonel W. J. Mills in the war with the Seminole Indians. He further stated that he volunteered at Mineral Springs on or about the 16th day of June 1837 for the term of six months, and continued in actual service in said war for the term of six months and two days. He said he was honorably discharged at Newmansville on December 18, 1837, as proven by his certificate of discharge and the muster rolls of said Company.

Thomas went on to declare that he had never received nor was he entitled to bounty land under any law, prior to the Act of September 18, 1850.

A second declaration was made on the same date, except it showed a second term of service for Thomas Altman in the Seminole Indian War under Captain George W. Smith and reported that he was honorably discharged at McRae's.

Thomas Altman had trouble producing his discharge certificate and his declaration was delayed due to the fact that his name was copied in error on the company's list as "Alkman" instead of Altman. After several letters and affidavits he was sent a copy of his discharge which was to accompany his declaration for bounty land. Given as No. 29,109 and dated May 13, 1851, it shows his first tour of duty from 16 June to December 1837 and also a second enlistment for service which lasted from March to September 22, 1838, where he served under Captain George W. Smith.

It appears that Thomas Altman felt a strong sense of duty toward his country and believed in military service. Two years after the Civil War began Thomas Altman, then 43 years of age, enlisted in the infantry division of the Confederate States of America on February 21, 1863 in Lake City, Columbia County, Florida, serving under Major R. B. Turner. The records first show him as a private, Company H, 9th Florida Infantry, Confederate States of America. He also served in Captain Stewart's Company of the Florida Volunteers, and later was transferred to Captain Reynold's Independent Company, Florida Infantry, where he was made sergeant. At one point he was "guarding the railroad bridge at Suwanee River." After almost two years service, he was subsequently discharged as "over age" and returned to Florida in 1865, just a few months before the war ended.

The military discharge papers of Thomas Altman give the following description:

Born in Ware County, Georgia;  
5 feet 11 inches tall; age 47, with dark complexion, blue eyes and black hair. The record further indicates that he enlisted at Lake City (Columbia County), Florida,

February 21, 1863 and was discharged near Petersburg,  
Virginia on February 1, 1865.

Thomas' discharge records list him as 1st Sergeant, Company H, 9th Florida Infantry,  
and states further:

"I certify that the within named Thomas Altman, 1st Sergt. of  
Company H, of the Ninth Regiment of Florida Infantry, born in Ware  
County in the State of Georgia, aged 47 years, 5 feet 11 inches high,  
dark complexion, blue eyes, black hair, and by occupation a Farmer,  
was enlisted by Major R. B. Thomas at Lake City, Florida, on the  
21st day of February 1863 to serve three years, and is now entitled to  
discharge by reason of being over Forty-four years of age.

The said Thomas was last paid by \_\_\_\_\_ blank  
\_\_\_\_\_ to include the 30th day of June 1864 and has pay due from  
that date to the present date. There is due him a clothing allowance  
from date of enlistment. He is indebted to the Confederate States  
\_\_\_\_\_ dollars on account of 1 cap, 1 Jacket, 2 pairs pants, 3 pairs  
drawers, 2 blankets, 2 shirts, 1 pair of shoes, and 1 pair of socks.

Given in duplicate at Camp near Petersburg, this 1st day of February  
1865.

Received of Captain H. I. Stone, Paymaster, C. S. Army, this 2nd day  
of February 1865, Three Hundred Twenty Dollars and 42 cents.

Signed:  
Thomas Altman,  
1st Sergt. Co. H,  
9th Florida  
Infantry"

Thomas Altman was lucky and probably overjoyed to get back to his home and family in  
Florida after being away for such a long period. It would be interesting to know how he  
traveled from Virginia and how long it took him to get to his home in Hamilton County,  
Florida. At the time he arrived home, his youngest child was Priscilla Ann, born in 1857.  
Four years after he returned from military service, Thomas and Martha had one more son,  
Reuben, born in 1869. Thomas probably applied for a Civil War pension in later years,  
but at this writing, I have not tried to obtain a copy from the Florida State Archives.

In a newspaper article, McKay's "**Pioneer Florida**" a page in the "*Tampa Tribune*" of  
Sunday, May 28, 1950, Mrs. Mary Lula Altman Barres, descendent from the pioneer  
Altman family identified with the early history of Southwest Florida, wrote in response to  
a request for data on old cemeteries in this section: "I will give you the history of the  
New Hope Methodist Church and cemetery near Fort Meade (in Polk County), from my  
own memory and what has been told me by older members of the family:

*"The first Altmans came here shortly after the Civil War. Four brothers - John, Louis, William and Joshua - were in the service of the Confederacy. They settled in Polk and DeSoto counties. Grandma Alice Ann Altman was the widow of Sam Altman. My father was John Altman. This branch built a log cabin and located north of Whidden Creek. It was customary in those days for settlers to pen the range cattle at night in their fields to enrich them for planting. The calves would be separated from the cows and driven across the creek. One afternoon as Grandma and my father were driving the calves in, she tired from the strenuous work, sat down on a log to rest in the shade of an oak tree. Soon she was sufficiently rested to proceed, and as she stood up, she said to my father – then affectionately known as "Little Bud" - 'Son, that rest gave me new hope. When I die, have me buried in the shade of that oak.' Being very old she died soon afterward and her wish was complied with. A cemetery was laid out and there are now interred many of her relatives and friends. When a church was erected nearby, it was called New Hope as a memorial to Grandma Altman. Hers was the first body buried there."*

In the next weekly article of "*Pioneer Florida*," it was stated:

*"Error Corrected - Members of the Bryan family have called my attention to an error in the brief history of the New Hope Cemetery, near Fort Meade, published last Sunday. The first body buried there was not that of Mrs. Sam Altman, but that of Mrs. Alice Bryan, Mrs. Altman's mother."*

This article was among the records of Aunt Gladys Altman and is inserted at this point because of the historical content.

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Martha Altman, wife of Thomas, died in Suwanee County, Florida, which adjoins Hamilton County, Florida on September 17, 1881. She was buried in Old Prospect Cemetery near their home in Hamilton County.

In the Friday, October 1, 1915 issue of the *Jasper News*, Hamilton County, Florida, the following newspaper article written by Mrs. Ann Bell Taylor, who married Judge H. J. Taylor in 1884, recalls the following information about Martha (Green) Altman, her father and her family:

*"Another old-time settler of this county was John Green, commonly called "Jack" Green. We have not been able to get the exact date of his arrival in this county (Hamilton), nor much of the family history, but he was here in the early Indian wars and lived in the east end of the county.*

*One of John's daughters, Mary, married a man named Powell. One of her sons, Richard Powell, is now supervisor of Registration of this county. Another son, John L., is a merchant in Jennings.*

*Another of John's daughters, Martha, married Thomas Altman and raised a large family. He also had several sons, who are all long since dead. Of Martha's sons, Sampson (Altman), Jr., was sheriff of this County from 1881 to 1884. John Altman died in Tampa a few years ago; William has been dead for several years. Joshua lives in Suwanee County and Reuben is here in Jasper, general manager for the Hamilton Trading Company.*

*One of Martha's daughters, Mary, is still living. She married Miles Hunter. She has long been a widow and lives with her children. One of her daughters, Mrs. W. R. Hunter, resides here in Jasper – her husband being one of Jasper's merchants.*

*Martha's husband, Thomas Altman, and her sons, Sampson and John, were Confederate soldiers and served in the same company with the writer's father.*

*Thomas Altman moved to Texas many years ago and died there."*

If it were not for this article making specific reference to John Green as the father of Martha (Green) Altman, it would have been difficult to set the record straight or to learn of her sister's and brother's names. There were at least two Green families living in Hamilton County, Florida at the same time, who were said to be unrelated.

After his wife's death, Thomas Altman made his home with his youngest son, Joseph L. and his daughter-in-law, Eliza Irvin (Clark) Altman. About 1886, Thomas went with his son Joseph and family when they moved to Texas, settling first at Waverly in Walker County. His daughter, Sarah Jane, and her husband, Robert Fewox, also made the move to Texas and settled nearby.

In failing health, the old Indian and Civil War veteran spent his last days at Joseph's new home in Madison County. He died there at the age of 69 on December 18, 1889, only three years after his move to Texas. He was buried at Mt. Tabor near Crossroads.

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The children of our generation will enjoy this story about Thomas and Martha Altman (our great-great grandparents) and parents of Joseph L. Altman. It is a story that describes an early Altman homestead in Florida and is the only story that Aunt Gladys had written in full in her own handwriting.

## **“A BEAR IN THE HOUSE!”**

When Aunt Mary Altman was a small baby, her father (our grandpa) Thomas Altman went out hunting one night. (They were out of meat so he went to hunt a deer). Grandma Altman took the baby and went to bed. “Old Shep,” the family watchdog, lay down on the floor in front of the fireplace to guard the family. The fire in the fireplace was kept going day and night because of the scarcity of matches, so they dared not let it die down or go out.

Because there was no shelter to the doorway, the father hung a quilt across the opening. After awhile the baby cried out several times and Grandma patted it back to sleep, but the baby cried out again. Grandma Altman worked up again and nursed the baby. and about that time she felt something put its paws on the bed. Thinking it was Old Shep, Grandma patted it on the head and told him to go lie down. But the touch of the dog’s head to her hand felt strange, and she discovered that the hair was curly – and when it took its paws down and started waddling across the floor she saw that it was a big black bear. This frightened her and she screamed, realizing that it was not Old Shep.

The bear went outside and Grandma got up and put more wood on The fire about the time Grandpa came back, and seeing the fire Burning so big, inquired the reason. He was surprised to know a Bear had come into the house!”

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