

THE ALLEN HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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George Shivers, Editor

In Memoriam

Alexander Price Ransone

Alexander Price Ransone passed away on August 28, 2010, at the age 86. He had been a resident of Oak Crest Village since 1995. He is survived by his wife, Marie; and six children, Suzanne Ransone and husband Michael, Dr. Ralph Ransone and wife Jeannie, Jeanette McGowan and husband Larry, Jennifer Guercio and friend David Strawderman, Robert Ransone and wife Heather, and Steve Ransone and partner Jon Skogen. He is also survived by 16 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and three sisters, Mary Ellen Seeds, Betty Sittler, and Patricia Hook.

Price graduated from Towson High School in 1942. He served three years in the Navy and graduated from Washington College in 1950. He worked for the Baltimore County Board of Education for 29 years and was a member of the American Legion. A memorial service was held at Oak Crest Village Chapel on Saturday, Sept. 4, at 1 p.m.

Although he had not lived in Allen, Mr. Ransone's roots in our village are deep. He was a descendant of the Porter family of Allen, about which more later in this edition. He had supported the Allen Historical Society through his membership for many years for which we are most appreciative. Our sincere sympathy goes out to his widow and all the members of his family.

In Memoriam

Florence Byrd Allen Cooper



We mourn the loss of Florence Byrd Allen Cooper, a founding member and generous supporter of the Allen Historical Society. Florence Byrd was a descendant of the Allen family for whom the village was named in 1882. She was born on January 14, 1922 in Jorhat Assam, India, where her parents, Walter Kendall Allen and Mary Beulah Nock Allen, were serving as Missionaries of the American Baptist Convention. Her grandfather was William F. Allen, founder of the strawberry plant and peach business for which the family was well known in the area for many years.

After her father died in India, Florence Byrd lived with her mother and sister, Gladys Martha Allen, in Burma (now Myanmar), where Mrs. Allen taught at the American School for Missionaries' Children in Taungyi.

Florence Byrd attended high school for two years at Woodstock School in Mussoorie, UP, India, then finished in the United States. She graduated from Goucher College in 1944, then taught school in Maryland for 11 years. She received her masters degree in education from the University of Maryland in 1950 and received a Ford Foundation scholarship in 1955.

In 1957 she married Levin Taylor Cooper, who died in 1995. She is survived by her sister, Dr. Gladys Allen, also a member and generous supporter of our Historical Society, and by three children, L. Franklin Cooper, Clifford P. Cooper and Mary Ellen Cooper Shupe. She is also survived by three grandchildren, Aaron Cooper, Nathan Shupe and Ellen Shupe, and by two great-grandchildren, Thomas and Peyton Cooper.

Florence Byrd was a major inspiration behind the founding of the Allen Historical Society, served as vice-president for many years, and was still a member of the board at the time of her death, although she had not been able to be active for some time due to ill health. She contributed generously to the establishment of the Passerdyke Cottage museum and archive in the village of Allen. In 2008 she became one of the first inductees into the Society's 1702 Society, established as a means of recognizing outstanding contributions to the Society and the broader community. She was also an avid genealogist who did extensive research on the branches of her family as well as the Cooper and Payne families and developed an extensive genealogical library from her research. In 1970 she authored a booklet on the history of Asbury United Methodist Church and the Village of Allen, which was revised and reprinted a decade later. Just a few weeks prior to her death the Allen Historical Society received a substantial donation to our fund for the renovation of the Huffington-Pollitt house in the village from an anonymous donor in honor of Florence Byrd. We are pleased that she was still well enough at that time to appreciate this great news.

Although she remained a lifelong Baptist and retained her membership in Allen Memorial Baptist Church, named in honor of her father, Florence Byrd regularly attended Asbury United Methodist Church in Allen and supported both churches in many ways. At Asbury she taught the Sunday School class for teenagers and often substituted for Douglas Nichols in teaching the adult class. I quote here from Melissa Bright who expressed her appreciation for Florence Byrd's teaching much more eloquently than can I. "She was a mentor and teacher who brought a generation or more of us a world view we might never have had by sharing her own experiences and perspective with us. She taught us the similarities between faiths around the world and thereby planted the seeds of tolerance. Her wisdom was available for the asking, not only to

the youthful students she taught, but always and ever to the adults we became."

The Allen Historical Society offers its heartfelt sympathy to her family in their time of grief, a grief which is shared by the entire community.

Community Calendar

Saturday, March 12, beginning at 12:00 noon-Fish and Chicken Dinner, Friendship United Methodist Church, Upper Ferry Road. Fish platter: \$10; fish sandwich: \$6; Chicken platter: \$8; chicken sandwich: \$5.

Next Historical Society Meeting-Sunday, March 13 at 3:00pm in the Great Room of Asbury United Methodist Church

Saturday, April 2 - Allen Historical Society, Second Annual Country Dinner. 5:00pm-7pm at the Allen Community Hall, Collins Wharf Rd. Tickets: Adults-\$15; Children under 12- \$8. There will also be a bake table. Call 410-749-9064 or 410-548-9839 for tickets.

Saturday, April 2 – Friendship United Methodist Church, Friends' Night Out at the Hall on Upper Ferry Road. Game night. Bring a finger food and a \$1.00 gift for gift exchange. Begins at 7:00pm.

Saturday, April 16-Asbury United Methodist Church Bazaar, at the Allen Community Hall. 9:00am - 1:00pm. Bake table, plants, white elephant items. Oyster sandwiches, chicken salad sandwiches, hotdogs, beef vegetable soup, etc.

Sunday, April 17 – Women's Day at Friendship United Methodist Church. 3:30pm. Speaker: Sheneatta Whittington of Marion, MD.

Annual Tea, sponsored by the United Methodist Women of Asbury United Methodist Church, Allen. tentatively set for Sunday, May 1. Watch for further news

July 4 - Annual Independence Day parade and celebration, sponsored by the Allen Lions Club. Parade begins at 2:00pm at Friendship United Methodist Church, Upper Ferry Rd. and ends at the Allen Community Hall, Collins Wharf Rd. Hotdogs, hamburgers, homemade ice cream for sale at Community Hall.

The Village of Allen & the Spanish-American War

On February 15, 1898 the U.S. Naval vessel *Maine* blew up and sank in Havana harbor under mysterious circumstances. There had been strong sentiment in the United States Congress for years that the United States should intervene to aid Cuban revolutionaries in their long struggle to throw off Spanish rule. President McKinley had so far resisted this pressure, but the sinking of the *Maine* was the impetus needed to push him to declare war on Spain. However, after successfully defeating the Spanish army and navy in a few months, instead of liberating Cuba, the United States occupied the remnants of the once vast Spanish empire, consisting not only of Cuba, but also Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. There were many in the United States who opposed this adventure in colonialism and empire-building on the part of our country, and interestingly, one of the earliest was the author of the following Allen News column that appeared in the *Salisbury Advertiser*. It turns out, of course, that he was also mistaken in attributing the explosion on the *Maine* to the Cubans. Following that article is a letter written by Wade T. Porter, who was born in Allen, in which he describes in some detail his enlistment during the War, although he was not shipped overseas.

Salisbury Advertiser
March 19, 1898

Messrs. Editors: If you will be kind enough to grant us sufficient space to address a few desultory remarks to the Advertiser, we shall part our hair in the middle, wax our proud mustaches, stick our pen behind our expansive ear, and proceed to relieve ourselves of this weight and pressure of our ponderous thoughts. We would have said scintillating and ponderous, but didn't feel quite sure that our metaphysical readers would agree as to the association of the two qualities. Suppose we had steered clear of the difficulty by saying scintillating and imponderable. Just think of scintillating and imponderable thoughts, while we shout, Eureka! But let us not fill allotted space with inharmonious trivialities. Other matters clamor for attention.

Naturally supposing that the great crime would be attributed to Spain and arouse the United States in arms against that country, with the recognition of the belligerency of Cuba, as one of

the contingencies, if not certainties, we advance the theory that Cuba blew up the *Maine*.

We have never believed that Spain, officially, had anything to do with the destruction of the *Maine* and crew, or any knowledge of it. Such suggestions under the circumstances, we opine, would have encountered not only opposition, but condemnation. Spain's stupidity in such a course would have been truly marvelous. What was to be gained? Fostering a spirit of neutrality in the United States by Spain, it is obvious, was a much wiser policy than enkindling an inimical and hostile spirit. [*Editor's Note: It is significant that in 1970 Admiral Rickover determined that the explosion that destroyed the *Maine* was caused by a malfunctioning!*]

And of those gentlemen who are able to buy substitutes, do not expect to smell powder, and are yet clamoring for war, we would ask, how much are you willing to contribute to the support of the widows and orphans of your *glorious war*.

And to those *conspicuous patriots* who would rejoice to see our country torn and bleeding, drained of treasure and blood, that they might have a chance to make a few dollars, we would say: There is a grander, and nobler work for man than multiplying dollars, and that the existence of a selfishness of such magnitude, in a civilized, cultured, and Christian land is one of the wonders of the 19th Century. Alas! The millennium is not yet.

Another egregious proposition runs to the effect that because of the destruction of the *Maine*, this government shall demand the independence of Cuba. Where is the logic of such propositions? What has the United States to do with the Cuban rebellion? Cuba belongs to Spain, and though we may sympathize with her in her struggles for freedom, we have no right to interfere. When Cuba says she has enough and Spain won't quit, why then . . .

The article was signed:

FAIRPLAY

[*Editor's Note: I have reason to believe that the author of the Allen News column during this period was Dr. John I.T. Long. I do not, however, have any documentation to confirm that belief.*]

Sgt. Ashby Slocumb

To the knowledge of your editor there is only one man who served in the Spanish American War buried in the Allen cemetery. His name was Ashby Slocumb and he was the husband of Caroline Huffington. Mr. Slocumb was born on March 7, 1873, most likely in Goldsboro, North Carolina, where he was living at the time of the 1880 census with his family. His father, Thomas W. Slocumb, was a railroad agent. His mother's name was Mary D. Slocumb, and he had two sisters and a brother, Harriet H., Araminta D., and Thomas W., Jr. In 1880 their ages respectively were 11, 9 and 5.

Ashby P. Slocumb served as a sergeant in the 18th Company of the U.S. Signal Corps during the Spanish American War, and it seems likely that he was wounded, since he filed for a pension in 1899 as an invalid (information from General Index of Pension Files, 1861-1934).

I have not been able to determine when he married Caroline Huffington of Allen, but by the time of the 1920 Census they were living in Baltimore in the household of his wife's mother, Caroline Hayman Huffington, widow of John Huffington, who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War and died in Allen in 1910. It appears that while they lived in Baltimore, Mr. Slocumb had a job with the railroad, following in the footsteps of his father. Eventually the family relocated to Denton, MD, and Mr. Slocumb died there on February 12, 1953.

A Letter from Wade T. Porter to Mrs Mae Gordy, April 16, 1963

The following letter is taken from the Porter genealogy cited previously.

Dear Mae,

The nicest thing happened to me on April 10, 1963. It was my 86th birthday and I received 17 cards from all over, yours among them. One has to do a lot of living to get to be 86. I don't think I wasted a single opportunity on the way. To account for all the things I have done, and all the things I failed to do would fill many pages in my biography. Of course I was away from the family from the time I went to school until I showed up again with a family. I did a lot of traveling and I held many jobs --from Printer's Devil at the Salisbury Advertiser to the time I

retired in 1945 (July 31) from a lush job with the Federal Government as Senior Accountant and Auditor with the District of Columbia Public Utilities Commission. I courted many girls and married one of them. I didn't break many hearts on the way but I had a hell of a good time.

When I finally got my birth certificate in 1961, it showed that I was born in White Haven, Maryland. My dad was the attendant of the ferry across the Wicomico River from the west side of the river to the east side. in Somerset County. Later we moved up the river several miles and farmed on one of the plantations. Our oldest brother Clinton died there of diphtheria. He was buried at Allen, Maryland Methodist Church yard. This grave has disappeared and there has been another buried in the same spot. When Edith and Mae put up a marker for our dad and mother they did not know just where the grave was. There was another brother buried in the same location-Tony Jackson Porter -- his grave is no longer locatable. There were twins and another baby that were buried there. Their graves have disappeared and someone else are (sic) buried in each grave site at this time. Who they are or were I do not know as there are no tombstones at any of the sites. Father was buried next to our mother where I remember she was buried. I was ten at the time our mother passed away, and remember distinctly where each grave is.

Edith was born on the plantation -- Handy Hall, later known as Pemberton, and still later as Parson's Home Place. The brick house is still there, but badly run down at this time. We lived there in 1878 to about 1882. We then moved to Allen, Md., where Edith and I had the measles. From the Allen place we moved to grandfather's farm on the Loretto Road. Mae was born there. Mother died there on Feb. 21, 1887 and buried in the Methodist Church Yard, Allen, Maryland. Estey was born there also --2nd marriage mother.

In 1891 we moved to Poplar Hill Farm on Quantico Creek, Maryland. This was in middle December. We went to Royal Oak school first part of January --Ned Dashiell was our teacher. From there on out I don't know who was born where. I went to Salisbury High School about that time and never did make it back to the farm after that. . . . Next the Spanish American War came along in 1898 and I enlisted. I was sent to Old Point Comfort fort and was assigned to Company F, 1st Maryland Volunteer Regiment -- Captain Charles Adams as Commander.

Company F was mostly Easton men. I being the only bookkeeper in the company was promptly detailed to take over the clerical work. Joe White was first Sergeant. We were housed in tents, wooden floors. Our uniforms were the Civil War issue: made up with woolen blue shirts and woolen britches, and brogan shoes, coarse cotton socks, a sombrero hat --gray--, 1 tin cup, 1 tin plate --double--knife and fork and spoon, all iron type. One gray woolen blanket. We slept on the floor with only the blanket. A few books or blocks of wood, was our pillow. The temperature was hot in the eighties and nineties--the woolen uniforms helped to generate more heat. If the war had lasted another week our regiment was to be taken to Puerto Rico on the transport already in Hampton Roads.

Then came September and we were moved to Middletown, PA. We slept on the ground with just one blanket, and a rock for a pillow. The nights were frosty and very cold. In November we moved to Augusta, Georgia. When we unloaded from the day coaches the rain came down in torrents. We had to march four miles to Camp Young, later renamed Camp MacKenzie. It rained the whole day through. That night we slept on the cold, wet ground in wet, soggy uniforms -- same old uniforms of blue, Civil War leftovers. Out of our \$15.60 pay we bought cots, and that was a little better. I was discharged in January, 1898. The only money we got was a railroad ticket back to Easton, MD from Atlanta, GA. Not even money for meals on the way back... Sow belly and beans, canned tomatoes, boiled potatoes and black coffee. For desserts on Sunday night we got rice pudding with raisins.

When I enlisted I weighed 115 pounds; when I was mustered out I weighed 135 pounds. I never was sick, not even a cold from all the hardships.

Editor's Note: Mr. Porter's letter goes on to describe his subsequent life, including various jobs in Salisbury, later in Georgia, Colorado, Texas, Utah and other places. Below is his obituary, published on May 25, 1969.

Wade T. Porter

Word has been received in this area of the death on May 25 of Wade T. Porter, 92, of Arvada, Colorado, and formerly of Allen. Mr. Wade died in the Veterans Administration Hospital at Cheyenne, Wyoming after a short illness.

Funeral services will be held Monday in Cheyenne and interment will be on Wednesday at 10:30am in the Arlington, VA. National Cemetery.

Mr. Porter, born at Allen, was a Spanish American War veteran. He was a Mason and held a life-membership in Wicomico Lodge No. 91, AF & AM. Mr. Porter was also a member of the Scottish Rite Club in Santa Fe, N.Mex.

His late parents were Levin A. and Elizabeth Thompson Porter. His wife, Mrs. Rose M. Ziegler Porter, died in 1949.

Surviving are a son, W.T. Porter, Jr., Cheyenne; a sister, Mrs. Mae Porter Gordy, Hebron; three half-sisters, Mrs. Estey Simms, Baltimore; Mrs. Lillian Porter Davis, Salisbury; and Mrs. Millie P. Trader, Berlin; and two half-brothers, George J. Porter, Devon, Conn. and Charles W. Porter, Philadelphia.

The Ancestry of Alexander Price Ransone

The following information regarding Porter family genealogy is taken from *Genealogy of George and Elizabeth Porter* by Wade T. Porter, 1962. Found in the Nabb Center, donated to that collection by our own Jim Trader in 1997.

According to this study the first Porter settler in this area was Hugh Porter, who wed his wife Mary on November 6, 1688. His son, also Hugh (birth date not given), married Katherine Dennis, and died in 1717.

Hugh and Katherine Dennis had a son William Porter, whose wife's name was Sarah. William Porter died in 1743. William's son Alexander Porter married Ann Beauchamp on December 5, 1759. Their son, George Porter, was born in 1762, married Elizabeth (Betsy) Disharoon (born in 1790) on March 14, 1809. Their son, George Jackson Porter, was born on February 9, 1819 and died on May 12, 1898. He married Anne Isabelle Twilley (born on September 27, 1824 - died on April 20, 1911). Their son, Alpheus E. Porter was born on April 5, 1844 and died on December 30, 1916. He married Letitia Fooks (born on February 22, 1842 - died on February 17, 1926. Their daughter, Margaret Porter, was born on October 19, 1870 and died on June 26, 1944. She married Findley F. Price on October 18, 1892. It was their daughter, Mary Letitia Price who was the mother of Alexander Price Ransone. Mary Letitia Price was born on

September 15, 1893. She married John E. B. Ransone on December 27, 1919. Their son, Alexander Price Ransone, was born on July 6, 1924 and died in August, 2010 (See obituary above.)

George Jackson Porter

Editor's Note: As noted above, George Jackson Porter was the great-great grandfather of Alexander Price Ransone. The Porter family genealogy, from which the above information was taken, contains information about George Jackson Porter, which I include here. This narrative contains material about the institution of slavery in the mid-19th century which is painful to read, yet, sadly, this too is part of the history of our community.

The immediate parents of George Jackson Porter were buried on his farm, situated on the Eden-Allen road across the branch stream on the east side, and on the north side of the Eden-Allen Somerset County Road. Between the stream and the Porter farm was owned by the Elijah and Sarah Chatham family of about ten acres, more or less. The Porter farm was bounded on the east by the George Furniss farm; on the west by the Mathias Williams farm; and on the south, across the county road, by the Orlando P. Jones farm. All in Somerset County, Maryland. It contained about 100 acres.

There are no tombstones or markers, but from memory, my dad, Levin Andrew Porter, told me that the two sunken places in the burial lot immediately west of the barn, were his grandparents, George and Elizabeth Porter's graves, and George Jackson Porter's parents. I was five or six years old at the time. My father tenanted the farm. In 1958 I visited the farm in company with my nephew, Paul W. Emory, and saw where the graves were, but the ground had been farmed over and there was no sign of there ever having been any graves. The original dwelling and barn were still there on the farm and it is interesting to point out that this house was put together with wooden pegs when it was constructed. The house and barn are still in good repair. *(Editor's Note: I feel fairly certain that the farm in question is the one that I remember from childhood as being owned by Mr. Parran Jones, also a Porter descendant. Mr. Jones had a dairy farm and supplied milk in the glass bottles typical of that time to many in the Allen area, as I recall. The house and barn are now*

long since gone and there is a housing subdivision on the land.) After George died in 1898 the farm went to his wife, Anne Isabelle Twilley Porter. Before her death the farm was sold to John Jones, Allen, Maryland.

George Jackson Porter lived on his farm before he and Anne Isabelle Twilley were married in 1841. She lived at Rewastico Creek Mill on a farm and her people were considered well-to-do. When she and George were married her parents gave her a Negro girl for a servant; of which I will tell more later on in this narrative.

George and Ann were married at her home May 19, 1841. The license was issued on May 18, 1841. (Daniel Davis performed the ceremony.) He went for her on horseback and he took her to his place, she riding behind. The Upper Ferry was in existence and they had to cross the Wicomico River in a long oared scow. The horse became frightened and went overboard. George led the animal at the rear of the barge and the horse swam the rest of the way and walked out on the ramp on the east side of the river. The horse being wet, Anne and the Negro girl had to walk until the animal dried out. Then she got back on the horse and rode the rest of the way to the farm, George leading the critter. It was four miles. The Negro slave brought up the rear.

Later George saw that the time was coming when the slaves would be set free, which was done by the War (1861-1865); so unbeknownst to Anne Isabelle, he ups and sells the Negro for \$1800 and buys a farm. This was several years before the Civil War period. The record can be checked at the Somerset County Court House, Princess Anne, Maryland. Anne Messick Desmond gave me this information.

George's and Anne's daughter, who was my Aunt Lillie, told me the story of the slave girl after Grandmother Anne had passed on. Anne fussed at George up to the very last . . . never quite forgave grandfather George for his trespass on her property.

When the children began to arrive, they had to have a larger house and farm, so they moved to the farm at Loretto Station by the N.Y.P. and N.R.R. Later George took over the Alexander Adams farm (Adams died 1769) that had gravitated to James Dashiell and later to Judge Charles B. Lore, Wilmington, Delaware, and was the tenant for 33 years. He retired in 1895. This farm is located on the south side of Wicomico

Creek that flowed from Upper Trappe, now known as Allen. (*Editor's Note: This farm was later purchased by Dr. Edward Tull and then more recently by his adoptive daughter, Mrs. Edna Tull Muir, who died in 2010. The 18th century brick mansion built by William Adams was razed many years ago.*)

There's still time to renew your membership for 2011!

Annual Dues

Individual: \$15.00

Family: \$20.00

Patron: \$40.00

Sustaining Member: \$250.00