

EARLY HISTORY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
IN ALLENDALE, NEW JERSEY

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## EARLY HISTORY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN ALLENDALE

(Numbers in parentheses indicate primary sources, a complete list of which may be found on the final pages of this history.)

The first school building (of which we have evidence) located within Allendale's present-day boundaries was built in 1826 and was known as the "little old red schoolhouse".<sup>(1)</sup> According to the "History of Bergen and Passaic Counties" by W. W. Clayton and William Nelson, published in 1882, two buildings had been used for school purposes prior to 1826. Having whetted our curiosity by dangling this tantalizing fact before us, Clayton and Nelson proceed to tell us more about the 1826 school, but leave us wondering what and where those first two buildings were.

The school built in 1826 was located  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile below the Allendale Depot at the intersection of Chestnut Street and Franklin Turnpike.<sup>(1,3)</sup> Its location is shown on an 1861 map published by Hopkins and Corey. By 1876, a new school had been built on a different site, as shown by the Walker's Atlas Map of that date, which shows a private home on the original school site.

This school was a one-story frame building 16 by 24 feet. The desks were arranged around the room, along with long, backless benches "on which the luckless urchin was doomed to sit from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon."<sup>(1)</sup>

The first Board of Trustees of the school included John G. Ackerman, John G. Ackerson and Albert A. Garrison.<sup>(1)</sup>

The first teacher was Isaac Demarest. Later teachers in this school included Henry H. VanDerbeck, James Alfred Ackerman (who first attended the school as a student, and then began teaching about 1842), John Binder and Mary Gercoe.<sup>(1,9)</sup>

In 1862 the building was moved to John Wilson's farm, where it was subsequently used as a granary. (2)

Allendale's second schoolhouse was built in 1862 at a cost of \$2000. (1,9) It was located  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile from the depot on the site of the present Municipal Building. (1)

This school was 25 by 35 feet in dimension, adorned with a belfry and blinds and was surrounded by shade trees. In 1882 the property was valued at \$2000. (1)

Among the teachers at this school were James Alfred Ackerman, Joseph Henry Ware (who was Principal in 1894) and a Mr. Van Wagoner. (1,3,6)

In 1860, the Trustees of the Allendale School District #6, Aaron Ackerman, Peter G. Powell and William White, purchased of Peter G. and Maria A. Powell for \$25 the plot on which the school was subsequently erected. (3) In 1876 the enrollment of the school was 80; in February of 1878 the enrollment was 87, with an average daily attendance of 62. (6,10) This school was enlarged at a cost of \$950 in 1887. (7)

On June 4, 1896, the Borough Council authorized the Board of Trustees to have the school removed along the public road. (8) In November of 1896, the building was sold to Henry J. Appert for \$65 and he utilized it for storage on his onion and celery farm. (5)

The History of Allendale, published in 1964, states that the building was subsequently demolished in the spring of 1963, but the Ramsey Journal of October 3, 1935, in reporting on a fire at the Appert farm states: "The fire obtained a firm foothold in the storehouse, which was formerly used as the Allendale Public

School." From the account given of the fire, it seems highly unlikely that the building in question survived this blaze.

Nearly two years after Allendale withdrew from Orvil Township to incorporate as a borough, ground was broken for the new school building.<sup>(5)</sup> The incorporation of the Borough of Allendale was a step that was instigated by a "school battle" -- Orvil Township proposed to build a new school, and planned to locate the school in Waldwick. Allendale's residents fought in vain to have the school located within their boundaries, and when the decision was made to build in Waldwick, Allendale residents felt that the only way to ensure local schooling for their children was to form a separate borough. The new school was built by Steven Van Blarcom at a cost of \$5500, and occupied the same site that the 1862 school had - the current Municipal Building site.<sup>(6,9)</sup> In fact, this school, begun in June 1896 and formally opened at a dedication ceremony held on December 18, 1896, is today Allendale's Municipal Building (much altered).<sup>(5,7)</sup>

The original building occupied a space of about 50 by 60 feet and contained two rooms downstairs (kindergarten through grade four) and one large room, divided by an accordian-type divider to make two rooms (grades 5 through 8) upstairs.<sup>(4,5)</sup> Each room housed two grades, taught by one teacher.<sup>(3)</sup> There was a pump outdoors, and after parents complained about their children drinking from a "community" dipper, all pupils were required to bring their own collapsible drinking cups to school.<sup>(4)</sup> Graduation exercises were held first at the school, later at Archer Hall, and still later at the Fire House.

Early teachers at this school included a Miss Murdock, Sadie Salyer, Ella Appert, Alfred Ackerman, John B. Zabriskie, Marie C. Maloney, Mrs. Joseph Ware and Anita Van Houten (Mrs. Stanley P. Fisher). Principals of the school prior to 1907 included John J. Ackerman (a nephew of James Alfred Ackerman), John B. Zabriskie, Adele Harris, a Mr. Johnson and a Mr. Brinkerhoff. In 1907 Willard Alling was appointed Principal, a position he held until his death on November 16, 1940. (3,4,5,9)

Among the early Trustees of this school were Stephen Van Houten, C. W. Stocker, William C. Tallman, J. E. Van Horn, J. W. Griffiths, Albert Pulis and Harry Sherman. (5)

The Ramsey Journal, in June 1900, lists 7 graduates of this Allendale School, and remarks that this represented Allendale's largest graduating class to date.

In 1914 an addition to this school was built at a cost of \$24,000. (2)

In November of 1927, Mr. Edward G. Washburne was elected chairman of a citizen's committee formed to assist school authorities in choosing a site and floor plan for a new school. Charles F. Smith, a long-time resident of Allendale, reminisced in March 1955 about his 50 years of residence in Allendale and remembered that a committee, including his wife and Mrs. Henry C. Anthony, among others, went to Chatham, N.J. to investigate their school, which, he said, ours was built to duplicate. (5)

In January of 1928 the people of Allendale voted almost 2 to 1 in favor of the selection of the "Anthony property" on Brookside Avenue as the proposed site for the new school, and authorized the expenditure of \$165,000 to purchase land and build and equip the

new school. (5)

The new Allendale Public School opened in 1929 with 225 pupils. (3) The guest speaker at the formal dedication exercises in September 1929 was Henry J. Appert, President of the Board of Education. (5)

On November 26, 1941, Representative J. Parnell Thomas (who, as a youth, had attended Allendale's public school) was the guest speaker at a ceremony dedicating three memorial plaques honoring former Principal Willard Alling, former President of the Board of Education, Harry I. Hand, and former school custodian, Christian Buhlman. (5)

## PRIMARY SOURCES

1. History of Bergen and Passaic Counties, by W. Woodford Clayton and William Nelson, published by Everts & Peck, Philadelphia, 1882.
2. History of Bergen County, by Frances A. Westervelt, published by Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1923. 3 volumes.
3. A History of Allendale, 1894-1964, by the History Committee of the Allendale, New Jersey Tercentenary Committee, published 1964.
4. Compiler's interview with Maytie Sparling and Ethel Borger, March 2, 1970.
5. The Ramsey Journal (newspaper) on microfilm, 1892-c. 1965. At the Ramsey, N.J. Free Public Library.
6. The Bergen County Democrat (newspaper) on microfilm, 1861-?, at Johnson Public Library, Hackensack, N.J.
7. The Hackensack Republican (newspaper) on microfilm, c. 1873-?, at Johnson Public Library, Hackensack, N.J.
8. Borough of Allendale, Borough Council Minutes, December 18, 1894 to present. At Allendale Borough Hall.
9. History of Bergen County, New Jersey, by J. M. Van Valen, New York, 1900.
10. History of Allendale Project, by Allendale Eighth Grade, class of 1945; Mrs. Willetta R. LaRoe, Teacher-advisor. Mimeographed 15-page history. At Brookside School Library.
11. Hopkins-Corey Map of 1861. Bergen & Passaic Counties; wall map 59 x 49. At New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J.
12. Walker's Atlas Map (1876); Atlas of Bergen County, with an historical sketch of the county, published by C. C. Pease, Reading, Pennsylvania, 1876. At Johnson Public Library, Hackensack, N.J.

13. Driving Road Chart of the Country Surrounding New York City, Hyde and Company, New York City, 1887. At Lee Memorial Library, Allendale's Free Public Library.
14. Atlas of Bergen County, New Jersey. Published in two volumes: Volume 1 published 1912; Volume 2 (including Allendale) published 1913. G. W. Bromley & Co. At Johnson Public Library, Hackensack, N.J.

Note: This little history does not include private schools located in Allendale, of which there were at least three, one of the earliest (of which we have records) begun in 1885. Prior to the establishment of public schools, there were undoubtedly schools of a "private" nature, with tuition paid by parents of scholars. Evidently, the state began to appropriate small funds to help support schools c. 1817. Until 1828, legal authority to build and repair school houses and pay for same from taxes did not exist. (2)