

THE ALLEN HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 31, Allen, MD 21810

Web Address: allenhistoricalsociety.org

VOLUME 24, NO. 1, February 2018

George Shivers, Editor

Community Calendar

Saturday, March 17, 8:00 – 2:00, Allen-Asbury UMC Spring Bazaar, Allen Community Hall

Sunday, March 18, 3:00 PM, regular meeting of AHS, Great Room, Allen-Asbury UM Church

Holy Week Services at Allen-Asbury UM Church:

March 29, 7:00 PM – Maundy Thursday service

March 30, 7:00 PM – Good Friday prayer service

March 31, 8:00 PM – Holy Saturday Easter Vigil

April 1, 6:40 AM – Easter Sunrise Service, Church Garden

11:00 AM - Easter Traditional Service

Sunday, April 8, 3:00 PM, Allen-Asbury UM Church - The next lecture in the Society's lecture series. Watch our emails for further information.

Nabb Center Events, Salisbury University

Delmarva: People, Place & Time, on-going exhibit

Exhibit – Modern Quilts of the Eastern Shore – through May 31

Exhibit: You're on Indian Land, through May 31

In Memoriam

Velmar Isabella Polk Morris

1935-2017



Velmar Polk Morris was born on April 11, 1935, the sixth child of Ulysses Samuel Arthur Polk and Velmar Frances Dorman Polk. She passed away on November 27, 2017. With her passing the Allen Historical Society lost one of its most faithful and devoted members. She served as vice-president of the Society for a number of years, and at a ceremony in October 2008 was received into our 1702 Society, which honors members for their many contributions both to the Historical Society and to the community at large. As a member of one of Allen's oldest and largest families, the Polk family, Velmar's participation in the Society was especially valued.

Velmar was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge about the history of Allen's African American community, Friendship United Methodist Church, and the Polk family. The exhibits she created to commemorate that history still hold a prominent place in our Passerdyke Cottage Museum and when our renovation of the Huffington-Pollitt House is completed, those panels will be

relocated there. She contributed much to the Society's activities as long as her health permitted, and we missed her when her health kept her away from the community that she loved. On the occasion of her 80th birthday at a celebration held at Salisbury University, the Society was delighted to grant Velmar a life-time membership.

Velmar is survived by her daughters, Chandra (Bernard) Ward of Clinton, MD and Patricia Nutter of Upper Marlboro, and by a special great-niece Ka'Ryiah Dennard of Salisbury, MD, as well as by four stepsons, two stepdaughters, as well as step-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. Her funeral was held on December 1, 2017 at Friendship United Methodist Church in Allen.

David William Kolb

Editor's Note: The article that follows was written by the late David (Butch) Kolb and made available to the *Historian* by his sister Agnes (Aggie) Kolb Culp, for which I am very grateful. I knew Butch well and he had an endless supply of stories and wonderful sense of humor. Those of us who remember the Kolb's store know that in addition to being a great place to shop for a wide variety of merchandise, it also provided a "stage" for Butch's (and earlier his father's) humor.

Butch was born on June 24, 1939 and passed away after a long illness on Nov. 29, 2001. He graduated from Washington College in Chestertown, MD and attended the University of Maryland law school. For a time he was associated with the Foreign Advisory Service (Foggy Bottom, near Allen). He was also employed by Nationwide Insurance, Century 21, O. Hoyt Bloodsworth Real Estate, and Woodrow Wilson Nelson Real Estate in Princess Anne, all before taking over the management of the family

store. Butch was a member of Asbury U.M. Church, the Allen Volunteer Fire Department, the Somerset County Historical Society and the Allen Historical Society.

The Ashland F. Malone Story

by David William (Butch) Kolb

Mr. Ashland Francis Malone (A.F. Malone) was considered by those who knew him to be a genius. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Simeon Malone, and his father was the postmaster of Allen. Mr. Ashland lived most of his life in the house now owned by John and Aggie Culp and he was as well known for his eccentric behavior as for his brilliance. At one time, apparently, he lived in our house (Note: the Cherry Hill Farm house, also owned by John and Aggie Culp). He told mother that he planted the big walnut tree in the back yard over the grave of his dog, when he was seven years old. He also said that he built and lost the house previously owned by the Misses Lulu and Ruth Nichols and now owned by Frank and Susan Knowles. Mostly, though, he lived in what is now the Culp house. When he was there, there were more out buildings and the house itself was different. It started with one-and-a-half story front section and a one- and - a half story back section connected by a one-story hyphen. There were two stairways, and you had to use both to get from one second floor room to the other. His daughter Margaret bought the house right after World War II and fixed it up, giving him life tenure. She added the middle room upstairs and the bathroom. The front and back sections had regular clapboard siding. I'm sure I remember the middle section having vertical board and batten siding. Miss Margaret had it all covered with asbestos siding.



Behind the house was a long outbuilding with three sections. The first was his shop, and the pump pit was added to that. The second was a wood shed, and the third was a combination storage and second outhouse. Behind that were a chicken house, another storage building (small barn) and a nice grape arbor.

When he was a young man, Mr. Ashland was a friend of Thomas Edison. The Edisons had a modest summer home at Pine Bluff in Salisbury. Young Mr. Edison and Mr. Ashland spent a lot of time bumming around the countryside in the Edisons' Stanley Steamer, and the two of them had the first gasoline-powered boat on the Wicomico River.

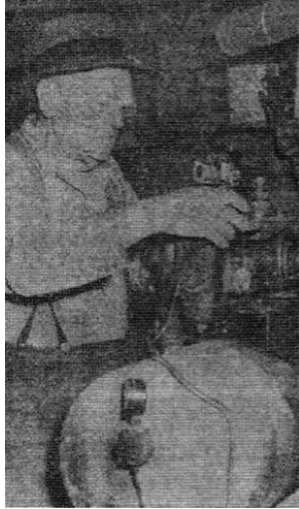
Mr. Ashland had a telephone in working order between his kitchen and his shop at the same time Alexander Graham Bell patented it. He had an extensive library and was conversant on every subject from gardening to physics. He was left-handed, but could play a violin (fiddle) strung for right hand, and he could fix anything that was broken. Occasionally, he drove a truck "up the road" for a local farmer or produce broker, but never had a license. On one occasion, he got stopped by the police, told them he had left his license at home, gave them the name of a neighbor, and the next time he went to that location, he borrowed the neighbor's license, stopped at the police station, showed it to them and got away with it! On another trip in New Jersey, there was a long delay for unloading and a very long line. One of the huge dynamos that supplied power to the machinery in the plant was broken and out of service. The plant engineer had determined that it required a certain part that had to be shipped with a delay of several days. Mr.

Ashland walked up to the broken machinery, got in close to the dynamo and examined it. No one challenged him. He examined the thing, asked for a screwdriver, a pair of pliers and a piece of wire, and fixed it – temporarily, of course. The plant manager came running and asked, "Who fixed the machine?" The others present pointed to Mr. Ashland, and he offered him a huge salary just to stay there for the day and keep it going. Mr. Ashland said the man was foolish and that he had to be in Allen the next morning to drive a well. He wired and plumbed most of the houses in the area.

Physically, Mr. Ashland was quite small, only a little over 5 feet tall and never very heavy. He looked the perfect leprechaun. He also bore a striking resemblance to Winston Churchill. He always wore blue bib overalls, a battered fedora hat, and a cardigan sweater, winter and summer, of course with an outer coat in winter. As a very young man, he went to a party and apparently said something to a young woman there that she considered "fresh." She pulled his hair, and it came right out in her hand! It never grew back, and he was bald for the rest of his life. Later in life he took one of his daughters to the dentist and was scandalized at the price to fill a tooth. He bought a bottle of whiskey, got a pair of pliers and went to bed. After drinking part of the whiskey to get ready, he went to work with the pliers. He would take a drink, pull a tooth, wait for a minute and repeat the procedure, pulling every one of his teeth! Thereafter, he was both bald and toothless, but made out fine.

He wrapped rubber bands around the mouthpiece of his pipe, so that he could grip it better and ate and drank what he pleased. As far as the drinking went, he kept a little buzz on for about seventy years until he died at about 87. Her liked whiskey, wine and his own homemade concoction called "Buck." He came to the store every morning, picked through the produce counter and took home all the rotten fruit – for the buck. Dad finally asked for and received a small sample and declared it some of the best he ever tasted.

Very few people got to taste the finished product, including Mr. Ashland, because he kept sampling it checking to see if it was ready.



One day Mr. Ashland did a job for Mr. Ira Waller and shortly thereafter, Mr. Ira missed a jug of wine he had hidden in the barn. He accused Mr. Ashland of taking it, and Mr. Ashland very indignantly claimed innocence on the grounds that he didn't know it was there. In telling the story, Mr. Ashland, who had no teeth, mimicked Mr. Ira, who not only had no teeth, but had a speech impediment. The result was priceless. Mr. Ashland said, "Thaes old IreY Waller, he says 'Athshkley!'"

Mr. Ashland married Miss Amy when they were young adults. At the time, he had a very good and regular job as foreman at the machine shop of R.D. Grier, when Grier had the contract to make repairs to the railroad locomotives. Because of this connection, Mr. Ashland could get railroad passes for free to travel anywhere in the country. The World's Fair was in St. Louis (I believe the year was 1904) and Mr. Ashland really wanted to go see it. So, he got passes for himself and his bride. After the wedding, he surprised her with the announcement of such a grand trip for their honeymoon. She was very much a homebody, and her reply was "Indeed she was not going way out there amongst all

those furriners!" So they boarded the train south from Salisbury, and when the train stopped at Eden, he gave her the key to the house, gave the postman 50 cents to take her home, and he went to St. Louis. He is the only one I have ever heard of who went on his honeymoon by himself!

Apparently, Miss Amy was not too deeply offended. They stayed married until she died a number of years later. They had three children. Buddy was an engineer for Dupont; Margaret was office manager for New York Life Insurance in Baltimore, and Jean married a jeweler in New Jersey. Buddy was injured at work and subsequently died of his injuries. To make matters worse, he inherited his father's independent spirit and left Dupont in a huff instead of letting them take care of him and his family.

Mr. Ashland had a life-long interest in the railroads. He knew all the engineers and could stand in the yard in Allen (his or ours) and tell by the sound of the whistle at the Eden crossing just which engineer was running the train. Whenever he traveled, (mostly to Baltimore), he went by train, but always stayed in the cabin with the engineer. One time he made the mistake of wearing a new pair of shoes on a trip to Baltimore. He took them off to rest, and his feet swelled. So he walked all over Baltimore in his stocking feet, carrying his shoes.

His drinking habits never changed and on one trip to Baltimore he went into a bar and asked for a glass of whiskey. The bartender served him a short glass full. Mr. Ashland looked at him and then finally picked up the short glass and drank it down. The bartender asked him if he wanted a chase, to which Mr. Ashland replied, "Chase what? Damned if I've had nothing to chase! Now give me a glass of whiskey."

Mr. Ashland walked down to the store one morning and started home. I found him lying him lying in the road (Pollitt Road) a short time later and he was taken to the hospital. He had had a stroke. Miss Margaret came down

from Baltimore and took him home with her. There really wasn't much choice in the matter, and he was very close to Miss Margaret. Still, he really didn't want to leave home. He only lived another six months. He is buried in the cemetery just inside the gate from the church parking area, and he was the last one to be buried in that cemetery in just a plain, pine box – in accordance with his instructions. He was a genius, an eccentric and a rugged individualist, but a friend to all and one of the greatest characters in the history of Allen.

Editor's Addendum

I too remember Mr. Ashland from my childhood in the late 40s and early 50s. Whenever my parents had plumbing or electrical problems, they called on Mr. Ashland, who by that time was a wizened (as well as wise) old man. I, of course, thought he was ancient! His language was colorful, to say the least. My father was not averse to uttering the occasional word that wouldn't be approved by Emily Post, but in the case of Mr. Ashland, his language would make a sailor blush, as the saying goes!

I've always suspected that our house (which had been built in 1921 by my grandparents) was wired and plumbed by Mr. Ashland. I have no way of confirming that, since it never occurred to me to ask my parents when they were still around. He was certainly in his prime at that time, and was the local expert. My grandparents had the house built before rural electrification arrived on the lower Shore, but they had the house completely wire and installed a generator in the basement. The wiring and plumbing stood us well over the decades, with occasional upgrades until both were replaced by us in the late 1990s.

Random Thoughts from Mr. Lindley Allen

“Nature smiles on the rich and poor alike . . . The only difference between the rich and poor – the rich worries about what he has, and the poor about what he hasn't.” (Dec. 16, 1937)

“At our house, all two of us took a vote as to which Thanksgiving to celebrate. We didn't want to belittle Mr. Abe Lincoln for putting Thanksgiving too close to Christmas or Mr. Roosevelt for putting it too far away, so to keep on an even keel, we compromised on the Sunday between the two Thanksgivings, and have chicken with the turkey trimmings. In other words, we are like the turkey that escaped the axe on the first Thanksgiving – ‘We are sitting on the fence.’” (Nov. 25, 1939)

“In the village of Allen one-third of the population are widows – widowers – bachelors or ‘spinster’ ladies (sometimes called ‘old maids’) all between the ages of 40 and 85 years. The writer is not running a matrimonial bureau nor is this information a threat or promise but a local census for the benefit of prospects – So don't say I didn't tell you.” (May 3, 1940)

“The writer believes in the old adage ‘ignorance is bliss’ and for that reason never Reads War – Listens to War or Talks War, but if some of our worrying friends will convince us where worrying over things we can't control will make us any happier, we will join them, but until then our motto will continue to be WORRY NOT TODAY OVER THINGS THAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.” (July 18, 1940)

Obituary of Mrs. Mary E. Smith

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Smith, widow of the late Andrew W. Smith of Allen, Wicomico County, died at the Peninsula General Hospital, Salisbury, Monday, October 1 at 12:45, following an illness of five weeks as the result of a fall sustained in her home in August.

Mrs. Smith, who was the oldest resident of Allen, having been born in January 1860, had lived her entire life in the village and was one of the best loved citizens.

She is survived by four children, Mrs. Wildar Jones of Cambridge, Mrs. Joseph Bell and Mrs. J. Harvey Hoffman of Norfolk, VA, and Jos. W. T. Smith, clerk of the circuit court of Wicomico County. Eight grandchildren and several nieces and nephews survive.

Mrs. Smith was a sister of Mrs. Fred E. Meekins and Mrs. T.H. Maguire of Cambridge and J. Lindley Allen of Allen.

Funeral services will be conducted from the Allen Methodist Church Wednesday afternoon at 3 o'clock with interment in the adjoining cemetery.



Home of Mrs. Smith

Historic Siloam Camp Ground

Editor's Note: I would like to thank Carol Hobbs for contributing two copies of a brochure that offers a brief history of the Siloam Campground. Unfortunately, the name of the author of the history below is not given in the brochure, nor is the date.

Siloam M.E. Church, organized in 1874, was built on land given by Mrs. Mary Ellen Banks White, wife of Beauchamp White, and is

located on the main road from Trappe (Allen) to Forktown (Fruitland).

The people of Siloam celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Church by holding a Camp Meeting in a lovely oak grove long since famous for its cleanliness, restfulness and wonderful drinking water.

The original grove was a gift of the late William H. Jackson of Salisbury. The Camp Committee, in the year 1911, enlarged the grounds; the present camp ground now consisting of about 7 ½ acres of beautiful grove on an improved road about five miles from Salisbury.

Among those who made possible and enthusiastically promoted the first camp meeting, and who were among the first tent holders were: John W. Lawrence, W. Harrison Cooper, Gamaliel Banks, John Henry Bounds, Thomas A. Bounds, Louis C. Bounds, Albert Townsend, Henry Denson, Rufus Simms; also, one of the first trustees, Levin Price of Allen. The Hayman family of Fruitland built and occupied the first eight tents of the first camp, one or two families occupying the same tent. Mr. and Mrs. R.J. Chatham operated the boarding tent at the first camp meeting. (Editor's Note: the so-called "tents" were actually small, one-room clapboard buildings with a loft. The front was open and covered by a curtain.)

Services were held daily, early services at 8 a.m., preaching at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., song service at 7 p.m. and preaching again at 7:30 p.m. On Sunday, early class service and children's services were held in addition to the regular daily schedule. For many years, Capt. Wesley Thomas, a relative of the "Parson of the Island," of Mt. Vernon, conducted the class service. The first Sunday of the Camp, Capt. Thomas came by boat, as did hundreds of others from points on the Wicomico River. This was in the days before improved roads.

Three years after the first camp, the old bower, built of bushes, was replaced with a new one, built entirely of wood. The

following were some of those who owned or occupied one of the twenty-two tents surrounding the circle: L.A. Whayland of Allen, T.A. Bounds, Henry Denson, Rufus Simms, Samuel Malone and Peter Bounds.

Many surrounding communities have helped to make Siloam Camp a success, especially the people of Allen, Shad Point and Fruitland.

The Siloam Camp was an old-time Methodist Camp carried on in the Methodist way for 53 years. It was not only a center of spiritual life; it contributed much to the social pleasure of the people who tented on the ground and others who traveled by ox-cart, spring wagon, surrey and boat for many miles in some instances to enjoy the fellowship of the camp.

From 1946, the date of the last camp, until 1957, the site was unused and the grounds became overgrown and unsightly. Part of the timber had been removed and sold to pay for repairs to Siloam Methodist Church. The tents, once the scene of much happiness and spiritual revitalization, were either torn down or converted to use as labor shanties.

However, God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. In March 1957, a group of Siloam resident, at the suggestion of Mrs. C. Ray Hare, banded together to preserve this spot, which had become hallowed in memory for the achievements of those who had gone before. Armed with rakes, axes, shovels, tractors, and a will to work, 87 interested persons appeared at the camp grounds on March 23, 1957 to begin the monumental task of clearing the grounds of underbrush, overgrowth and trash that had accumulated over the years. A second clean-up day was needed before the natural beauty of this memorable spot began to reappear.

So well did the work of restoration progress that by Easter of that year a sunrise service was held in all the natural beauty, which makes this such a beautiful season.

The joy of work awakened memories long dead, and this inspired a spontaneous desire to further the restoration of this hallowed knoll by adding picnic tables and benches. These were presented by families of original tent-holders and were first used on Mother's Day of that year, when visitors from great distances were reunited in a gathering reminiscent of the camp meetings of long ago.

Such memories kindled the institution of a movement to build a community hall on the grounds, which would provide a place for the enriching of the social and recreational life of the community. Three years of hard but satisfying labor were poured into this endeavor. The majority of all work was done on a free-will basis.

Skilled masonry craftsmen, whose family ties linked them to the Siloam community, donated their skills and labor in erecting the cinder block walls. Following in their footsteps, many men, too many to enumerate, skilled in the art of carpentry, went to work finishing out the building as they had time. Too, these men had a close relationship to the community. To back up these skilled workers, many people – farmers, clerks, housewives, and “jack-legs”- came out to assist where and whenever needed. Mr. Clarence Christopher (plumber), who had established residence in the community since the last Camp, gave generously of his time, installing a modern heating system. The women fulfilled their obligations by supplying adequate amounts of food to the workers. The building was consecrated on September 24, 1961.

Beautification of the grounds proceeded with some prison help, at the same time with the planting of many memorial dogwoods, magnolias and evergreens. Benches have also been donated to permit the visitor to enjoy the magnificent natural beauty, enhanced by the mountain laurel, holly, hickory trees and other native plants.

The potential is great, but much remains to be done. The building debt must be cleared; paved parking areas should be provided; one of the original tents still standing should be restored and furnished authentically; ornamental shrubs should be planted; recreation areas with play equipment should be planned.

Much has been accomplished. Much remains to be done.

Editor's Comments: Some of the things enumerated in the final paragraph were never accomplished. For example, the old tent was never restored and furnished to my knowledge. For many years, nonetheless, the camp ground and community hall provided hours of enjoyment and spiritual enlightenment for residents of the area and others. Sadly, the community of worshippers at Siloam Methodist Church dwindled and it was forced to close and with that the community could no longer support the old campground. The property was sold to private owners; the community hall was converted into a private residence and other residences were built on the property. The old tent disappeared from the landscape and an era came to a close. Happily, today the old church building is being used by new congregation (not Methodist).

The Allen Historical Society welcomes new members. Our annual dues are \$15 for an individual, \$20 for a family, \$40 for a patron and \$250 for a sustaining membership. Send your check made out to the Allen Historical Society to P.O. Box 31, Allen, MD 21810. All are welcome to visit our small museum on the 2nd floor of Passerdyke Cottage, open by appointment. You may also enjoy a virtual visit of our village on the web at: allenhistoricalsociety.org.



**Passerdyke Cottage, c. 1830
Home of our Museum**



**Huffington-Pollitt House, 1884-85
Our future home**

Gifts to help us complete the restoration of the house's interior are gratefully received. You may make a gift in memory of a loved one or to honor a living person. We are a 501C-3 organization.