

GEROGE ALEXANDER (abt. 1620-1709)  
 SUSANNA SAGE ( )

Alexander is an ancient English and Scottish surname. It is found as early as 1450 in Stirlingshire and Ayrshire, Scotland. William M. Clemens made a study in 1914 of a rare old Scotch book, the 'House of Alexander' and was able to record for us, in America, some genuine lines of descent and make some pertinent, but brief, statements about early lines in this country. One of several lines reviewed was the royalty connection of Col. Fielding Lewis who married Betty Washington, sister of President George Washington. Clemens' opening remarks read, "Among the early colonists, the Alexander family was conspicuous for worth, ability and service toward the progress and establishment of the nation. The history of the family is necessarily brief." <sup>1</sup> Of our George Alexander we remain without a knowledge of his parentage and line of ancestry. However, Clemens does state that from the marriage of Margeret, daughter of Robert II, King of Scotland, to John Alexander, Lord of the Isles, are descended all of the Alexanders and the name became a surname at that time. <sup>2</sup>

Much of what is found of George Alexander, our immigrant ancestor and his wife Susanna Sage, is incorporated in the writings of the Mudge family records. These two lines merged when George and Susanna's daughter, Mary, married Micah Mudge (7-46). It is supposed that George Alexander was born in Scotland but some evidence points to the possibility that he came to America from western England as a follower of Puritan preachers who did not conform to the established church in England. The parents of George and Susanna have not been given with any certainty and their nativity remains indefinite.

"The Sage family, without doubt, is of Scandinavian origin. When the Norsemen conquered Normandy, in France, they generally softened the final "a" tone of Saga to Sage. As the name spread to other countries it was subject to other changes - in Germany, Saige or Suage; in Switzerland the same, while in France it became Le Sage. The name first appears in England on the roll of Battle Abbey, prepared by the monks of Battle Abbey at the command of William the Conqueror, to perpetuate the names of those who took part in the battle of Hastings, which gave William the English throne." <sup>3</sup>

"It will be noticed that the Sage family in America was remarkable for the longevity of its members when they died from natural causes. They were a vigorous, hardy race, noted for their courage and endurance." <sup>4</sup>

". . .The success of the Plymouth Colony, as well as the continuance of religious persecution and intolerance in the mother country, gave a decided impetus to the progress of emigration to New England.

"The Charter of Massachusetts Bay, granted in 1628 encouraged colonizing and within the next two years 17 ships arrived, bringing some 1,600 or 1,700 immigrants. The area of the Bay was rapidly settled by the new comers. The social necessities of these colonists, as well as their restless activity and numbers, forbade the supposition that they would long remain within these narrow limits when they became acquainted with the better lands and resources of the interior.

"Foremost among these colonies, both as regards the character of its members and the date of its arrival was the one which settled - Dorchester (now Milton), south Boston, and which afterwards removed to Windsor, Conn. The Dorchester group had been formed mostly

from the western counties of England. Great pains were taken by this group in Dorchester 'to construct a company of such materials as should compose a well-ordered settlement, containing all the elements of an independent community.' Two devoted ministers, Maverick and Warham, were selected, not only with a view to the spiritual welfare of the plantation, but especially that their efforts might bring Christian principles to the Indians. Some few men of education were joined to the association, that their counsel and judgment might aid in preserving order and founding the social structure upon the surest basis. Several gentlemen, past middle life, with adult families and good estates, were added . . . But a large portion of active, well-trained young men, either just married or without families, were the persons upon whom the more severe trials of a new settlement were expected to devolve. Three persons of military experience in England were selected as a suitable appendage, as forcible resistance from the Indians might render the skill and discipline essential to the safety of the traveling group through the wilderness." <sup>5</sup>

Such was the group of which George Alexander was associated as an unmarried young man going into the interior of a territory that was to become the State of Connecticut. The country at the time was under the English jurisdiction of General Courts and the boundary lines of any separate states, as are now set up, were not yet existing.

From the writings of Alfred Mudge we become aware that George Alexander was married to Susanna Sage March 18, 1644 in Windsor, Conn. where all seven of their children were born. <sup>6</sup> In "American Marriage Records Before 1699" by W. M. Clemens, 1967, "Susanna Sage and George Alexander, md. 18 March 1644, Windsor, Conn." <sup>7</sup>

"Alexander, George, in 1644 bo't Jasper Rawlins' place, S.E. from the Old Mill; resided there until about 1655, then sold to William Filley." <sup>8</sup> (see map #23) Windsor, Hartford and Wethersfield were early neighboring towns - settlements along the Connecticut river (see map #6). The adventurous merchants of Holland had long recognized the Connecticut River Valleys as inviting areas of rich stores of beaver skins and furs that could be conveyed to old world markets readily by the shipping conveniences provided by the great Connecticut River. The Dutch made little or no attempt to colonize the land. It was not until the English, with their deep religious zeal, love for popular liberty, and need for asylum from civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, had looked toward America as an only alternative, that the territory of the Connecticut became destined to be wrested from the Dutch.

"These godly people," says Roger Clapp, one of the number who came first to Windsor, 'resolved to live together under such rules and regulations as seemed proper to their ministers. Both their Reverends, Maverick and Warham, had formerly been ordained by Bishops in England, and though now thorough non-conformists, no re-ordination was deemed necessary.'" <sup>9</sup>

These early settlers lived in constant fear of Indian troubles. Situated as they were in a new country, and surrounded by Indians with whom their intercourse was necessarily guarded, any act which would imperil the general safety was justly deemed a grave offense and punishable by severe methods. ". . . Any neglect to attend military training or any neglect to mend or keep weapons in repair was punishable by a fine . . ." <sup>10</sup>

James Russel Trumbull, in his history of the settlements of the Connecticut River Valleys written in 1890, is explicit as he told of conditions that existed in the early days. The following information is taken from Trumbull's writings. In spite of all the excellent preparations that had been made by the colonists and their leaders to assure a successful venture, the effort was not without its difficulties. Mr. Trumbull's review of the conditions encountered by the brave planters who, as always, make up the determining power in any community endeavor, promotes ones faith in humanity.

The Indians of the Connecticut Valleys were nomadic. They had few ties to bind them long to any place. While the squaws tilled a small portion of the meadow land, the men did a little fishing, and at other times amused themselves in hunting and trapping. The chiefs of the numerous tribes, claimed authority to sell land and readily parted with it, and their followers, who had no knowledge of the nature of a deed, occupied and used it nearly to the same extent as before. They mingled with the white men on friendly terms. Often times the settlers, who measured them by the standard of their own superior culture, treated them unscrupulously, though honestly paying them for land and corn in a manner satisfactory to their dusky friends, still with a regard scarcely worthy of respect. The Indians failed to adopt the ways of their white neighbors. They remained too lazy to work, easily aroused to anger and innocent to any vice. Their cruelty could be animalistic.

They lived in a simple and primitive manner, clothed in the skins of the wild animals, whose flesh stocked their larders; sheltered by the wigwams formed, in part, of the twigs and branches of the forest. During the winters, they further protected the shelter with a covering of hides. Their food consisted mainly of the flesh of wild animals, fish, wild fruits, nuts, corn, beans and pumpkins. They were children of today, making little preparation for the future; the women performed the labors of drudgery while the men fished or hunted or were on the war path.

The river Indians were frequently at war among themselves, and the settlers suffered at times as a result. Misunderstandings easily arose and the white people had to be on constant guard for fear some slight arousal could cause a group to band and attack .

After the close of the Pequod war, there followed six years of uneasy peace between the Indian tribes, preserved in a great measure by the efforts of the English. It seemed, in spite of all their efforts, Indian hostilities were a constant menace in all of New England. Not until the King Philip's War in 1675-76 did the English settlers decide, once and for all, to unite against the onslaught of an all-out Indian effort to exterminate the intruding whites. The war effort seemed to bring about the subjection of all Indians, and migrations into new areas became less hazardous to the English colonizers.

During the years before King Philips War the settlers had their hands full in protecting themselves and striving to conciliate and keep the peace. The sufferings and sacrifice of lives filled the hearts of people in all the colonies with fear and trembling. Inhuman atrocities were experienced in the majority of the settlements.

In the strict regulations under which every community lived, we see evidence of the prudence and constant watchfulness necessarily imposed upon the settlers. In no part of New England were the Indians so numerous, in proportion to the territory, as in the Valleys of the Connecticut River, and traditions of the horrors attending the Indian wars are linked with almost every settlement.

Added to the dread of Indian treachery was the loss and trouble among their cattle that had suffered much from exposure to winter weather. <sup>11</sup>

The Alexanders acquired their home lot in Windsor at the time of their marriage and their grants of pasture and tillage acreages were listed with the distributions that were made to the first settlers. These added acreages were located in Bowfield, Little Meadows and the Great Meadow across the Ferry of the Rivulet to the east of his home lot. The Ferry provided the means of travel to the Meeting House, Commons and their neighbors to the north (map #23). The DAR records give the statistics of George Alexander's marriage the same as earlier mentioned and gives his death date, March 29, 1709. The children, all born in Windsor, were listed:

- "1. John Alexander, b. July 25, 1645; d. Dec. 31, 1733
2. Abigail Alexander, md. 16 June 1663, Thomas Webster
3. Mary Alexander, b. Oct. 20, 1648; md. Micah Mudge Sept. 23, 1670 at Northampton, Mass.; died early in 1728, ae. 79 (7-46)
4. child, died
5. Daniel Alexander, b. Jan. 12, 1650/1; d. 1686, Suffield, Conn; unmarried, was wounded in king Philip's War.
6. Nathaniel Alexander, b. Dec. 29, 1652; md. June 20, 1679 Hannah Allen; He died at Hadley, Mass (see map #6 )
7. Sarah Alexander, b. Dec. 8, 1654; md. 6 July 1678, Samuel Curtis" <sup>12</sup>

George and Susannah remained in Windsor until 1655. At the time of the family's move north to Springfield, Mass., their six living children ranged in ages from one to ten; three boys and three girls.

New settlements were beginning to be laid out in the more northern valleys of the Connecticut River extending into what later became western Massachusetts. The Alexanders pioneered the settlements of Springfield, Northampton and Northfield. (see map #6).

George's stay in Springfield may have been short but he is listed as a home owner there on an early town map (map #28). His lot was ten rods wide and lay along its length by what is now North Main Street and beside the way to the wharf and Ferry that crossed over the Connecticut River to the west side (see map #28). It is well to note that George's property was within a few blocks of the home lot of William Pynchon, the founder of Springfield, Mass. It would be interesting to know whether these two men had more than a passing acquaintance. We do know that they were both at Dorchester together, anxiously awaiting the passing of a royal charter that would allow the Company of Massachusetts Bay, in New England, to issue patentees or grants for purchasing land beyond the Bay area.

William Pynchon was one of twenty-six named by the King for such a purchase. Associated with him were his sons-in-law, Henry Smith, and Jehu Burr. These three planned and financed the Springfield enterprise.

The times and events in England bred a thirst for adventure. Though of gentle birth, Pynchon lived when England boasted the greatest sailors and explorers the world had ever known.

The political horizon in England, however, was very dark and the fortunes of the people were in jeopardy of diminishing. Taxes kept increasing to satisfy the reckless extravagance of England. Men who refused to pay enforced loans were thrown into jail with the writ of habeas corpus denied them.<sup>13</sup>

"Pynchon grew to be a man well versed in affairs, a man of broad aggressive thought and logical mind, keen, clear sighted and practical. He was acute, resolute and self assertive, with an indomitable will and a perseverance that recognized no obstacles . . . He was a disciple of democracy and a champion of free speech and equal rights . . .

"Alluring tales were told in England of the success of the French and Dutch in that great land beyond the sea, tales of inexhaustible stores of fish, lumber and furs as well as anticipations of precious minerals; of rivers that stretch themselves far up into the country, even to the borders of divers great lakes where they kill and take most of their beavers and otters."<sup>14</sup>

Springfield became Pynchon's dream of an entity of perfection. He came as one of the patentees with special privileges concerning trade with the Indians, and it was the fur trade which gave him a special interest in founding Springfield.

"No other single feature of our early history excites so much admiration as the capacity which the first settlers displayed at the very beginnings of each community, in constructive and orderly government . . . In England there was law and order based upon the principle that the few were born to govern the many. Here there was neither law nor opinion other than that which was evolved from their own inner consciousness. They did not stop to wander in the wilderness of doubt and fear, but set out with the supreme conviction that they were able to govern themselves, and that government was something in which all, even the humblest, should take part. The land in the old home in England, which should have been in the ownership of those who tilled it, was possessed by the few who had been the favorites of kings and courts. There were no free homesteads like those our ancestors created, and there was no equal distribution of the burdens and the benefits of government . . . As we look back to the beginning it is that genius which shaped the destiny of this country, which builded so differently and so wisely for the future, that excites our admiration, and it must ever remain as the supreme example, and the foundation for philosophic study of the men and women who crossed the ocean in peril and often in poverty, to found a new system of government.

"The common place affairs which may seem unimportant to us, who are now under different conditions, were incident to the beginnings of such settlements as Springfield . . . After this long lapse of time since the founders of Colonial America, there opens to our view the character and the purposes of those who came here at the beginning, and valiently, against great obstacles, worked out the new problems which were presented to them. While they brought with them from their mother country the habits and to a great extent the beliefs of their old homes, they proved that they were equal to the new duties under entirely

new conditions. They all walked and lived, and toiled on a common level, and nothing short of superior education or intellectual acquirements, gave any one advantage over another, or placed any one in the front rank in directing the affairs of their little community. It was as true a democracy as dreamers of all time have pictured, in which there was a gradual ripening of faith in the higher duties, which have come down to the race as the view and complexity has broadened." 15

The common place affairs of the pioneer takes on a great importance as we project ourselves into the situations to which these early settlers found themselves. As a consideration for land grants the king saw America largely as a commercial enterprise and those going out to New England being called "planters," hence our settlements came to be known as "plantations," and this is the origin of the term as early used in New England.

In Springfield, as in many of the new settlements, "unworthy persons or those liable to become a town charge, were not admitted for settlement, the founders thus undertaking to guard, at the beginning, against all undesirable characters. As early as 1642 a vote of consenses in this matter was sustained." 16

We can be sure that the early settlers of Springfield were men and women who possessed that element in character which triumphs over difficulties. "They were the yeomanry of the mother country, who held that all labor was honorable and ennobling." 17

Of George and Susanna we can state with assurance that they filled a nitch in what they must have felt was a contribution of the greatest necessity of their time; that of assisting new areas to become permanent settlements. George became one of the original proprietors of Northampton, Mass. (map #6). "He became a freeman in 1663 while in Northampton, owning a four acre home lot and 32½ acres of meadow land for his stock." 18

In Northampton the planters were subjected to many harrowing experiences due to Indian uprisings. Not only were they in constant fear of attack but the settlers were continually trying to settle and keep the peace between the several surrounding tribes. Warring among the Indians themselves was a constant threat to the stability of any town. From "The Mudge Family Records" we are told that while the Alexanders resided in Northampton, Mary, the daughter of George and Susanna, met and married Micah Mudge on September 23, 1670. 19 (story 7-46)

Northfield, an infant settlement to the north of Northampton, became the next location of the Alexanders. They again made a new home where they could assist in founding what seemed to be a promising area but which proved to be an even greater threat to their lives as the Indians of the north were being agitated by the French in Canada to make war with the English settlers. The competition was keen between rival nations for the acquisition of land and in all cases the Indians were used as a means to that end. The settlers of Northfield were attended with the most difficult of trials. Indians burnt the village and drove the settlers from the area in 1675. It seemed that New England was doomed to certain destruction for 1675 was the year that King Philip, the Indian chief, had united many tribes in an all-out effort to ex-

terminate the whites. Northfield lay between these two great conflicts.

From a footnote in the writings of Alfred Mudge an account is given as follows: "A list of names were presented to the General Court of Boston on May 24, 1680, petitioning for settlements of land grants or plantations in Squakeheag, or Northfield . . . with the Deeds from the Indians as proof of legal possession . . .with the consent of the proprietors which have taken up land there with the Grants and rescript of every man's land . . ."20

Among the list of settlers we find the names of George Alexander, John Alexander and Micah Mudge. This affirms the belief that the Alexanders did return to Northfield to settle in spite of the prevailing Indian unrest and suspicion that continued to exist because of the influence of the French to the north. It needs to be remembered that there was no boundary between the two nations and that any rightful possession of land was a matter of dispute between England and France.

The Mudge record states that George Alexander returned to Northfield to reclaim his land there after its destruction, and build again a home in the place of the one that had been burned by the Indians. This kind of persistent effort, in the face of odds, is seldom seen except as can be found in the lives of our immigrant ancestors.

It became evident that the suspicions, long held that the French in Canada were aiding the Indians in their movements, were correct. Under this state of things, so insecure were the settlers, that they went about their ordinary activities armed. Boltwood's "History of Hadley" gives realistic descriptions of Indian raids as they occurred in the Connecticut River Valleys of Massachusetts (map #6).

On the 19th day of September, 1677, a party of about fifty Indians from Canada fell upon the town of Hatfield inflicting terrible slaughter upon men, women, and children, and captured and took away a large number into captivity. The departing savages left six or seven others wounded as they retired northward.

At this time the people of Deerfield were busy re-building their houses that had been destroyed by burnings of an earlier Indian attack. The Indians of the Hatfield skirmish reached Deerfield just before dark and halted in the woods east of town. At about sunset they entered the place and repeated their acts of slaughter and added captives to their ranks, pushing on about three miles to spend the night. The next day after crossing the great river (Connecticut) twice, they halted at about thirty miles above Northfield, built a shelter for themselves where they remained for some time. One captive man managed to escape. After a cold and weary pilgrimage, the prisoners themselves being subjected to frequent indignities and great hardships, all arrived at Sorel, a small French garrison in Canada.

The distress of those in Deerfield and Hatfield, thus bereft was naturally intense. A commission was sent by the Governor of Massachusetts in October to reclaim the prisoners. The expedition was a hazardous attempt. They proceeded with great difficulty and succeeded, at last, in getting the captives

that survived, by payment to the Indians of 200 pounds. 21

It was hoped that the declaration of peace between England and France in 1697 would ease the tensions felt by the settlers along the Connecticut River but the Queen Ann's War, called the French and Indian War in the New World, followed closely upon the latter event and renewed the hostilities between the French and English in America. On the 8th of October, 1703, Deerfield experienced, again, a most brutal and destructive attack. While the village slept a French brigade, assisted by ferocious Indians, broke in the doors of the houses, dragged out the astonished inhabitants, killed such as resisted and took prisoners the majority of the remainder; only a few escaping from their hands into the woods. The slaughter inflicted in the taking of the town was a terrible one. 22

The same destruction took place in the town of Hadley that same year and horrible autrosities were prevalent and frequent. We are reminded at this point that Hadley was the home of the ancestors of Lois Kellogg who was the first wife of our ancestor, Titus Rice (1-5) and the mother of his first child Susannah Rice. Titus met Lois probably at her home in Hadley when, as a young man, Titus made a journey to Berkshire County in western Massachusetts. (see story 1-5).

It can be said that the Alexanders lived to see some of the most difficult of times. We know they were forced to abandon Northfield in 1675 at the time of King Philip's War. Northfield was completely destroyed, burned and ravaged by Indians from the north. They escaped to return to their former home town of Northampton. Northampton, too, was in a pitiful state of privation and suffering but she could not turn away the many destitute who crowded in her confines for protection.

George Alexander's daughter, Mary and her husband Micah Mudge (7-46) and their family were also among those who returned to Northampton, destitute and homeless. The Mudges, however, returned to Northfield later and helped restore the town to its former state; rebuilding a mill and log homes for those who desired to resettle on their land again.

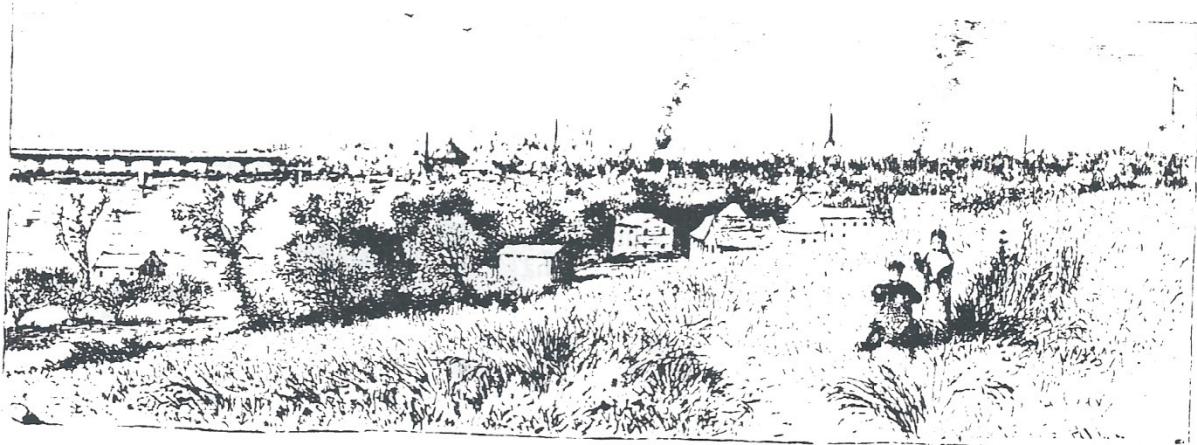
The Alexanders were not entirely free of the fears of Indian troubles at Northampton but at least the risks had been lessened at the close of the King Philip's War of 1675-6. It was a terribly sad war for all of New England. Thousands of Indians were killed and many of the settlers gave their lives that the English might survive in this new land. Those Indians remaining receded into a subdued state, not likely to cause another uprising in an effort again to exterminate the whites.

It took several years to rebuild what had been destroyed and a year or two of successful harvests to bring back prosperity to the settlements. George remained in Northampton for the remaining 23 years of his life. We do not have the place or date of Susannah's death but George probably outlived her. He was about 89 when he died Mar. 29, 1709 at Northampton.





Scenes at Springfield





Northampton Meadows

An artist finds in all the region of the Connecticut River abundant opportunities for the exercise of his skill, and that the man of taste may wander wherever his inclinations may direct, and be sure of finding enough to gratify his most ardent love of Nature.

South Hadley appears to be in many respects, the most beautiful village on the Connecticut. Let the tourist take his stand on the bank of the river, and look toward the northwest. Holyoke and Tom rise with boldness from the valley, standing on either side of the river like watch-towers, from whose lofty summits the observer may look out upon some of the most charming scenery in the world. through the opening made between these twin-mountains one can see two or three miles up the river, in which will be noticed one or two islands looking peaceful enough to make another paradise on earth.

The illustrations of artist J. Douglas Woodward shown in this story give us a glimpse of scenes along the beautiful Connecticut River where many of the early settlements were built. Springfield, today, is emphatically a government city, its prosperity depending largely on the partonage of mechanical labor.



The Connecticut Valley from  
Mt. Holyoke

Leaving Springfield, the tourist, as did the writer, passed rapidly over the level lands along the river, catching views at every turn of scenes of singular natural beauty. The view from Mt. Holyoke is one that expands ones emotions and excites the imaginings of days gone by.

The charms of the beautiful valleys of the Connecticut River have often been described by writers and artists.

1. #58 pp. 3-7
2. ibid
3. #152
4. #103 p. 32
5. #117 p. 20
6. #58, Vol. 2, p.14
7. #155
8. #117 p. 149
9. ibid pp. 21,22
10. ibid p. 64, 65
11. #131 pp. 171-175
12. #71 p. 80
13. #126 pp. 5-7
14. ibid
15. #127 pp. 15-17
16. ibid p. 52
17. ibid
18. #56, p.34
19. #56 p. 34
20. ibid
21. #36 pp. 135, 136
22. ibid, pp. 148-157