

An Examination of “Other Souths”

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Visiting a new history-related website is somewhat like test driving a new car. You come to it with certain expectations, but always are looking for new features. In this case, my examination of the website “Other Souths” was much more like driving a car whose make I had purchased many times.¹ The reason for this familiarity is because the New South’s historical terrain is Alamance County, North Carolina. Having written my first book on Civil War-era Orange County, North Carolina, from which Alamance was carved in 1849, examining this new website was something of a homecoming for me. Hence, as I examined this website it was impossible for me not to think about some of the questions I had posed in my earlier study of Orange County.

For scholars of backcountry studies, the most significant part of my book on Orange County, North Carolina, focused on how that community’s first hundred years of development was shaped by the migrants who settled in there beginning in the 1740s and 1750s and whose descendants were still residing there on the eve of the Civil War. The lives of these original settlers and their descendants were shaped by the geography of this backcountry area of the North Carolina piedmont as the overwhelming agricultural nature dictated that they clustered along the rivers and creeks in rural neighborhoods. These rural neighborhoods never became formal administrative, civil or judicial districts. What united them over time was that they general had a single church that the vast majority of members attended and the fact that over time there was continuous intermarriage of residents who remained in the area. Over time these neighborhoods tended to be divided as new counties were carved out of the backcountry and artificial lines thus put some rural neighborhood residents on each side of a county border. Still, the neighborhood itself tended to be far more influential in shaping the social lives of residents than did the county unit.

At the outset of 1849 Alamance County became the last county to be carved out of Orange County before the Civil War. By 1849 the residents of western Orange County felt the desire to create their own county. This decision no doubt was shaped on the long-term problem of having to travel to Hillsborough to register their deeds and do all of the other tasks which took them to the county seat as well as the fact that by this time a significant textile industry had developed in this part of the county. Hence, for the last time many of the residents living in rural neighborhoods in the newly-created county would find themselves living on opposite sides of the new county’s eastern border than their many relatives. Again, this was not a new development as this had occurred as all of the counties which bordered Alamance—Caswell, Chatham, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham—and now Orange, were formed.

The “Other Souths” website along with the Ancestry.com website makes it possible to trace to what degree the patterns identified in my study of Orange County had also take place in the area that became Alamance County. By using the website’s 1860 free population census search engine it is possible to create a list of the most common surnames of its more than 8,500 residents who lived in the county eleven years after its separation from Orange County. A sample of every 50th resident yields 119 different surnames that compose just under half of the names of all the county’s residents. ($4066/8528 = 47.67\%$) Examining those individuals in the

¹ Charles F. Irons, “Other Souths: Alamance County in the Civil War & Reconstruction,” Elon University, <http://www.elon.edu/othersouths>.

sample who shared their surname with at least 29 other residents (or at least a total of 30 people) suggests to what degree a relatively small share of the surnames composed a large share of the population—one of the long-term impacts rural neighborhood settlement patterns shaped the population from the era of the colonial backcountry on to the eve of the Civil War. (See Table 1.) What is clear is the degree to which these surnames were unique to Alamance and the counties which border it. (See Table 2.) Indeed, nearly two-fifths of the residents of North Carolina who shared 22 of the most common Alamance surnames lived within the borders of Alamance. Even more suggestive of the long-term impact of the role of rural neighborhoods is that two-thirds of all of the state residents with these surnames lived either in Alamance or usually just across the county's border.

This analysis of Alamance's population made possible by the "Other Souths" website reveals how over more than one hundred years kin networks tended to be divided by county borders. A few kin networks continued to avoid such division as most or in some cases all of the people with these surnames were residents of Alamance. For example, every North Carolinian with the surname Kimery and Whitesell lived within Alamance. By contrast, some kin networks were distinctly divided by the county's borders. For example, just a bit more than half of the 65 North Carolinians with the last name Troxler resided in Alamance. The rest of the Troxlers could be found in to the immediate west in Guilford (11) and to the northwest in Randolph (18). Clearly the extended Troxler network was located in the western/northwestern part of the county. Likewise, about half the Faucetts (50.7% = 111/219) made Alamance their home. However, nearly nine-out-of-ten (67/77 = 87.0%) of the remaining Faucetts resided in Orange County. Clearly the extended Faucettes were located in eastern Alamance and had been divided from their kinsmen who lived in the Eno neighborhood of Orange County with the creation of Alamance in 1849.

One way it is possible to confirm the concentration of Alamance residents who shared their surname is to examine the order of visitation by the census-taker in 1860. Because the system of township governments would not be established in North Carolina until after the Civil War, in the antebellum census enumerations rarely are jurisdictions noted except in the case of incorporated communities. Indeed, in 1860 Assistant Marshall W. H. Faucett, the census taker, only wrote that every resident of the county on the 214 pages of the census had Graham as their postoffice. While he does seem to have enumerated the 180 households in Graham at the end of the census, there are no designations for the other 1,559 households outside of the county seat. In my study of Orange County I encountered the same issue as the census takers there only enumerated residents of Hillsborough and Chapel Hill and then clustered all of the rural residents as living either north or south of the North Carolina Central Railroad. Knowing from other sources where many of the residents of Orange County actually lived, I was able to designate what appeared to be the route of the census taker in the rural parts of the county using the order of visitation or as it was called, the household number. This order of visitation is equally valuable in identifying the cluster of Alamance families who shared surnames as revealed in the "Other Souths" website's inclusion of household numbers. For example, 27 of the aforementioned 36 Troxlers resided in household numbers 179, 200, 215, 230 and 231. The close vicinity of these households is even more evident than the last two households suggests because the problems of crossing rivers and creeks often caused census takers to enumerate bordering households as much as 20 or 30 numbers apart. The "Other Souths" website guide to the population schedule indicates that the website is attempting to provide in the future an

“Alternative Household Number” to impose more order than seems to have been the case when the census was taken.

Like most websites, “Other Souths” remains a work in order. The 1870 federal manuscript census is now being added. This will be a most important addition as it will include the community’s African-American population, most of whom were not enumerated by name in the 1860 schedule which only included the names of free people. The most impressive thing the website has done is to link both the 1860 slaveowner schedule as well as Confederate Service records with the 1860 free population search engine. Hence, all a user needs to do is click the star next to a resident’s name and the number of slaves that person owned as well as his service record will appear. For example, George Coble, a 37-year-old farmer with \$600 in real estate and \$1,700 in personal estate, is enumerated as the owner of one black female slave. Coble served as a private in the 44th North Carolina, Company G, after enlisting on July 1, 1862. He does not appear to have suffered a casualty in the conflict. This record linkage is invaluable for historians who are trying to analyze to what degree property ownership and especially slave ownership influenced Confederate service both for the owners as well as their sons.

“Other Souths” clearly represents the positive contribution historical websites can make when they are focused around a particular community or theme. The compilation of multiple sources covering different points in time and the effort to link these sources gives both scholars and the general public the opportunity to approach these websites with a variety of questions in mind and provides them with the ability to find answer to them.

Table 1

Common surnames in Alamance County and number in surrounding counties and in North Carolina, 1860

	NUMBER IN ALAMANCE	ALAMANCE’S SHARE OF NORTH CAROLINA		NUMBER IN SURROUNDING COUNTIES	TOTAL SHARE IN ALAMANCE & SURROUNDING	
ALBRIGHT	111	216	51.4%	48	159	73.6%
CLAPP	61	238	25.6	172	233	97.9
COBLE	105	500	21.0	327	432	86.4
DICKEY	31	75	41.3	26	57	76.0
FAUCETT/FAUCETTE	111	219	50.7	77	188	85.8
FOGLEMAN	35	105	33.3	00	35	33.3
FOUST/FAUST	44	165	26.6	112	156	94.5
GARRISON	73	203	36.0	7	80	39.4
GILLIM	34	41	82.9	0	34	82.9
HOLT	128	533	24.0	189	317	59.5
HURDLE	37	136	27.2	11	48	35.3
IS(E)LEY	136	180	75.5	43	179	99.4
JEFFRIES	45	60	75.0	07	52	86.7
KIMERY	54	54	100.0	00	54	100.0
MURRAY	156	529	29.4	63	219	41.3
NOAH	47	121	38.8	17	64	52.8
RIPPY	47	100	47.0	00	47	100.0
SHARP	113	372	30.4	81	94	52.2
THOMPON	39	47	82.9	00	39	82.9
TICKLE	64	98	65.3	11	75	76.5
TROXLER	36	65	55.4	29	65	100.0
WHIT(E)SELL	76	85	89.4	04	80	94.1
TOTAL	1,583	4,142	38.2%	1,224	2,807	67.8%

Table 2

Common Alamance surnames found in surrounding counties

	CAS- WELL	CHAT- HAM	GUIL- FORD	ORANGE	RAN- DOLPH	ROCKING- HAM	TOTAL
ALBRIGHT	00	18	30	00	00	00	48
CLAPP	00	08	152	00	12	00	172
COBLE	00	11	241	00	75	00	327
DICKEY	01	00	02	23	00	00	26
FAUCETT	02	08	00	67	00	00	77
FOGELMAN	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
FOUST/FAUST	00	05	50	00	57	00	112
GARRISON	07	00	00	00	00	00	7
GILLIM	00	00	00	00	00	00	0
HOLT	08	88	52	09	11	21	189
HURDLE	06	00	01	04	00	00	11
IS(E)LEY	00	00	24	00	00	19	43
JEFFRIES	00	00	00	02	00	05	07
KIMERY	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
MURRAY	35	00	01	02	14	11	63
NOAH	00	00	00	00	17	00	17
RIPPY	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
SHARP	00	00	19	30	00	32	81
THOMPON	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
TICKLE	00	00	02	00	00	09	11
TROXLER	00	00	11	00	00	18	29
WHIT(E)SELL	00	00	00	00	00	04	04
TOTAL	59	138	585	137	186	119	1,224