

GOD'S PROVIDENCE HOUSE, LIVER-  
POOL

*Communicated by the Hon. Secretary*

THE following inquiry and answer appeared in the Liverpool *Daily Post* of the 23rd Sept. and 8th Oct. 1907, and are perhaps worth putting on permanent record. To these have been added copies of the abstracts of two Alcock wills proved at Chester, kindly supplied by Mr. F. C. Beazley, also some notes sent by Mr. Ronald Stewart-Brown.

*"M. H. S." writes, Sept. 23, 1907 :—*

"When crossing Derby Square my eye often travels up to the little oblong stone on the second storey of the house at the corner of Preeson's Row and James Street, bearing the inscription "God's Providence is mine inheritance," followed by a date which it is not easy to decipher. In common, no doubt, with thousands of my fellow-citizens, I have looked at that stone for more years than I care to reckon, and it has often come to me to wonder who put it there, and what its history may have been. It is clearly not in its original position, or, rather, the modern house in the wall of which it now is must have been rebuilt, perhaps several times, since the inscription was carved. My interest in it has been revived by the recent Historical Exhibition, and it has occurred to me

to wonder whether some of your correspondents, who have made early Liverpool history their study, cannot supply the information, and tell us the story of the man who first raised this quiet memorial."

*To the Editor of the "Post" and "Mercury"*

Sir,—In reply to the inquiry of your correspondent "M. H. S.," in your issue of the 23rd ult., it may be of interest to print a few particulars which I have been able to collect relating to God's Providence House and its builder.

The exact inscription begins with the initials "E. A. I.," the letter "A" being above the other two, thus indicating that it should stand for the surname of the original builder. These letters are followed by the words of the inscription, thus:—

A E I GODS: PROVIDENC: HATH: BEENE: MY INHERITANC: 1660.
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The letter "N," where it occurs, is incorrectly cut, the joining stroke being sloped in the wrong direction.

From a careful examination of the "Hearth Taxes" of Liverpool for the years 1663 and 1665, it appears that the only householder in this part of Liverpool with the initials "E. A." was one Edward Alcock, a mercer and bailiff's peer, whose wife's name, Jane, accounts for the third initial, "I" or "J." That this identification is probably correct is shown by the fact that Edward Moore, in his "Rental," written in 1667, speaks of "the house Mr. Alcock built me on the Castle Hill," which he recommends his son to pull down, so as

to give access to another portion of his property ; and further refers to it as "a pretty house on the Castle Hill," and goes on to add that "the highway belonging to this house of mine upon the Castle Hill and all that row Thomas Prison [Preeson] lives in lies where the rubbish now is laid that was taken out of the Castle trench." We gather from this that the road in front of Preeson's Row was at that date interrupted by spoil taken out from the Castle moat, which ran parallel with it. This "rubbish" was doubtless thrown out during the Civil War in an attempt to deepen the moat and render the Castle more capable of defence. X

Edward Alcock did not live long to enjoy his house, as we find from the Parish Register of St. Nicholas (which Mr. Peet has printed), that he was buried on the 27th February 1665, and his widow followed him two years later. Edward and Jane Alcock both left wills which are still preserved at Chester, and in her will, dated 11th December 1666, the widow specially mentions "my messuage and tenement newly erected and built on the west syde of the Castle of Liverpool, now in the occupation of Mr. Henry Higinson."

The foregoing facts make it safe for us to conclude that the stone referred to by your correspondent was placed in a house, which preceded the present building, by Edward Alcock, a Liverpool mercer, in the year 1660. In what special way God's providence had been his inheritance we shall never know, but if Edward Alcock was a Royalist it is possible that the sentiment may be an expression of his thankfulness for the restoration of the monarchy in that year.

The stone has at least this distinction, that with the exception of the boulder in Castle Street, marking the south-west boundary of the Liverpool Fair, it is probably the oldest identifiable fragment now

left in the whole of the ancient township of Liverpool.—Yours, &c.,

WILLIAM FERGUSON IRVINE.

8th Oct. 1907.

1664.

In the name of God, Amen, 2 May 16 Car. II. [1664], I, Edward Alcock of Liverpool, co. Lanc. Mercer, sick, &c.

One third of goods to wife Jane Alcock.

One third of same to my three youngest children, Edward, Anne and Margrett Alcock.

One third part to my Grandchildren [no names given].

To my said three children all my lands and tenements until Anne accomplish the age of one and twentie, the reversion . . . to . . . my sonne Edward Alcock [charged, &c.].

[If these 3 children have no issue, remainder to] the heires of Samuell<sup>1</sup> late wyff of John Blundell and unto the heires of Marie my other daughter and now wyff of John Burton equally.

My desk in the shop and the shoeing-horn in it unto my sonne Edward Alcock.

To Raphe Eccleston, Richard Eccleston and Elizabeth and Elline Eccleston children of John Eccleston dec. £10 apeece.

Wife Jane Sole Ex<sup>x</sup>.

Mr Nicholas Fazakerley gent my loving landlord, Thomas Alcock my loving kinsman, and John Burton my sonne in law Trustees.

Wafer seal.

Witnesses

Thomas Alcock.

John Burton.

Jane Alcock sworn 2 June 1665 endorsed proved same date—Chester.

Inventory 1 June 1665 £393. 10/.

On back of will wax seal, [lion?,] rampant.

In the name of God, Amen, 11<sup>th</sup> December 18 Car. II. [1666], I, Jane Alcock of Liverpoole widow, relict and late wyff of Edward Alcock deceased, sick, . . . unto my eldest sonne Raph Eccleston, mess<sup>g</sup>e & teñt in Castle St wherein I doe now inhabit . . . he shall pay his two sisters Elizabeth & Elline Eccleston £10 apeece, & if he die without issue remainder to "the other three children of my first husband John Eccleston" [dec. over written] vizt: Richard Eccleston, Elizabeth E.; and Elline E: and if they die without issue remainder to Edward, Anne, &

<sup>1</sup> A curious name for a woman—it is occasionally spelt Samwell in contemporary references to Mistress Blundell.

Margrett Alcock children of Edward Alcock my late husband dec. And for the mess̄ge and tenem<sup>t</sup> in Liverpoole now in the possession of William Price lately leased unto me by Edward Moore, Esq., I give . . . when the same shall fall from M<sup>r</sup> Corles to my said son Raph Eccleston & his issue, remainder to three younger children of my said first husband John Eccleston remainder to Margrett Alcock remainder to Edward & Anne Alcock. Mess̄ge & tenement in Dublin in Ireland unto my sonne Richard Eccleston & his issue . . . remainder to sonne Raphe Eccleston remainder to all the rest of my children. To my eldest daür Elizabeth mess̄ge & Tenem<sup>t</sup> newly erected and built on the west syde of the Castle of Liverpool now in the occupacon of M<sup>r</sup> Henry Higinson. Unto my younger daür Elline E. mess̄ge Tenem<sup>t</sup> & dwelling house in the Dalestreet now in the occupacon of Johnathan Gleave [?] with the Croft wherein the said house standeth and also three Lands in the Towne ffeild remainder &c.

Unto my sonne Edward Alcock rents &c of house & Burgade shopsellors Backsyd & buildings . . . in ye Juglars Street now in lease to John Blundel . . . and also ye issues . . . of ye two houses on ye west syde of ye Castle now in ye posēcn of Roger James & of John Mullinex, Marriner, and also that mess̄ges and house in Haughton now in the possession of James Charles mason . . . and also all the mess̄ges [&c] of the lands in Crosbie [charged &c] [s<sup>d</sup> Edward A. is under 21]. To said Anne Alcock all that the newly erected Buyliding situate in the Dalestreete in Liverpoole w<sup>th</sup> thatt pte of ye Garden on the Backsyde thereof and also the uper Croft in ye Tyth barne lane and the other three butts of Land in ye Townefeild belonging to Jonathan Gleaves Tenem<sup>t</sup> remainder to her sister Margrett. To my youngest daür Margrett the twoe dwelling houses in Dalestreet aforesaid now in the severall possession of John Poultney and James Hesketh w<sup>th</sup> that pte of ye Garden on ye backsyd thereof & the . . . [?] thereto belonging.

Mentions grandchildren of said Edward Alcock decd.

Mentions lands in Aughton.

Mentions John Blundels children and his youngest daür Mary Blundell.

Four children of John Eccoes £5 apeece.

Four children of William Done £20.

To John Burtons daughter Jane £5.

To my mother in law Elline Bler[uine?] wd 30<sup>s</sup>.

To my Father Thomas Clayton 30<sup>s</sup>.

To John Clayton £5 to putt him apprentice &c.

Rest to my children equally.

Richard Peircivall, Willm Strangewaics and Willm Bushell Ex<sup>rs</sup>.

Thomas Alcock, John Burton & Ralph Eccleston Overseers  
and Trustees for my children.

. . . day abovesaid 1666.

Witnesses.

Ralph Eccleston.

Thos Litherland.

John Winstanley.

[Seal; two bars, in chief three  
crosses pattées, a crescent in  
fess point.]

Codicil replaces Richard Persevall by "Ralph Eccleston my  
naturall sonne."

Sworn 10th Sept. 1667 by Ralph Eccleston, power res. to  
Wm. Strangeways, Richard Persevall & Willm Bushell renouncing.

Endorsement faded.

. . . Sept. 1667.

} Chester.

Inventory Dec. 11. 1666. Plate £22. 12/.

Total £140. 16. 10.

Mr. Ronald Stewart-Brown kindly supplies the  
following notes:—

In vol. xix. p. 257 of the Holt and Gregson MSS.,  
there are some notes and reminiscences of the early  
buildings of the town in the writing of Matthew  
Gregson. After referring to a house in Lord Street  
as the oldest building of the type of Speke Hall (as  
altered in 1598), he says this was followed in Liver-  
pool by stone buildings, "The most early I can  
trace now or lately standing are such as those in  
Preeson's Row—the inscription on one late pulled  
down ran thus, 'GODS PROVIDENCE, &c. &c.,  
1660,' &c."

There is a good deal more of some interest. If  
these notes can be dated from internal evidence,  
it would fix the time about when the Alcock house  
was pulled down; the date should probably be  
between 1790 and 1820.

"Gregson's Fragments," 1869, p. 160, in a note  
on Preeson's Row:—

"Preeson's Row, so called from Alderman Pree-  
son, who resided in a house there after the Castle  
was demolished; on a stone was this inscription:  
'Gods providence hath been my inheritance,'

Anno 1660, which is now [? 1817, date of 1<sup>st</sup> ed<sup>n</sup> of "Fragments"] fixed up in a new building on the foundation of the old one." I don't think this means the stone was on Ald. Preeson's own house, though Picton apparently thought so.

R. S.-B.