

THE ALLEN HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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George Shivers, Editor

Coming Events

Members Please Note!

SUNDAY, MARCH 2 - MEETING OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT THE ALLEN COMMUNITY HALL, COLLINS WHARF ROAD, AT 2:00PM. FURTHER PLANNING FOR THE JULY 4 CELEBRATION, THE FALL CEMETERY WALK. ALSO A REPORT ON THE STATUS OF OUR INQUIRIES INTO THE AVAILABILITY AND POSSIBLE COST OF THE ELIZA HUFFINGTON HOUSE. PLEASE COME!

Saturday, March 8. Allen Lions Club Chicken and Dumpling Supper, 4:00-6:00pm. At the Allen Community Hall. Tickets: \$12. Funds to benefit projects of the Lions Club.

Friday & Saturday, March 14 & 15, Annual Friendship United Methodist Church Choir Anniversary services. 7:00pm each evening. This year marks the choir's 30th anniversary.

Saturday, April 5 - Asbury United Methodist Church Spring Bazaar. 10:00am - 2:00pm. Allen Community Hall.

Sunday, May 4 - The United Methodist Woman of Asbury United Methodist

Church present the annual tea party at the Community Hall, 4:00-6:00pm.

June 23 - 27 - Vacation Bible School at Asbury United Methodist Church.

Friday, July 4 - The Allen Lions Club presents its annual Fourth of July parade and celebration. Parade begins at 2:00pm in front of Friendship United Methodist Church and continues through the village to the Allen Community Hall. Hamburgers, hotdogs and home-made ice cream for sale. Games for children and adults.

Saturday, September 13 - The Allen Historical Society's Cemetery Walk. 7:00pm. Beginning at the Asbury Cemetery and continuing at Friendship Cemetery. See our village's more colorful citizens from the past in action! More details in the August newsletter.

In Memoriam: Richard F. Hazel

Our community has lost one of its most outstanding citizens with the death on February 16 of Richard F. Hazel at the age of 78. The Allen Historical Society lost one of its truest and most generous friends as well, and we mourn loss. Mr. Hazel contributions of his time, talent, energy and resources throughout the broader Salisbury and Wicomico County community. Perhaps little known, however, were the generous gifts granted to the Allen Historical Society by Mr. Hazel and his late wife Patricia, when

our organization was in its infancy. Their generosity, along with that of other donors, made it possible for us to acquire the Passerdyke Cottage almost a decade ago and to establish our museum and archive. We will be forever grateful that the Hazels took such a chance with a small and relatively new and unproven organization. I suspect that not too many philanthropists would have done so.

Mr. Hazel was born June 5, 1929 in Philadelphia. In Salisbury he was the owner of the Pepsi Bottling Company and was active in a number of local service organizations. In recognition of his many contributions to the community he was honored in 2004 with the Frank H. Morris Humanitarian Award by the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore. He was also the recipient of awards from the Rotary, the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Del-Mar-Va Council Boy Scouts. Other honors included the Salisbury Award (2004) and the Jack Nichols Humanitarian Award (2000).

The membership of the Allen Historical Society would like to extend our deepest sympathy to the members of his family.

The Story of James Huffington and Eliza Pollitt Huffington and of the Eliza P. Huffington House in the Village of Allen

by George Shivers

(Editor's Note: Since our Society is presently considering the purchase and restoration of the Eliza P. Huffington house, I thought it appropriate to present here as much as I have been able

to ascertain regarding the history of that property.)

James Huffington was the third child and second son of Jonathan Huffington, Jr. and his wife Henrietta Adams Huffington. He was born on October 20, 1819. Jonathan Huffington, Jr. was born and raised in the Barren Creek area of Old Somerset County (now Mardela Springs in Wicomico County). The first in the Huffington line to settle that area was Jonathan's great-grandfather, John Huffington who arrived in 1720 from Accomack County on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, where his father, Richard Huffington, had come in 1672 as an indentured servant. From those humble beginnings the Huffington family in Somerset County had become wealthy planters by the time James Huffington was born.

When James was born, his parents were living on a tract of land called "Poor Quarter" which they had purchased from Joseph Moore three years earlier. That farm was located very near the Upper Ferry on the south side of the Wicomico River and contained 120 acres. Over the next twenty years Jonathan added at least two other adjoining tracts to his plantation. We know nothing about James Huffington's boyhood except that he grew up on this plantation along with his older brother, William, an older sister Sally, as well as two younger brothers, John and Jesse, and five younger sisters! It must have been a busy household indeed! We don't know to what extent the children were educated, although they most certainly learned to read and write, perhaps with a tutor at home, since there were no public schools in the county at that time. Eden Academy, a private academy for boys, operated in the area only until 1805, closing over a decade before the Huffington children were born.

James was just a month shy of his twentieth birthday, when his mother Henrietta Huffington died on September 5, 1839 at the age of forty-one. Not quite two years later,

on January 6, 1841, Jonathan married for a second time Sarah (Sally) Benson, who was probably a widow herself. Her maiden name may have been Bounds. Both Jonathan's wives have been very hard to identify in any public documents and the problem is not helped by the fact that their graves are not in evidence along with his in the cemetery of Asbury United Methodist Church in the village of Allen. According to information in the 1850 federal census, Sally Huffington was 50 years old, making 1800 the year of her birth and making her 14 years younger than her husband. Seven years after their marriage, on June 20, 1848, Jonathan moved once more, purchasing the plantation of the late Samuel Bounds, recently deceased, and his widow Anna. The plantation at Upper Ferry became the home of his oldest daughter, Sally, who by that time had married Captain James Morris. The new farm would be expanded over the years and would remain in the Huffington family until the death of Levin Drexel Huffington in 1991. By the time of the family's move, Jonathan's three surviving sons had reached adulthood or in the case of Jesse, near adulthood. One son, John, born in 1822, died at an early age. In 1848 William was 32, James was 29 and Jesse, the youngest was 18. James was wed the following year, March 13, 1849, to Eliza Pollitt.

Eliza Pollitt was ten years younger than her new husband, having been born September 19, 1829. Like her husband, she stemmed from two of the pioneer families of Somerset County. Her father was Robert Pollitt and her mother was Drucilla Hayman. Her parents had married on January 16, 1827 (Pollitt, III). Robert and his brother Nehemiah inherited property near the village of Upper Trappe (now Allen) from their father, George Pollitt, who died in 1833. Members of the Pollitt family had been present in the county since 1668, when John Pollitt and his younger brother Thomas established a trading post on the Manokin River, where Princess Anne is now

located. John Pollitt had come to Baltimore from Liverpool, England in 1656.

According to the federal census of 1850, James and Eliza were then living on a farm near Upper Trappe. He had acquired the property from the estate of John E. Moore, who had purchased it in 1837 from Thomas Dorman. The farm consisted of 141 acres. The land fronted on both the Upper Ferry Road and what is now the Allen Road. James and Eliza lived there until 1857, when they sold it to Richard S. Bounds for \$2000. On December 10 of that year, Jonathan and his three sons paid \$11,000 for a large tract of land purchased from Warren J. Morris and his wife Caroline. Both William and James had homes on this tract and James Huffington's portion remained with his descendants until well past the mid-point of the twentieth century.

James and Eliza Huffington had nine children. Alexowna was born on June 30, 1851; Albert on June 29, 1853; Emily Virginia on June 6, 1856; Mary Williamanna on April 25, 1858; Plumer on May 16, 1860; Jackson on July 24, 1862; Reetta in 1869; and Drucilla in 1871. By the time of the federal census of 1860, it is clear that Jonathan Huffington and his sons were prospering. Jonathan's real estate was valued at \$30,000 and his personal property at \$12,000. James's real estate was valued at \$4000 and his personal property at \$1000. Twenty-six slaves were owned by the family (all in Jonathan's name), seven females and nineteen males, ranging in age from one year to seventy-one. Additionally there were two free African-Americans in Jonathan's home, Jacob Cottman, age 52, and Asbury Dashiell, age 10. In James and Eliza's household there were four free African Americans, William, Seth, Andrew and Eliza Bayley.

Jonathan Huffington died in 1862. His youngest son, Jesse, inherited the farm on which his father had resided, while William and James retained their farms along what is now Cottman Road. Actually, James bought

out the interest of his two brothers in that farm in 1866 for \$1000. At that time the farm consisted of 300 acres. The Huffington brothers continued to prosper in the decade following the Civil War and emancipation, despite the loss of their slaves. The 1880 federal census data shows that both William and Jesse had several African American servants and laborers as members of their households. In addition to farming they were heavily invested in the timber business after the war. Evidence suggests that the family fortunes may have taken a downturn after 1880. James Huffington in particular suffered from the recession that affected the country in the late 19th century. It may well be that the construction of a new house in the village in 1883 was the final demonstration of their former wealth. The writer of the Allen News column in the *Salisbury Advertiser* wrote on April 14, 1883, "Mrs. Jas. Huffington has purchased the "Dashiell Lot" and proposes to rear a handsome dwelling thereon." On September 15 of that year the column contained the following, ". The carpenters have begun work on Mrs. James Huffington's house, a handsome edifice, she proposes erecting on the lot she purchased of Mrs. I. M. Toadvine and heirs. A prettier spot than the one she has selected, in our humble opinion, save one, cannot be found in the village." It is noteworthy that in both cases the writer indicates explicitly that it is the house of Mrs. James Huffington, although her husband was still very much alive. The house was no doubt completed in 1884. Two years later on February 2, 1886 James Huffington died intestate at the age of 67, leaving a considerable burden of debt. In my view the evidence suggests that James Huffington, in failing health and recognizing that his financial situation was declining, made sure that his wife and unmarried daughters would have a home in the event of his death. As it turned out, in fact, his property had to be sold in order to cover his debts following his death. By the time of his death the original 300 acres had been reduced by one half. Eliza Huffington reported on July 12, 1886 that her husband's

personal estate was insufficient to cover her debts and that therefore she consented to the sale of his real estate. The public auction was held on Saturday, August 28, 1886 in the store of J.S.C. Allen in the village.

ironically next door to Eliza Huffington's new residence. Prior to the sale, the farm had been divided into four parcels. All four were purchased by Samuel A. Graham. However, eventually two sections were sold to James Huffington's son-in-law, Charles U. Waller, husband of his daughter, Emily Virginia. That property remained in the Waller family until 1978. The new owners razed the old James Huffington house sometime after that date.

The land which Eliza Huffington purchased and on which she had her new home built was part of a colonial land patent granted to John Christopher in 1683. It was still listed under his name in the Rent List of Somerset County in 1723. He left it to his son, also John, in his will dated 1748, indicating in his will that it was the plantation on which he then resided. Since the patent was for 95 acres, we do not know where the Christopher residence stood. A daughter of the second John Christopher (or he may have been the third) married Isaac White and they resided on the land which she inherited from her father. This land included the land purchased by Eliza Huffington. In the early 19th century the land came into the possession of the Drura family, and a small graveyard behind Eliza Huffington's house contains the graves of members of that family. We know that George Drura purchased a tract in the village from Luther Price on January 8, 1818 for which he paid \$200. According to the deed, Price had purchased the tract from Elizabeth Christopher White. The deed further states that the tract bounded John Jones land (now Passerdyke Village) and the county road leading from Adams Mill. On February 15, 1820 George Drura sold additional land in the village to Phillip Messick. According to that deed, it was on the east side of the county road leading from Adams Mill. A deed which may better refer

to this tract is dated October 9, 1821 and states that Stephen Drura purchased a tract from George A. Dashiell, part of the tract purchased previously by Ezekiel Savage from Elizabeth White "near or at Wicomico Creek trap." Stephen Drura sold part of his tract in 1822 to Mary Whittington Allen. If there had been a Drura residence on the property where the grave yard is located, it had disappeared by 1877, when a map of Trappe district shows no dwelling on the property. Eliza Huffington purchased the property on February 15, of 1883, just two months before the reference in the *Salisbury Advertiser* noted above.

Eliza Huffington resided in her new home in the village until her death on January 22, 1891. In her will she left the house and property to her two unmarried daughters, Reetta and Drucilla for the term of their natural lives. Both did eventually marry, Drucilla to a Dr. Martin and Reetta to Karl Wendt, a German immigrant. They were widowed early on and lived together in the house until Drucilla's death in 1944. Reetta continued to live there until her death in 1955. The property then passed to several cousins, all descendants of James and Eliza Huffington. On February 28, 1956 it was purchased at public auction by Jesse M. Pollitt. He and his wife Agnes M. Pollitt remodeled the house extensively. Agnes Pollitt died in 1963 and Jesse in 1979. In 1981 the Pollitt's niece, Ruth Keeller, purchased the property and lived there until her death. It is now owned by Mrs. Keeller's daughter, Shirley Spielman. The house was damaged by a fire in the summer of 2007, and it is now the hope of the Allen Historical Society to purchase and restore it as the home of our Society and its museum and archives. That plan is currently under discussion.

The Village of Allen in the 1880's

by George Shivers

Since the new home of Eliza Pollitt Huffington was being built in the year 1883 and probably became her permanent residence at the death of her husband in 1886, I thought it would be of interest to our readers to explore what was going on in the village during that time period. Fortunately for us, an Allen news column made an irregular, but frequent, appearance in the local newspaper, the *Salisbury Advertiser*. We do not know who the writer of the column was at that time, though there is some hint that by the end of the century Dr. John Long, village physician, was writing the column.

The village of Allen was booming in 1883 according to the news columns. In addition to work beginning on the Eliza Huffington house, a new house was being begun for Benjamin Franklin Messick. That house still stands on the right of Allen Road going south, two houses down from the Eliza Huffington house. Sadly, it is abandoned and in very poor condition and may well not be saved in the future. The writer of the column on September 15, 1883 states, "Allen has assumed new life and bloomed out upon the astonished and delighted vision beyond any period of its existence. I simply mean that there is more improvement being made in this place at this time than at any period of the village's existence. Mr. B.F. Messick's dwelling is being pushed forward to an early completion and promises to be the most commodious and inspiring structure in the village." In the same column the writer notes that Simeon and Levi Malone "have also caught the spirit of the age, and after having moved the old building back a short distance from the original site, have begun an addition in front that promises to contribute much to the aspect of that end of the village." The spacious Malone house still stands in excellent condition on Post Office Road and is the residence of Mrs. Lula Lee Fields.

It wasn't just architecture that our writer admired, however, for he closes that column with these words, "In conclusion, the

number of young ladies in this village, blooming and blushing into sweet womanhood must be appalling to the older girls. Their rosy, pink-tinted faces and winsome smiles illuminate every nook and corner of the village. 'Twould seem that the atmosphere was laden with the fragrance. You girls with fading teens - Well, a hint to the wise is sufficient."

Local industry was also bustling during the period. In the January 10, 1885 column the writer notes that W. W. Disharoon and Sons were about to begin work on installing a steam mill, and that the local grist mill was running constantly. In the same column it is clear that the building boom had continued. The reporter notes that work on the church has been discontinued until spring, and he continues, "Then, I hear, it will be pushed to completion. When done, it will be an ornament to our village." Further news is that Mr. M.T. Disharoon "has erected a very commodious dwelling here," and that "There have been many other improvements made during the past year." Repairs to the church resumed in June, as reported in the Allen News column on June 20. Here more details are given as to what was being done: "The church, when completed, will be a gem. It has an entirely new and modern roof. A recessed pulpit has been added. It will also have a large tower and steeple, which when completed, will be about 75 feet from tip to tip.; They also expect to add a large bell." The work was apparently completed rapidly, for in the July 25 column the reporter described a festival held to celebrate its completion:

"To begin with, we had a lovely day. The large crowd present surpasses, I suppose, the turnout on any former occasion of the sort ever held by our people, and perhaps by any people in the county. We were somewhat disappointed in our speakers; some were prevented from coming by sickness, some by the session of the Princess Anne court, and others still were disappointed in themselves in getting conveyances. Late in the afternoon,

however, Revs. J. H. Amiss and J. T. Whitley of Salisbury arrived. The audience up to this time had been entertained by vocal and instrumental music by the ladies and young gentlemen. The band also acquitted itself well, to the entertainment and delight of all present. As the day, on the arrival of the speakers, was growing old, the time for speechmaking was limited. Rev. J. H. Amiss, however, was induced to take the stand, and in a brief but interesting manner set forth the worthiness of the object which solicited their sympathy and patronage. At the close of this interesting appeal, he made an assault on the stingy young men and old widowers. He said, "If there is a young man on the ground, who does not give his sweetheart her supper, I hope she will discard him before the sun goes down; and if there is an old widower here who does not treat his lady-love to everything she wants, I hope he will have to make his own bed, do his own cooking, and pour out his own coffee for five years to come." When Mr. Amiss had finished, Rev. Mr. Whitley was invited by the pastor to make a few remarks. Mr. Whitley said he had no speech to make, but as soup was a mixture, he would give them a small dish. Among others he gave them a very amusing matrimonial ingredient, his own experience in marrying a very remarkable couple. After Mr. Whitley had served successfully his dish of soup, Rev. J.T. Routten arose amid the ringing of the dinner bell, and said, "Now you have had the soup, I invite you up to the table to get the meat and greens." And they accepted the invitation too. In a few minutes the table was crowded. A large number was fed, and well fed at that. We are under many obligations to the people of Salisbury, Princess Anne and the surrounding country for their presence and patronage. One of the most pleasing results was the large sum realized. After a neat calculation, it was found that the net proceeds footed up the handsome sum of \$203.31. The statement is authoritative."

There were other references to the active social life in Allen during this time period.

The January 10, column reports on the Christmas Day masquerade parade in which 50 or 60 persons "passed along the principal roads of our village." He goes on to say that the masqueraders were mounted on horses and mules as well as being seated in carts and wagons. The parade was led by the village coronet band. In the evening there was a "basket auction" for the benefit of the church. We can assume, I suppose, that there was food in the baskets! The following week, according to our reporter, the pastor of the church received a "pounding" at the hands of his parishioners, "in the shape of many good and substantial things to tickle the palate and replenish the larder."

Weddings were another important part of the social calendar in Allen during this period the March 21, 1885 column reports such an event as follows:

"The fact is the people of our little village have been enjoying some very rare things. On Wednesday evening last (March 11th), the M.E. Church, South, at this place was well filled to witness a scene that is always interesting to the people of our village. The fact is that it was something that does not occur here every day, 'these hard times.' Suddenly the sign is given, when the garment of silence is rent in twain by the thrilling peal of the organ, at which Rev. Mrs. Routten presided. Mr. Joseph Disharoon and Miss Clara Snelling approach the matrimonial altar. Scarcely had they reached its sacred shrine, when followed Mr. Palmer G. Snelling with his beautiful bride, Miss Mary A. Watson. They were met at the altar by Rev. J.T. Routten, where each couple was made man and wife. After the close of this interesting ceremony, a large number of guests assembled at the residence of Mr. Richard Snelling to enjoy the festivities of the reception there given. Heaven bless the happy couples."

The weather could be a problem then as now. On March 13, 1888, the writer of the

Allen column reported that "Although the snow is not very deep, this is the most disagreeable blizzard or snow storm here since the 18th of January, 1857." He described the roads as impassable, noting that "Even the school boys, who are usually ready to plunge into a snow bank, did not venture from their homes yesterday." Finally he indicates that very little farm work has been done and that "from the present outlook, the spring will be a backward one."

Also in the March 13 column was an interesting commentary on longevity in Trappe District: "The writer has been making inquiry about the longevity of some of the oldest people of Trappe District, and finds that there are 32 persons between 70 and 80 years of age, 5 between 80 and 90, and 1 between 90 and 100. Of these 24 are males and 14 females, 26 white and 6 colored, and their combined ages amount to 2,825 years, and one who is 73 has a mother still living. Who will say that Trappe District is not a healthy locality?" On that note, I will end this perusal of Allen news in the 1880's!

Due to increases in printing and postage costs, the Historical Society has raised its annual dues beginning in 2008.

Individual: \$15

Family: \$20

Patron: \$40

Sustaining: \$250

We thank all of you who have already renewed your membership for this year, and we hope that those of you who have not, will do so soon!