



ALLENDALE HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Vol. II

NOVEMBER 1975

No. 2

NEXT MEETING: Monday, December 1, 1975, 8:30 p.m. at the Allendale Municipal Building.

PROGRAM: "Personalities and Early History of Bergen County," by Alec J. Hurst of Wyckoff. Mr. Hurst teaches history at Tenafly High School and is extremely active in local historical circles. He is Historian for the Hermitage, a member and trustee of the Wyckoff Historical Society, a member of the Wyckoff Bicentennial Commission, Resource Director of Wyckoff and Tenafly Bicentennial activities, and is editor-in-chief of the official Wyckoff Bicentennial history.

NEWS AND VIEWS: Are you interested in the history of Allendale's older homes? Would you like the intrigue of researching the history and background of the land and families of early Allendale? Do you relish the satisfaction of solving little mysteries? If you can answer yes, and if, in addition, you have a few spare hours on a weekday every now and then, WE NEED YOU! We're looking for people to help us trace old land records in Allendale. This involves research at the Bergen County Courthouse in Hackensack, which is open only on weekdays. We'll show you how and get you started, and you can either work alone or on a team. Interested? Want to know more? Call Pat Wardell, 327-0605.

Two slide programs have been given within the past month, one for the Schierloh Post, VFW, and one for Troop 252 Boy Scouts.

In this issue we begin the first of a series of articles entitled "Allendale: Background of a Borough." This is a history of Allendale before its incorporation of a borough. A footnoted typescript, with bibliography, will be placed in the society's collection. This issue's article focuses on "Allendale before the railroad." Future articles will be "The railroad comes to Allendale," "Allendale's first real estate boom," and "Allendale: The Newport of Bergen County."

ALLENDALE: BACKGROUND OF A BOROUGH.....by Pat Wardell
 I. Allendale before the railroad.

If the few square miles which are now called the Borough of Allendale were to be called by their earliest known Township name, that name would be "New Barbadoes." In October 1693, the division of the original four New Jersey counties into townships resulted in the naming of three townships in this area: Hackensack, Bergen, and

New Barbadoes, of which the present-day area of Allendale was but a very small part.

The next name change came in 1767 when that part of New Barbadoes Township containing what is now Allendale was incorporated as Franklin Township. On February 5, 1849 most of what is now Allendale, along with much surrounding territory, was set off from Franklin Township and designated as Hohokus Township. In April of 1885 this area was further divided, and part of it, containing much of present-day Allendale, was called Orvil Township.

Before the approximately 3-5/8 square miles that comprise the borough were officially surveyed and named "Allendale," the area was known by several other informal names. Before the Revolution, when John Fell made Allendale his home, he named his estate "Petersfield," probably after his son Peter Fell. Before long, the entire local area surrounding his estate was referred to as "Petersfield."

John Fell was a New York merchant who had moved to this area before 1766, during which year he was appointed judge of the Bergen County court of common pleas. He was later a member of the Provincial Congress (1775); chairman of the Provincial Council (1776); a member of the Continental Congress (1778-80); and a member of the state council (1782 and 1783). In 1793 he sold his Petersfield estate to John Thompson and moved first to New York and then to Coldenham, N.Y., to reside with his son Peter, who had married Margaret Colden, granddaughter of Lieut.-Governor Cadwallader Colden of New York.

During the first half of the 19th century, the area was known as "the Turnpike," taking its name from the newly chartered toll road running through the settlement--the Franklin Turnpike. Charity Ackerman, who kept a diary from 1836 to 1841 referred several times to families and individuals living "at the Turnpike."

The area comprising present-day Allendale was probably inhabited solely by Indians until about 1740, when John Lauback and Powles Van Houten purchased much of the acreage comprising the present borough.

Allendale's area, plus what later became the greater portion of Hohokus and Franklin Townships, was originally purchased from the Indians by deed dated November 18, 1709 by Peter Sonmans, sole agent for the 24 proprietors of East Jersey.

The entire tract of 42,500 acres, known as the Ramapo Tract (Ramapock, Romopock, various other spellings) was surveyed by Sonmans and the survey filed on April 25, 1710. On December 10, 1709, Sonmans, acting for the 24 proprietors, conveyed the entire tract to John Auboineau, E. Boudinot, Peter Franconier, L. Kiersted, John Barberie, Thomas Barjoux, Andrew Fresneau, and Peter Bard.

Most of these purchasers evidently did not settle on this land, and this caused difficulty later, for when Martin Ryerson (who had purchased about 4,000 acres from one of the above named buyers) tried to survey and mark off his land on the northerly branch of the Ramapo River nearly 27 years later, he was interrupted and threatened by settlers who had evidently purchased smaller parcels within the Ramapo Tract from the Indians.

The resale by Sonmans was questioned by the Board of Proprietors on the grounds that he had not sufficient authority to make such a deed. The Board of Proprietors spent the following years until about 1767 trying to resolve the situation by attempting to obtain releases from the various purchasers and lease renewals from the various tenants and settlers of the tract.

During the years 1767 and 1768 the Board employed George Ryerson, Jonathan Hampton, and Benjamin Morgan to survey and make a map of the disputed tract, dividing the area into lots. After completion of the map, the Board of Proprietors decided to sell the lands, resurveying lots as they were sold. To further add to the confusion, the resurveying seems in many cases to have differed from the original survey and map.

It was not until September 18, 1790, when the Board divided the remaining Ramapo Tract lands and sold them by shares, that the Ramapo Tract lands were finally owned solely by individual owners.

John Lauback and Powles Van Houten, purchasers about 1740 of much of the land comprising present-day Allendale, apparently did actually settle on the land, and their descendants have continued to live in the area to the present day.

By about 1840, the tiny community numbered among its inhabitants the families of Anthony Crouter, Aaron Ackerman, Henry Powell, John G. Ackerman, Lewis Van Blarcom, John R. Vanderbeek, and Abram A. Quackenbush. Others, listed in the 1830 Federal Census for Franklin Township, living within the bounds of present-day Allendale or nearby, included Barney I. Spear, William Folly, John Lauback, Albert Garrison, Jeffrey Smith, Jacob Smith, Albert Smith, Richard Vanderbeek, Albert A. L. Zabriskie, John Christopher, and Cornelius Van Horn.

A guide to cities, townships, villages, and settlements within 30 miles of New York City, published in 1839, described the countryside of Franklin Township as generally well-cultivated and productive. Within Franklin Township, it stated, on the Ramapo River on the west boundary and the Saddle River on the east, were 13 cotton factories, 18 grist mills, 25 saw mills, 3 paper mills, 2 fulling mills, 22 tan vats, and 4 distilleries. The population of Franklin Township was given as about 4,000 inhabitants. Some of the main settlements within Franklin Township were Peramus (Paramus), New Success (Ramsey-Mahwah area), and New Prospect (Waldwick). The most direct route to Franklin Township from New York was by the Paterson and Hudson Railroad to Paterson and then across the Passaic River through the town of Manchester to Franklin.

Franklin Turnpike is probably the oldest road in Allendale; a road following its route existed in Revolutionary times and probably even earlier. It was chartered as a toll road in 1806 and was once part of the Albany Post Road. It is shown on an 1812 map of the area as the "New Prospect-N. Goshen Turnpike." In 1852 the Turnpike was taken over by the state and its original width of 60 feet was cut to 50.

In the early 1800's a toll house was erected on the southern corner of the present Crescent Avenue-Franklin Turnpike intersection. This toll gate is clearly shown on I. H. Eddy's "Map of the Country Thirty Miles Around" dated 1812. After two fires in June and September of 1933, the old toll gate house was condemned and razed late that same year. In 1949, Mrs. Fred Koster, who lived nearby on Franklin Turnpike, retold a tale she had heard from her grandmother, Mrs. Gary Storm. Mrs. Storm, who lived in the toll gate house from the late 1800's until her death about 1930, heard the story from older residents. Sometime during the 19th century, according to the tale, the toll gate house became known as "the house the elephant kicked over." The elephant, part of a circus traveling along the turnpike, became entangled in the toll chain attached to the building. As a

result, the elephant pulled down a section of the building. The damage must have been soon repaired, for the house continued in use for many years. Amazing as the story seems, it appears that such an event could indeed have actually happened, for such circuses and animal shows were not unknown in this area. On November 1, 1833, Martha Ann Zabriskie of Saddle River wrote in her diary, "A great show of animals has been at New Prospect."

In the early 1800's a stage coach line ran along the Franklin Turnpike, through the Franklin Turnpike gate from Ramapo to New York, via Paterson. In 1812-13, Henry I. Traphagen and William Southerland were running this stage with four horses; later, in 1819-20, Garret Bampa (Bamper?) ran the stage to Ramapo and Abraham Clearwater carried it "through the Orange Turnpike gate."

In 1826 a one-story frame schoolhouse, 16 by 24 feet, was built at the intersection of Franklin Turnpike and what is today Chestnut Street. John G. Ackerman, John G. Ackerson, and Albert A. Garrison served as the first Board of Trustees and employed Isaac Demarest as their earliest teacher.

Before the building of the railroad, Allendale was comprised of woodland, pastures, orchards, and cultivated farmland. Most farmers planted from one to five acres of strawberries, for which this area became famous. In the early 1800's, farmers and their families spent long winter months making strawberry baskets for use in the summer. Wood was split into thin strips which were soaked overnight and then woven into small cups and baskets. About 1840, William Packer of Saddle River opened a factory for making baskets in which to pack fruits and berries, and by the mid-1850's Van Ryper's basket works--also in Saddle River--was turning out containers for corn, oysters, peaches, and various other fruits. Before railroad shipping, farmers took their berries and other produce to markets at Paterson or New York in wagons piled high with the loaded baskets, on each of which was painted or carved the farmer's distinctive identification mark. When the fruit was sold, it was emptied into the customer's container and the shipping basket was returned to the farmer. Strawberry pickers in the mid-1800's received from 65¢ to \$1 per hundred baskets picked, and the berries were sold at market for 2-1/2 to 5 cents a basket.

(Next issue: The Railroad Comes to Allendale, 1840-1870.)

Sources:

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Bergen County Deeds, Book D3, p. 201; Book D6, p. 542; Book J, p. 43.
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United States Federal Census, Bergen County, Franklin Township, 1830.
Bergen County History, 1970 Annual of the Bergen County Historical Society.
Federal Writer's Project of the WPA, Allendale and Its Fire Fighters.
Allendale Fire Department records.
Ridgewood Herald-News, July 2, 1964.
Frank Bertangué Green, The History of Rockland County.
W. Woodford Clayton and William Nelson, History of Bergen and Passaic Counties.
Chester A. Smeltzer and John Y. Dater, The Birth and Growth of Ramsey.

The Flash Flood of July 23, 1945.

Accounts from three different newspapers:

From The New York Daily News, July 24, 1945:

The worst flood in a generation poured over northern New Jersey and southern New York yesterday, transforming miles of street and countryside into rivers of destruction.

Fed by a week of steady rain, flood waters raged through a 6-mile-wide belt extending 20 miles south from Spring Valley, N.Y., to Little Falls, N.J., and striking hardest in three counties--Bergen and Passaic in Jersey, and upstate Rockland, where a giant dam was threatened last night.

In more than 100 communities, normal activity came to a virtual stop as the rampaging Passaic and Ramapo rivers forced evacuation of thousands from their valley homes, closed dozens of war plants, burst dams, and washed out roadbeds, bridge foundations, and railroad tracks--paralyzing normal traffic for hours...

From The Ramsey Journal, July 26, 1945:

Allendale was among the heaviest sufferers from the flash flood on Sunday night and Monday morning. A broken dam in the Ramsey Country Club Estates released a torrent of water which caused a serious washout which undermined the No. 1 of the Erie near Christopher's Lumber Yard. This material and soil above the concrete abutment of the...Crescent Avenue underpass was packed tightly into the underpass blocking it to a height of about ten feet. Train schedules were disrupted, delaying commuters in reaching New York and although a track maintenance crew worked steadily on the washed out section of track, it was not until Tuesday afternoon that train service returned to normal. County road department employees had not completed clearance of the underpass up to Tuesday evening. To add to the woes of the Allendaleites the dam at Crestwood Lake also gave way causing widespread damage to property and gardens on the west side of the borough. The Allendale Celery Gardens, on the east side of Franklin Turnpike was entirely covered with water and presented the appearance of a large lake. It was not until late Wednesday that the drainage ditches on the farm were able to carry off most of the surface water. The county bridge on Brookside Avenue east of the school went by the board, and in the low section of Park Avenue many families had to be evacuated from their homes. Some residences had nearly a foot of water on their lower floor. The brook that flows through this section was responsible for this, though the dam just about held, which was fortunate, one resident stated. Owners of chickens and live stock are reported to have sustained serious losses.

From The Ridgewood Herald-News, July 26, 1945:

The entire business section of Allendale was flooded when dams at Crestwood Lake and Freeman's Pond gave way to the pressure of swollen streams above the town and swept down through West Crescent and Myrtle Avenues to cover the town waist-deep with a sea of turbulent water.

Greatest damage to a single area was done to the Erie Railroad, where 200 feet of Westbound passenger tracks was washed out, causing long delays in the movement of commuter trains. Trains were detoured over westbound freight tracks during the early stages of repairs.

Mayor George Christopher organized rescue and relief forces with the assistance of many volunteer citizens including Life Guards Paul D. O'Connor and Leonard Baum, Jr.

Eight members of the Alsdorf family were taken out of their home by boats. A turkey hen with a new brood resisted all attempts at rescue and was lost along with most of the birds raised on the place.

The Allendale Celery Farm was completely inundated and the entire crop lost.

A car driven by G. Heinzelmann of Waldwick was caught in the West Crescent Avenue underpass and buried in mud and water. The driver escaped uninjured. Kenneth Booth, responding to an alarm call, stalled his car in the roaring flood sweeping down West Allendale Avenue and had to wade to safety. The car was moved under its own power the following day.

Recreation Park was completely inundated when Crestwood Lake's retaining wall let go, pouring millions of gallons of water down West Crescent and Allendale Avenues. At its peak the water was waist-deep at the intersection. Brookside Avenue Bridge was completely destroyed along with the iron guard rail and the entire road bed.

The Ridgewood Herald-News of the same date, in captions under photographs, reported: "...the railroad track washout on West Crescent Avenue left more than two hundred feet of west-bound passenger track suspended in mid-air. The gully created was more than ten feet deep. Repair work, carried on day and night, started immediately, and by morning of July 25, the tracks had been replaced in position.

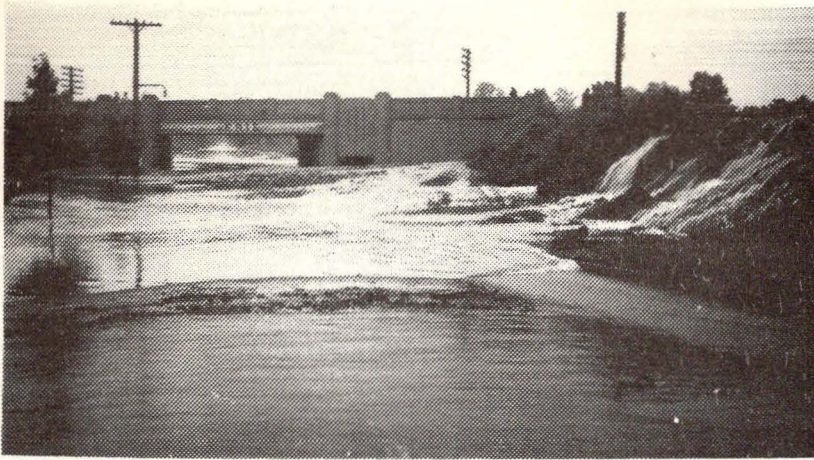
The Brookside Avenue bridge and roadbed over the normally quiet stream east of the Allendale school crumpled like paper, and with but a few feet of roadway left, it was necessary to close the street to all traffic.

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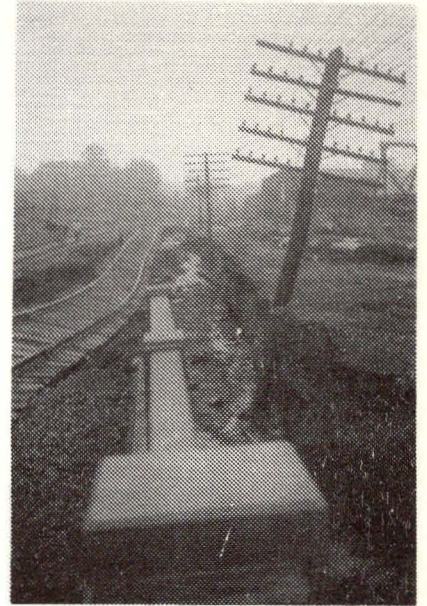
Adventures in and around Allendale

From *The Paterson Weekly Guardian*, November 24, 1857:

ALLENDALE. Mr. Editor:--There was considerable of a stir at this place. One of the residents being away, one of the neighbors saw a light in the parlor where it was unsafe, in these tight times, they concluded it must be the robbers, so they went to the barn and procured a binding rope, after they found the door broken, and fastened the knob of the door to the stoop railing, so as to prevent its being opened from the inside, which done, they all came with pistols and clubs, some stationing themselves by the windows and others by the doors, made a noise which they believed would cause the robbers to look out, thinking to frighten the persons inside. It did frighten the people inside, who happened to be the servant girl with her sweet heart, who had taken possession of the parlor wherein to hold a nice spark whilst the mistress was out. The girl got scared badly and crawled under the bed whilst the spark ran all around, believing a nest of robbers had made an attack for bread upon the house. When the folks outside found out how the case stood, the doors were opened, the servant girl saying all the time "It's me! It's me! Don't hurt him!" However the neighbors were so indignant at the false alarm that they ordered the lover to hurry himself home with the intelligence that his mother wanted him, whilst the girl was ordered to blow out the light and go to bed. ALLEN.



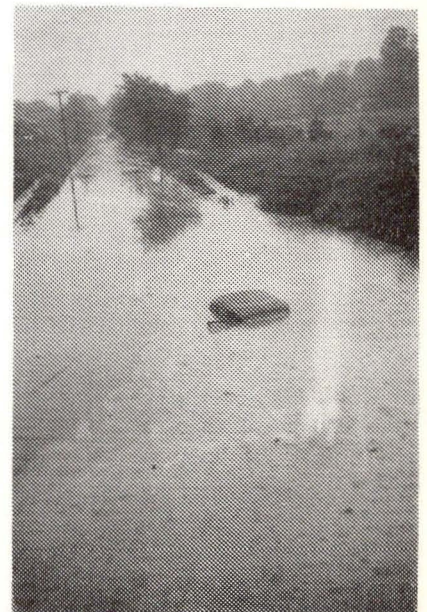
West Crescent Avenue, looking south toward Erie underpass.



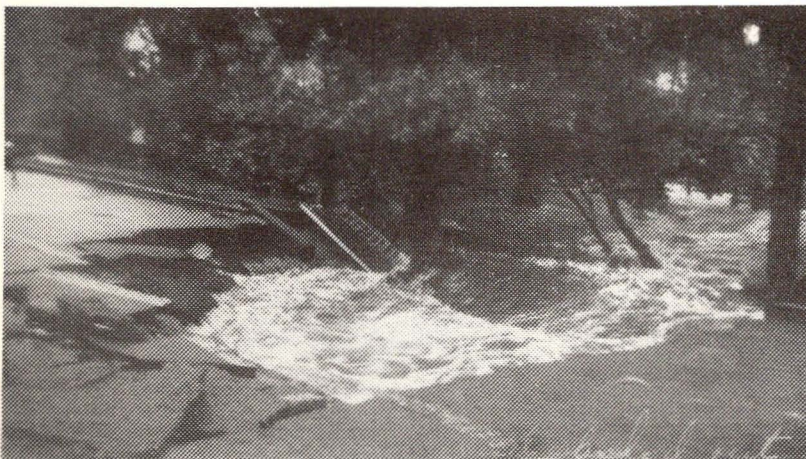
Tracks, looking west from W. Crescent Ave. underpass.



Allendale business section, looking southeast from Myrtle Avenue.



Car buried in mud and water; looking south from W. Crescent Ave. underpass.



Brookside Avenue, bridge just east of Brookside School.

New Members

We welcome the following new members:

- Miss Margaret Mc Nelley of Granville, New York
- Mrs. Lena Santulli of Allendale
- Mr. and Mrs. Albert L. Sutherland Sr., of Brandon, Vermont

Accessions

We gratefully acknowledge the following gifts to the Society's collection:

A copy of the 1876 Walker's Atlas of Bergen County, and a bound volume of photographs of the National Park Bank of New York, donated by Russell Mallinson.

Dedication Memorial Book of the Church of the Guardian Angel, published in 1966 to commemorate the dedication of the new church building, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kraft.

Allendale School, 2nd grade class photograph, 1942, and a program of the Annual Commencement, Allendale Public School, June 23, 1915, donated by William B. Buhlman.

Five Allendale School class photographs, c. 1910-1924, donated by Mrs. Helen Hoekstra.

School photograph, Allendale Class of 1923; Allendale 7th grade photograph, 1921; undated program (prob. c.1930-35) "Testimonial dinner tendered to William J. Reimer, Chief of Police, Allendale, N.J."; First Anniversary booklet, Allendale Police Department, 1929; Official program booklet of the Allendale Coming-of-Age Festival (21st birthday of borough) September 1915; program booklet, Allendale Ambulance Corps Carnival Week July 1938; 2 Allendale Board of Trade Bulletins, July and August 1918; Borough of Allendale audit, 1939; Borough of Allendale Budget, 1939; Borough of Allendale comparative summary of budgets for years 1941 and 1938; all donated by Mr. and Mrs. Norman Critchley.

More appreciation...

- To Mrs. Raymond M. Scholz for loaning numerous photographs and postcards to be copied for the Society's collection.
- To Mrs. Claire Tholl for repairing and reinforcing the binding of the 1876 Walker's Atlas donated by Russell Mallinson.

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Do you know of someone in Allendale, or perhaps a former resident who has moved away, who would enjoy receiving a sample copy of our newsletter? If you would forward the name and address to the Society or the editor, we would be happy to send a sample newsletter.

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Additions to, corrections of, and just plain comments on the articles and items printed in the newsletter are always welcome. In addition, anyone who would like to contribute an article, story, or reminiscence for publication in our newsletter is hereby encouraged to do so!

Allendale Historical Society
P.O. Box 294, Allendale, N.J. 07401

Membership Categories: (Annual Dues)

- Family Membership.....\$5.00
- Regular (Individual) Membership....\$3.00
- Junior Membership (under 18).....\$1.00

Dues are not required, but are voluntary, for those members over 65.

Allendale History and Heritage is published four times a year in September, November, February, and April, and is mailed to members of the Allendale Historical Society.

Editor: Mrs. Walter M. Wardell, Jr. (Pat)