

THE ALLEN HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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George Shivers, Editor

Community Calendar

Sunday, Sept. 12 – Church picnic at the Allen Community Hall following the church service.

Sunday, Sept. 19 – Monthly meeting of the Allen Historical Society, 2 pm at the Huffington-Pollitt House.

Saturday, Oct. 16, Allen Historical Society Cemetery Walk, Asbury UMC Cemetery, 5 pm. Light refreshments included. Cost: \$10 per person

Saturday, Oct. 23, 10 am – 2 pm, Asbury UMC fall bazaar. Chicken salad and soup only. Pre-order and drive-through pick up. Bake table also available.

Sunday, November 14, Allen Lions Club Annual beef dinner. This year due to Covid, beef will be sold by pre-order. The United Methodist Women may also have mac & cheese available. Drive-through pick up.

Saturday, November 20, Women's Auxiliary of the Allen Fire Co. will sell oyster fritters. Drive through to pick up.

When the Gypsies Came to Allen

by George Shivers

Back when my mother, Lillian Phillips Shivers was a girl in the early decades of the last century, the gypsies would pass through Allen on their wagons. They often would stop at my grandfather's store.



The Phillips family in front of their home; store on the left. My mother is standing in front of her mother.

Back then, gypsies were considered terrible thieves and child kidnappers, so grandfather would hurry to be sure my mother and her younger sister, Pauline, were safely in the residence that was connected to the store. Neighbors, like Mr. Lindley Allen and Mrs. Mary Taylor, who had seen the gypsies arrive, would hurry over to the store to help keep an eye on the merchandise.

One such day my mother plucked up her courage and decided to stay in the store. Seeing this dark-haired, bright-eyes young



Neighbors Mary Taylor and Bernice Bounds many years after the gypsies came to Allen, as witnesses by the fact that I am there!



Mr. J. Lindley Allen
(Grandfather of Captain Lindley Lentz)

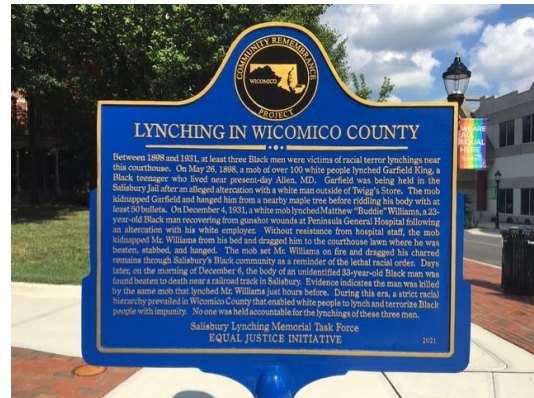
girl, one of the gypsy women decided she would probably like to have her fortune told, so she walked up to my mother and took hold of her hand to read her palm! My mother's courage left her and she pulled away, thinking that she was about to be dragged out of the store and carried away never to be heard from again! Once free she hurried into the house, no doubt leaving the poor gypsy woman wondering what had just happened! It is clear that the event made a big impression on my mother, because she told the story many times.

Remembering Garfield King **by George Shivers**

In 2019 Maryland established the Maryland Lynching and Reconciliation Commission with the passage of House Bill 307. The Commission is authorized to research cases of racially motivated lynchings and to hold public meetings and regional hearings where a lynching has occurred.

To my knowledge only two counties on the Eastern Shore, Wicomico and Kent, have created their own organizations to follow through with the purposes of the State Commission. In Wicomico County that body is the Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Their work has resulted in the placement of an historical marker on the

Wicomico Court House lawn in remembrance of this county's three lynching victims, Garfield King in 1898, and Matthew Williams and an unidentified man, both in 1931.



It turns out that Garfield King was from Allen and was only 18 years old when a mob dragged him from his cell in Salisbury, hanged him from a tree on the courthouse lawn and mutilated his body. I researched and wrote an article on that event that was published in 2008 in *Shorelines*, a publication of the Edward H. Nabb Center at Salisbury University. What follows is drawn from that article.

Garfield King was born in 1880, too late it seems to appear in the Federal Census that year. Since the 1890 Census was lost and he died before the 1900 Census, I was never able to determine anything about his parents or siblings. It is clear that he was given the name Garfield to honor President James Garfield, who had fought for the Union in the Civil War and had been an advocate of Emancipation. The President was to be assassinated a year after Garfield King's birth.

Garfield King was a recent graduate of the Princess Anne Colored Academy, when he was murdered. The Academy was founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1886 for the education of African Americans. It was primarily a secondary school that offered industrial, agricultural and practical Arts courses.

The King family has had a presence in Allen since the early 19th century. The following Kings appear in the 1900 Federal Census data: Isaac King (born c. 1852) and his wife Martha (born c. 1857) had the following children: William H. (1876), Isaac W. (1880), Tobey E. (1883), Hurley A. (1885), Sera M. (1886), and Levin T. (1888). The dates are right for Isaac and Martha King to have been Garfield's parents, however their son Isaac was born in the same year as Garfield. Of course, that doesn't discount the possibility of their parentage. Arthur and Leah King could also have been Garfield's parents, a possibility further enhanced by the fact that they resided near Twigg's Corner, where the event that resulted in his arrest took place.

The first time I ever heard about the lynching came in letters given to the Historical Society by Mrs. Bettie Sue Payne Malone. The letters were written by Mrs. Ruth Jones, who had grown up in Allen and was planning to write a history. She sent letters to several of the older members of the community asking for their memories on several events, among which was the lynching of Garfield King. Her book project never panned out, but we are fortunate to have acquired the responses to her request for information. One of those questioned was Mr. Percy Allen, who wrote that "In looking over your list of topics, I would very definitely suggest that no mention be made of the Garfield King lynching. It was too horrible, and none of those involved were residents of Allen. Am sure you will have enough pleasant things to write about.". Another response came from Mr. Robert Huey, a resident of Chestertown at that time, who wrote the following in his 1951 letter: "Reference has been made to the lynching of Garfield King. While I read of this incident quite a number of years ago, I did not then, nor do I now, know of the details. I recall, however, going out to the little farm owned by Uncle Price (author's note: He is referring to Mr. Levin B. "Squire" Price, local teacher, who resided across the street from the church.), and following in the furrow as Garfield plowed around the field.

Garfield was always good to me, and never did I see him act unkindly." His sentiments were echoed by a reporter who wrote: "The lynched man was an educated negro who graduated at the Colored Academy at Princess Anne, and has always been well thought of by his neighbors."

It was spring time and local farmers were harvesting strawberries and planting their summer crops. One of those farmers was Gamaliel Banks. He hired a young man from White Haven to work for him. That man was Herman Kenney, who was 22 years old and white. On Saturday night, May 21, 1898, he was at the local store on Twigg's Corner, at the corner of what is now Walnut Tree Road and South Upper Ferry Road. Garfield King was also there with a group of his friends. Both young men were destined for tragedy that spring evening. King and his friends left the store first, followed almost immediately by Kenney and his friends. Apparently an argument had begun between the two groups in the store and continued once they were outside. Newspaper reports indicated that King pulled a gun and shot Kenney in the abdomen at close range. Kenney died in the hospital on Tuesday evening, May 24. King argued that he had acted in self-defense, because Kenney had struck him. A number of questions arise:

1. Given his character as it emerged, why was Garfield King carrying a weapon?
2. Why would he feel compelled to such a violent act if he did not feel threatened?
3. Was there a prior history of tension between the two?
4. Were the witnesses questioned by authorities, and if not, why not? Both men were with a group of friends after all, not to mention the store owner.

These and other questions were never answered, because Garfield King never had his day in court. The fact is that he was already being tried in the court of white public opinion. There is ample evidence from newspaper reports that the tensions were rising among local Whites. And there is no lack of evidence of white racism. This was,

after all, the Jim Crow era. Men from the surrounding countryside began to gather in Salisbury on Wednesday evening and by 11:30, according to the *Salisbury Advertiser*, a mob had gathered at the courthouse, which also contained the jail. Street lights near the jail had been eliminated, and it was cloudy with a light rain falling. Before midnight shots were fired and the lynching began. The report in the *Advertiser* states "*Sheriff Dashiell had been made aware of the mob's presence, and was preparing to make the best defense of his prisoner that his circumstances would permit. By this time a hundred and fifty men, many of them clad in gum boots, oil coats and tarpaulin hats, had gathered in a quiet, orderly mass at the jail door. They seemed to be patiently awaiting the arrival of somebody, presumably their leader. At 12:35 o'clock their leader was observed to come up from the direction of Division street. His arrival was signaled by a ready hurrah. He lost no time in approaching the Sheriff, who stood inside the jail doors, and demanded of that official the jail keys.*" The sheriff refused to give him his keys, but someone brought over a conveniently nearby telephone pole, which was used to break through the jail door. The men opened the cell using an axe to break the lock and dragged the terrified King out of the cell, down the stairs and into the jail yard, while simultaneously kicking and beating him. He was then hanged from a tree in the yard, but the first attempt failed when the rope broke. When he was hanged the second time, he was simultaneously shot once, soon to be followed by a volley of shots. A few white citizens tried to quiet the mob and prevent the lynching, according to the newspaper. One, Mr. E. Stanley Toadvine pleaded with the mob to return the prisoner to the custody of the sheriff.

After the lynching, when the mob had dispersed, a Judge Holland arrived, having been awakened by the shooting and the shouts. He had King's remains taken down and placed in the nearby engine house of the local fire department. His body was later interred in an unidentified Salisbury cemetery, possibly what was known as

Potter's Field near the railroad track. No mention was made of Garfield King's family in the newspaper reports.

Contemporary reports indicated that some in the white community and, of course, virtually all in the black community were distressed and outraged by the act of vigilantism and mob violence that deprived Garfield King of life and justice. The reporter for the *Salisbury Advertiser* condemned the act in no uncertain terms, writing:

"How can a citizen who has sworn his allegiance to the government to support the constitution, deliberately join in a procession to do violence to the law and to his own oath? . . . Such an act means that we have no confidence in our civil government... Is there a lack of confidence in our government? If so the proper method for the officers of the law to pursue to establish confidence is to prove this matter and seek out the offenders."

Judge Holland also expressed his outrage during an interview with a reporter, though it must be noted that his concern stems not only from the crime against civil law but also from its impact on the reputation of the community: "It was a shocking, and to me, very unexpected crime. It is a burning shame that the fair fame of this community should be darkened and disgraced." Concern spread to other communities on the Eastern Shore, as a later article testifies. The writer declares:

"The recent lynching at Salisbury is denounced in Easton by unanimous public sentiment. It is considered an Eastern Shore disgrace. . . Salisbury has boasted of being the largest town on the Eastern Shore, the most businesslike, the most thrifty, but it is evidently not big enough to prevent such murderous lawlessness. There was never a lynching in Talbot County, although crimes provocative of mob law have been committed."

On Tuesday evening of the week following the lynching of Garfield King, leaders of the black community in Salisbury called a

meeting, held at John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. Solomon T. Huston was chosen as chairman of the meeting and several other men spoke. According to a newspaper report of the meeting, "All the speakers condemned the lynching, but gave good advise (sic) to their people, and counselled (sic) them to be law-abiding and law-fearing. The young men of the race were admonished to sell their pistols and razors and put the money in useful literature." At the same meeting a committee was appointed to urge Governor Lowndes to offer a reward of \$1000 for the apprehension of the lynchers. The meeting also adopted a resolution declaring their loyalty and love of the community, their belief in the importance of maintaining law and order and in the right of trial by jury. The resolution also demanded that public officials give an explanation for the recent violent action, and denounced as "inhumane, retrograding and barbarous the preserving of pieces of the rope with which the victim was lynched." It went on to state that "in the light of civilization we condemn every manifestation of favor to the crime and are astonished that some of the citizens of this town and county should be identified with the preservation of these mementoes." The language of this resolution is interesting in that it never accuses any member of the local white community of actually participating in the lynching, but seems rather to focus its condemnation on those who took souvenirs of the occasion. Nonetheless, it is a strong reaction on the part of the community, condemning the action while upholding firmly their belief in upholding the law. It also cautiously advises members of the community against acts of violent revenge, since clearly the black community would have suffered most from such action.

A number of years ago, I spoke with Mrs. Zella Holden, then among the oldest members of Allen's African American residents, born in 1911. She said that she had never heard the lynching of Garfield King mentioned in the community during her youth or later. In her book *On the Courthouse Lawn*, author Sherrilyn Ifill points out "there

are many reasons for whites to remain silent: fear of consequences, guilt, denial, or insistence that it was all in the past and no longer significant. She goes on to say that blacks too may resist talking about incidents of racial violence: "They may fear that such a conversation will be racially polarizing, undermining progress painstakingly made over decades. . ." She insists, however, that that conversation must occur. Theologian James H. Cone presents a similar thesis in his lecture *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. It was delivered at Harvard Divinity School on October 19, 2006 and ended with these words: "If America has the courage to confront the great sin and ongoing legacy of white supremacy, with repentance and reparation, there is hope beyond the tragedy - hope for whites, blacks, and all humankind - hope beyond the lynching tree." We can be grateful that the State of Maryland and Wicomico County are finally seeking to make amends for the injustices in our history.

Sources: *Salisbury Advertiser*, Vol. 31, No. 40 (Saturday, May 28, 1898)

Cone, James H., "The Cross and the Lynching Tree." Posted on *Trinity News*.

October 12, 2007. .

<http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/welcome/?article&id=917>

Ifill, Sherrilyn A., *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-first Century*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.

A Photo from the Past



This photo is from a newspaper article in a scrapbook kept by Mr. Lindley Allen. It is titled: Allen Community Hall dedicated. The text below the picture states: "The new Allen Community Hall, complete with stage for plays, tables for dinner, etc. was dedicated Sunday in special services which followed the Homecoming of Allen Methodist Church, the Rev. Roscoe Jones, a former pastor of the church, was the principal speaker. Preceding the dedication, the Ladies Aid Society served a dinner. The hall was a former school building.

Some of us have fond memories of the hall when it looked like this inside, especially of the stage, which we have sorely missed since the renovation. Do any of our members know when the church acquired the hall? Unfortunately, there was no date on the article as clipped by Mr. Allen. The building ceased to be a school in 1937, I believe. The clipping was on the page opposite a program from the 1948 Homecoming bulletin, but I suspect the church acquired the building much before that.

**Excerpts from a Letter to
Ruth Jones Wilkins by Fred Messick in
1951**

The first debating society I have any memory of I think was promoted by Raymond Allen. It met on the third floor of the old Allen store (owned by Mr. J.S.C. and W.F. Allen).



Allen Brothers' Store

Here all public meetings of any size were held. The only subject I seem to recall debating was: "There is more pleasure in anticipation than realization." Later there were more serious ones between the more mature members of the community. George Wesley Jones, who was more mature than the rest of us, took part. Dr. John Ignatius Theodore Long took an active part. He loved an argument and used to rehearse by the hour his oncoming speech in his little office that stood in the corner of his little office that stood in the corner of his yard right by our front gate. *(Editor's Note: Neither the Messick residence nor the doctor's office are still standing. The Messick house stood more or less across from the Rayfield residence until it was razed a few years ago. It was an impressive house and had been built in the 1880s, a prosperous time in Allen.)*



Messick House

Occasionally Capt. T.W.H. White would come down and join in. I remember his talking one night on the "Eel Bill" he was trying to get through the state legislature. He succeeded, by the way, and for several years the state paid a bounty on captured eels, which were so destructive on trap and seine fisheries. When father and mother celebrated their 25th anniversary in 1890, Capt. White

gave father a napkin ring bourne or drawn by a turtle. He said that was the nearest thing he could find to an eel.

.....

I wonder if you would be interested to know that there was a whiskey shop in Allen up to about 1880. It was run by a man named O'Neil, and stood over near where John and Edith's house stood. (*Editor's Note: This may refer to John and Edith Griffith, who lived across from the church. It would be ironic that there would be a whiskey shop so close to the church, if that were the case!*) It burned about that time, to the great delight of the village residents, and was never rebuilt.

Levin B. "Squire" Price

(From the Editor: Since we will be reprising Squire Price and his wife Mary in our Cemetery Walk in October, I thought that a word about him here would be appropriate. What follows is his obituary, from the Salisbury Advertiser, July 17, 1897.)

Death of Levin B. Price

Levin B. Price of Allen died at 7 o'clock Thursday morning of heart failure. He had been in failing health for the past two or three years, but was as well Wednesday as usual, eating a hearty supper in the evening. About one o'clock in the morning he was attacked and died at seven o'clock as stated above.

Mr. Price was born in 1838 at Allen, then known as Trappe, where he spent his whole life. He was educated under Col. Lemuel Malone, his cousin, in the Trappe schools and succeeded Col. Malone as teacher of the school in 1855 and served as teacher of the school for about 35 years. As teacher he was a conscientious and efficient worker. For 30 years he held the office of Justice of the Peace.

He married a daughter of the late Peter Turner and from this union there were

six children, viz.: the late Lemuel Malone Price, Isaac L. Price of the Salisbury Lime and Coal Company, Findlay F. Price of Philadelphia, and L.B. Price, Jr., an employee in the Maryland House of Correction, and two daughters. Mr. Price's mother was a sister of the late Simeon and Levi Malone and cousin of Col Lemuel Malone.

Mr. Price never held any public position save that of Justice of the Peace. In 1891 he was put on the fusion ticket for a Republican for Register of Wills. He was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South



Levin B. "Squire" Price



Mary Turner Price

Still Available!

Our heritage cookbook. \$30 per copy. Send check to AHS, P.O. Box 31, Allen, MD 21810. Be sure to include your return address for delivery.

Our order for memorial bricks has been placed. We hope the Memorial Walk will be in place by the time we open our museum in December.

**Join the Allen Historical Society!
Individual member: \$15. Family Membership: \$20; Patron: \$40
Sustaining Membership: \$250**