

THE ALLEN HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 31, Allen, MD 21810

Web Address: allenhistoricalsociety.org

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George Shivers, Editor

Community Calendar

Sunday, Sept. 25 Homecoming Service
at Asbury United Methodist Church,
Allen, with luncheon following at the
Community Hall.

Allen Lions Club, Paddle Poker, Sept.
17. Registration: 10 am. Begins at 11
am. Begins and ends at the Yacht Club.

Allen Historical Society, Breakfast, Sat.
Oct. 24, 7:30 – 10:00 at the Allen
Community Hall. Adults: \$10; children
6-12: \$6; children under 6: \$4.

Asbury United Methodist Church Fall
Bazaar – Saturday, Oct. 29, 10 am – 2
pm. Allen Community Hall.

Allen Lions Club Beef Dinner – Sunday,
Nov. 13. Take out only. Menu: pit beef,
mac and cheese, and stewed tomatoes.

Progress on the Society's Museum at the Huffington-Pollitt House

Work on the house is almost complete,
and, in any case, it is ready for the
museum exhibits on the ground floor.
Our parking lot is currently being used,
and the entrance ramp has been installed
for some time. Exhibits are being
installed as I write, and we expect that it
won't be too long before the museum
can open. Watch for an announcement of
that date in the future.

Letter Written in 1951 from Robert
Huey to Ruth Jones Wilkins

Chestertown, Maryland
August 22, 1951

Dear Ruth:

The several incidents that
I have jotted down, with pencil, as you
allowed, but which I will now attempt to
put on the typewriter, may have little
value to you in accomplishing what you
wish, but it has given me great pleasure
to do this, and in so doing refresh my
memory concerning people and a place
that added much to my life as a child.
You will understand that there is no
continuity, - just incidents.

Uncle Price passed on early in
the time of my visits to Allen, but my
memories of him are pleasant, and
Auntie Price, bless her heart, was
grandmother, and all that goes with it.
Nan, Sue and Kate were wonderful, and
I trust that Sue may be with us all on
Sunday next.

Now the girls did peeve me at
times, as for instance the time that they
stood me up in the floor (back to them)
and challenged as to who could kick
over my head. They all did it, with one
exception, a girl who was visiting - I do
not remember her name - did not quite
make the grade, and her heel landed on
the side of my head. Now, even to this

day, if you want to get my dander up, just hit me on the head, - so you can imagine.

Auntie Price cooked the best corn that anyone could wish, with plenty of butter, and seasoned just right. It seemed that I never could get enough (?). So, one day Auntie Price said, "Bless your heart, I'll see that you get enough corn for once in your life." At dinner she placed at my plate a large vegetable dish filled with corn, with the remark that it was just for me. Well, I ate every grain, - there was nothing else for a boy to do. When Auntie asked me if I had had enough, I couldn't say yes, and I couldn't say no, so I said that I could eat some more. With that she said, "Bless your heart, you shall have more, and was about to get up from the table and cook more corn. Boy, was a fellow in need of a friend! One more grain would have popped me. One of the girls, Kate, I believe, was the "shero." She said, "Mamma, you are not going to do that, that boy has had enough, he will be sick." The argument was short, Kate won, and I lived happily ever after.

One time several of us boys were in Uncle Price's corn patch, and he, altho he could not see us, thinking that we were after his watermelons close by, called out, "You boys get out of my watermelons." We were glad that he did not catch on that we were after corn silks to smoke.

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, 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.

I am very grateful for the atmosphere and teaching of the Sunday School. The Superintendent, Mr. John Jones, was recognized as a man of character and ability, respected by us all. I remember him as a devout Christian gentleman, one who inspired confidence and stability, and one whose influence is still expressing itself after a lapse of over half a century. And "Miss" Annie Malone, who exercised much patience with "her boys" in the Sunday School Class, used every opportunity to teach us the right way of life. It was always a great treat when the male quartet sang, and I sat in attentive silence when Messrs. Peter and Wood Malone and Will and Harry Messick rose to sing. The Village Church has been, and still is, a quiet and powerful influence in shaping our destiny as individuals and as a nation. It deserves our best.

As I spent four full summers in Allen, I was allotted certain chores, which usually resulted in pleasure. Not one day, however, when a boy about my age came with some relatives, and he followed me around the orchard, watching me pick up apples. I do not know who he was, but I did not care much for him.

Driving Jumbo and Sheely, the two horses that I remember, to Eden with the fruit for shipping was a great delight. Sometimes, on the way, when the dew lingered, a watermelon would taste mighty fine. On one occasion, while waiting at Eden, so that I could bring Mr. Alex Malone home, I was watching the trainmen unload the

freight. A barrel of molasses was given a whirl by one of the men and was about to come to a stop, and up, right over my left foot. Taking in the situation, which I did not, because of attention elsewhere, he grabbed it just in time, for the metal band on the barrel left only a trace of rust across my toes.

When one of the girls in the Price family would mention the need of "going to town," meaning Salisbury, I became very alert, for after all I might be allowed to go along, and perhaps drive. The "trip to town" was usually made on a day following a thunderstorm, for the resulting rain helped wonderfully in packing the sandy road. Oh yes, when we reached the edge of "town," which was much nearer the center of the city than now, there was a shell road. It was great. The first time I went from Salisbury to Allen by auto, we were in Tony Tank before I could realize it, and in such a short time the Church Spire in Allen broke into view. Allen was wonderful then, and Allen is wonderful now.

Sooner or later, tragedy comes to all of us. A deep impression was made on me by the untimely death of Robert Malone, - perhaps the first such experience in my life. And sometimes comedy mingles with tragedy, - as for instance the time there was the funeral of a small child at the church across the road, and someone had conceived the idea of having small children as pall-bearers. Lacking one boy, a last minute search was made, and my younger brother, Frank, who with my mother, was at that time visiting Auntie Price, was "elected" to fill the vacancy. Now, Frank, at that age, was a very charming little boy, - with long, red curls, and

complexion envied by the girls. At the moment he was needed, however, he was bare foot, with ruffled hair and dirty face. But a pall-bearer was needed and a pall-bearer had to be supplied. So, all the women - available women-set to. One washed his face, one combed his hair, one brought clothes, another put on his shoes and stockings, - there was no time for washing feet and legs, for in those days long black stockings were worn. Shortly he was a full fledged pall-bearer - although actually the poor child was baffled, he did not know what it was all about. I guess no one was harmed by the laughter that followed.

When one turns over in his mind things that happened over a half-century ago, some are naturally vague, while others present themselves as tho they had happened but yesterday. Why should I remember the day when I was picking up apples in Uncle Price's orchard and came upon one apple that was more beautiful than the rest? So symmetrical and beautiful it was that I removed it from the others in the basket and placed it in the fork of one of the trees, to keep it as my very own. And why should "Miss Marget" Simms, close by whose house I had found this particular apple, see it, admire it, and, without asking for it, impel me to give it to her. Really, I did not want to part with it, but I did. "Miss Marget" and "Mr. Lisha" were nice people and good neighbors.

And mentioning "Miss Marget" causes me to remember how her chickens and Auntie Price's chickens used to range together in the space between the two homes. Auntie Price was an intelligent woman, and she had her chickens well trained. At feeding

time she would mix their food, walk over to the fence that separated the yard from the pound, and with the large spoon which she had been using, tap firmly on the fence a few times. Her chickens would look up, and, on hearing the second series of taps, they would come running to her for the food, leaving "Miss Marget's" chickens standing bewildered. I have often wondered what might have happened to her chickens if a flock of woodpeckers had located in that area.

The swimmin' hole was a rendezvous for pleasure, with bathing suits, which we did not have, being the least of our worries. Sure, there was mud, which was well stirred up when and if one of the boys brought a horse along to swim. It was fun to see the horse swell up, as they do, when swimming, and each boy waited anxiously for his turn to ride the horse in the water. The horses were better swimmers than we. One day one of the Long boys and I left the swimmin' hole mounted on Guy Long's riding horse. Coming out the crooked path, the two of us made out finely until the horse increased its speed. Finally, when we had bounced around (no saddle) until we were up on his neck, having dropped the reins and holding on for our lives to his mane, he slowed his pace, and we once more felt secure. We did not know that Guy had taught him to speed on a tight rein, and slow down on a loose rein.

At the edge of the church graveyard, next to the walk (a part of the road) leading to the lower part of the village, stood a large cherry tree, under which was reported to be buried an old, and in his time, a well known slave, named Great Scott. The story, as told to

us boys, was that if one visited the tree in the stillness of the night, contact with Great Scott might be accomplished. Remaining perfectly quiet until exactly midnight, the visitor would then say, in distinct, low, but audible voice, "Great Scott, what are you doing?" In the silence of the night, Great Scott would say - NOTHING. Naturally, we boys wanted to try it, but, - oh well, we didn't warm up to that one too well.

Siloam Camp meeting was an annual occasion, and it was always a pleasure to go; however, I cannot claim that my impulse was of a spiritual nature, nor even religious. After all, rides in a horse-drawn vehicle, with possibly some extra eats and confections, were attractive to a child then, as are auto rides and the like to a child of today. Cousins Nan, Sue and Kate had their beaux, and they each went their several ways, however, when the more mature and the children went, a good time was had by all.

One summer my Mother and Aunt Maggie Elliott (note by Ruth Wilkins: niece of grandmother Price and grandmother of Yale professor Ralph Brown) were visiting during camp time, with some of the children, which ones I do not remember, but as there was quite a group, Uncle and Auntie Price decided that we would go in the dearborn. We placed extra seats, and were about to leave when Uncle Price called to me to get "aboard." Forthwith I ran and returned with a board which I thought would make a good extra seat. I was stopped in my tracks when Uncle Price turned to me and said, "Dod-blam it all, Robert, I didn't say get a board, I said get aboard." Well, we all got aboard, and started happily for Siloam Camp. All

went well until we were possibly a half-mile from home. Then, without any warning, the rear axle, overtaxed as it was, collapsed, on the right side, and down went the rear of the dearborn, spilling its passengers in the sand. Jumbo stopped still, which was perhaps more to his liking with all that load, and, also, Jumbo had good "understanding." Jumbo was a very large horse, and he had about the biggest feet of any horse that I ever saw. When it was discovered that no one was hurt, Uncle Price said, "Dod blame it all, Mary (Auntie Price), you broke that wagon down." "Why, Mr. Price (She always called him Mr. Price), I was not even on that side." "Well, dod blame it all, you must have done it, you are heavy." Aunt Maggie was heavy also, but, as a matter of fact, the question of who broke it down was not then important. The important thing was, what should be done. In the council that followed, a decision was promptly reached, so Uncle Price and I quickly ungeared the horse, and while the rest of the group straightened out their ruffles and the like, we departed and in a short time returned to the scene of the spill with Jumbo geared to the horse cart, with plenty of straw to sit on. If there was a happier group than we, where could it be found?

**Commerce in the Village of Allen
during the 18th through the 20th
Centuries**

The village, known as Allen since 1883, grew up around the grist mill, which our oral tradition says was established ca. 1702 by the Brereton or Brewington family. By 1763 it was run by John Adams, a son of Rev. Alexander Adams, rector of Green Hill Church. The mill

was owned by Adams descendants until the middle of the 19th century, and continued to operate under other owners until 1919, when it was razed after a storm washed out the mill dam. By the end of the 18th century the Adams family also operated a store, a saw mill and a tavern at the place known then as the Trappe and by the 19th century as Upper Trappe.

The Adams brothers' businesses had disappeared by the 19th century, and new stores were being operated by Stephen Drura, and Thomas Dashiell.



Stephen Drura's store
Later the village post office with
Herschel Wallace as postmaster.

In 1848 Joseph S. C. Allen and his brother William F. Allen opened their store in the village center. Joseph S.C. Allen was serving as postmaster in 1883 when the postal service asked that the village name be changed to avoid the confusion that arose from so many "Trappes" on the Eastern Shore! Our village then took its name from the family of its postmaster. The Allen Bros. store burned in 1894.



In 1900 George Phillips and his wife Emma Huffington Phillips built a store and residence on the site of the Allen Bros. store. That store operated under several owners until 1954.



At about the same time Alonza Whayland established a store on the site of Thomas Dashiell's business near the mill dam.



Alonza Whayland's Store and Home

In the 1920s Herbert Elzey and Oliver O. Banks operated an automobile repair

shop. It later became Mr. Banks' general merchandise store. It stood on property adjacent to Jesse Pollitt's Store.

In 1916 Jesse M. Pollitt opened a store business at the north end of the village. That business continued to be operated by his son and daughter-in-law, David and Mary Lee Kolb, and then by their son David "Butch" Kolb, Jr. until the latter's illness and death.



Mr. Pollitt also operated a farmer's auction block next to his store during the 1920s and 1930s. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture reported that more string beans were sold at Mr. Pollitt's block than anywhere in the world!





Picking string beans on the Norman E. Smith's "Bounds Farm," formerly Brereton's Chance, home of William Brereton in the late 17th Century. Pictured are Russell Malone and Mildred H. Smith. This was one of the farms that made Allen the "String Bean Capital of the World" in the first half of the 20th century!

Our village also boasted a tomato canning operation in the late 19th and early 20th century. It was last operated by Harry Messick. The factory burned in the 1920s.

Rayfield Church had a large strawberry field and would sell his berries to a produce stand in Salisbury. Dare Polk Gunther had a cucumber field each summer and sold her produce at the Farmers' Block in Salisbury. Lillian Shivers sold eggs, chickens (dressed for cooking) and garden produce to customers in Salisbury for a number of years.



This early photograph of the Allen mill pond shows both the Whayland Store building and the Harry Messick canning factory. That factory opened in 1899 and was destroyed by fire in 1926. The site, along Cottman Road, is now the location of the county park dedicated to the memory of Douglas D. Nichols.

The Allen vicinity also became a strawberry plant and peach center from the late 19th through the middle of the 20th century. The W.F. Allen strawberry plant and fruit business was located in Salisbury, but the orchards were near our village. John Jones operated a strawberry plant business in the late 19th and early 20th century, and that business was taken over by J.H. Shivers in the 1930s and operated until the decade of the 1960's

Rayfield Church and his wife Celestine ran a business on the Upper Ferry Road called Ray's Place from the late 1950's until the late 1960's. It was a combination grocery store, nightclub with a barber shop connected to it.



Rayfield Church in his place of business

Today the only businesses operating in the Allen vicinity are Wikander's Yacht Yard, at the site where Luther Payne had his Chris Craft pleasure boat building operation during the 1950s, and the Bordeleau Vineyard and Winery, owned and operated by Thomas Shelton. Both are located along Wicomico Creek, about 2 miles from the village center.

There have been other small businesses that have appeared and disappeared during the 20th century. Just north of the village was Buddy's Garage, an automobile repair shop, run by Buddy Malone, son of Mr. Ashland Malone. The building still stands. On the other end of the village was another car repair shop operated by Ralph Bounds. That building also still stands and is owned by Norris Howard. Mr. Perry Polk ran a small store on Walnut Tree Road in the 1950's and 1960's. His wife Bertha continued to operate the store after his death. There was also a bar and barber shop on the Upper Ferry Road, known popularly as Nick's Peaceful Palace, owned by husband and wife Nick and Naomi Banks from the late 1940s until the late 1960s. Joseph Brewington owned a grocery store from 1910 until the early 1960s. It was directly across

from Friendship Church. Pat and Audrey Hall had a store at the corner of Upper Ferry Rd. and Walnut Tree Rd. from the 1970's until the early 1980's. Their store also sold gasoline.

Several members of Allen's African American community had school bus contracts. These included Lenny King in the 40's and 50's then his son Douglass and wife Barbara 1950's-1970's. Ulysses Polk, Sr. also drove a school bus in the 1940's and 1950's. His son Ulysses, Jr. and wife Doris continued from the 1950's through the 90's. Their son Reggie and his wife April has continued that family tradition up to the present.

Oscar Waters Sr. and others used their cars to provide an informal taxi service back and forth to Salisbury during the 40's and 50's.

Join the Allen Historical Society!

Individual: \$15

Family: \$20

Patron: \$40

Sustaining: \$250

**Send dues to Allen Historical Society,
P.O. Box 31, Allen, MD 21810**

Send us an email and we will see that you are invited to our meetings and other activities. These days you can join us through Zoom!