

THE ALLEN HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 31, Allen, MD 21810

Web Address: allenhistoricalsociety.org

VOLUME 19, NO. 1 March, 2013

George Shivers, Editor

Community Calendar

Saturday, March 23 - Spring Bazaar, Asbury United Methodist Church at the Allen Community Hall, Collins Wharf Road, 9:00am - 2:00pm

Saturday, April 6 - Allen Historical Society breakfast, 7:00am-10:00am, \$7 adults; \$4 children 6-12, free under 12. Blueberry pancakes, scrambled eggs, country sausage, scrapple, toast, fruit, juice and coffee.

Saturday, April 13 - Gather at the Allen Community Hall at 9:00am for community roadside clean-up.

Thursday, July 4 - Allen Lions Club annual Independence Day celebration. Parade begins at 2:00pm. Hot dogs, hamburgers, soft drinks and homemade ice cream follows at the Allen Community Hall.

At the Nabb Research Center Salisbury University

Wednesday, March 13, 7:00pm at the Nabb Gallery, "Transatlantic Origins of Early Delmarva Settlers," a lecture by Vaughn Baker

The Allen Historical Society welcomes new members. Visit our website at allenhistoricalsociety.org. Dues are collected annually in February.

Individual Membership: \$15

Family Membership: \$20

Patron: \$40

Sustaining Membership: \$250

In Memoriam: Dr. Gladys Allen



Dr. Gladys M. Allen, 89, died at home in Salisbury on November 6, 2012. She was born in Jorhat, Assam, India, where her parents, Walter Kendall and Beulah Nock Allen, were missionaries for the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Her father died in India in 1925 and Gladys came to the United States with her mother and sister, Florence-Byrd Allen Cooper. Her sister died in 2011.

Gladys started school at the Campus Elementary School of the Normal School in Salisbury, now Salisbury University. When she was eight years old, her mother accepted a position with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society to teach the elementary children in what was then Burma, at the American School for Missionary Children in Taunggyi, Burma. In October 1931, with her mother and sister, she returned to the Orient. She attended the school where her mother taught for four years. She and her sister attended high school at Woodstock School in Landour, Mussoorie, in India, for two years. In 1938, she returned to America where she completed high school and graduated in 1940 from Lackey High School in Indian Head,

Maryland. She completed the pre-med course in University of Maryland, College Park in 1943, in the war time accelerated program, and graduated from the University of Maryland Medical School in Baltimore in 1947. The following year she was an intern at the hospital of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. From 1948 to 1952, she was a resident specializing in obstetrics and gynecology at the associated Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia. In early 1953, she returned to the land of her birth as a medical missionary for the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. For five years she worked at the mission hospital in Gauhati in Assam, India, where at times she was the only doctor. In 1959, Gladys established a private practice in obstetrics and gynecology in Salisbury, Maryland which she continued until 1974 when she became a public health officer in Wicomico County. In 1976, she became the chief public health officer in Somerset County. She continued this position until 1986 when she retired. She had been a member of Quota Club since 1959 and a member of Allen Memorial Baptist Church for most of her life, teaching Sunday School classes and working on many committees. Her medical memberships include the Wicomico County Medical Society, Medical and Chirurgical Society of Maryland, and Fellow American College of Obstetrician and Gynecologists.

Dr. Allen was a member of our Historical Society since its founding and was inducted into the 1702 Honorary Society in October, 2008. She contributed generously to our work over the years, including establishing the museum and library at Passerdyke Cottage. She was a descendant of Mary Whittington Allen, our village's first school teacher.

A funeral service was held at Allen Memorial Baptist Church (named for her family) on Friday, November 16, 2012 at 11:00 am.

In Memoriam: Edward Sumstine



Edward M. Sumstine, 72, of Salisbury died Monday, Dec. 31, 2012, at PRMC in Salisbury. Born in Washington, D.C., he was the son of the late John Edward and Ruth Lee Rabbitt Sumstine.

He was a U.S Army veteran. He worked for Dresser Industries in Salisbury for 18 years, but retired from Icelandic Corp. in Cambridge in 2005 after working for them for 25 years. Past president of Tri-Town Jaycees, he was past governor for Salisbury Moose Lodge 654 and held the Pilgrim Degree of Merit. Mr. Sumstine was also a member of the Red Men's Lodge 149, the Allen Historical Society and the American Legion Princess Anne Post 94.

He is survived by his loving wife, Betty Marie Carey Sumstine; two sons, Edward Willis Sumstine and his wife, Marie, of Cottage Grove, Minn., and James Franklin Sumstine and his wife, Lisa, of Milton; grandchildren, Caleah Sumstine McMillan, Karl Joseph Sumstine, Kathryn Rachel Sumstine and Charlotte Spencer Sumstine; and a sister, Joanle Farrar and her husband, Bryan; and several nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents he was preceded in death by his two sisters, Ruth Marie Troughton and Nancy Lee Shockey, and a brother, James William Sumstine.

A funeral service was held Saturday, Jan. 12, at 10 a.m. at Holloway Funeral Home in Salisbury. Interment took place at Allen

Methodist Church in Allen at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday.

In Memoriam: Lynn Leigh Huffman

Lynn Leigh Huffman of Springfield, VA, and formerly of Allen, died at home on January 20th at the age of 95. He was born in McLean, VA on June 1st, 1917. He attended McLean High School and later joined the army, serving on Okinawa among other places. After the war, he worked for the federal government for 32 yearw as an electrical engineering division chief.

Mr. Huffman was a 79 year Life Member of the McLean Volunteer Fire Department and, while living in Allen, was on the Board of Directors of the Allen Volunteer Fire Co. He was also a member of the Allen Lions Club and of the Allen Historical Society.

He loved to travel and particularly loved fishing. He became an avid photographer and took pictures of everything, but especially of his family. His family was Mr. Huffman's number one priority. He and his wife Betty (Mary Elizabeth Moran) spent quite a few years in Allen after retirement, but eventually his children and grandchildren lured him back to Virginia.

Still he liked to come back to the Shore, to Allen and to Ocean City, and loved to spend time with the extended family and his many friends. On these visits he often hosted wonderful crab feasts. He was always busy and among the first to lend a helping hand wherever needed. His quiet capability made him a steady rock in many lives.

A highlight of Mr. Huffman's later years was the recognition he received on his 90th birthday, when the flag over the U.S. Capitol was flown in his honor.

He was preceded in death by his wife and by their son Bobby. He is survived by son John H. Huffman and daughter Melissa Stolz, by his sister Gladys Dulaney, and by his grandchildren Mary Beth Gros, Dawn M.

Nelson, Rebecca L. Nawroth, and J. Robbie Stolz; and by his great-grandchildren, Amber Gallerano and Timothy Nelson.

A funeral service was held at Allen Asbury United Methodist Church on January 25, 2013. Interment was in the church cemetery.

On behalf of the Society I would like to express our condolences to member Geraldine Hayward on the death of her mother, Mrs. Elaine Mable Hudson McCray (January 7, 1931-November 28, 2012).

Post Office Appointments in the Village of Whayland & at Collins Wharf

I published the history of the Allen Post Office in vol 13, no. 1 of this newsletter in March of 2007. Recently while perusing Ancestry.com my wife Jeanette found the listing of post office appointments (from the National Archives). I found it interesting to note that, in addition to appointments in Brereton/Upper Trappe/Allen, dating back to 1849, there were appointments at two neighboring communities which have since disappeared from the map.

Lamartine T. Collins was appointed to serve at the Collins Wharf Post Office on May 16, 1888. That was the only reference I found to that post office. Since Collins Wharf was an important steamboat stop, that may explain the existence of a post office there, at least for a time.

Appointments were also made in the late 19th century at the village of Whayland, which apparently was at the Upper Ferry crossing. James M. Whayland was appointed on December 27, 1887 and apparently served until January 15, 1889, when Peter Bounds was appointed. A month later William A. Whayland was appointed on February 18, 1889. Apparently the naming of villages to honor the postmaster was not limited to Allen!

Humor in the Allen News: 1900-1901

Editor's Note: What follows are brief excerpts from the Allen News columns found in the *Salisbury Advertiser* in 1900 and 1901. The author of these columns shows a definite bent to humorous anecdote. Although the author's name is not given in any of the columns, evidence found in the content of some of the columns suggest that he was Dr. John I.T. Long, who resided in Allen and practiced medicine here for several decades, ending in 1910, when he moved to Fruitland.

"One of our learned townsmen in a dissertation on weights and measures of the ancients comes to the conclusion that Adam's height was 128 feet 9 inches and that of Eve 118 feet 9 1/2 inches. That fraction of an inch is exquisite. There is nothing like minuteness in the particulars of a story. The children of our first parents must have looked like young Bunker Hill monuments."

"Anybody who supposed that locking a girl in a back room will prevent her from knowing what love means might as well undertake to keep strawberries from blushing in June by whispering in their ears about the snow we had last February."

"Our village wag calls veal "unfinished beef." This is pretty good, but why not extend the vocabulary? Suppose we term lamb 'incipient mutton' and denominate pig 'premonitory pork.'" (April 28, 1900)

"Prosperity has at last struck the village of Allen. Mr. P.A. Malone is painting his residence and Johnnie Murray has built two chicken coops. Wonderful indeed how things will 'move' under a Republican administration." (May 12, 1900)

"Hoboes and mosquitos have made their appearance in Allen, and are giving our townsmen some trouble. The 'weary willies' are begging for bread and the mosquitoes are on the hunt for blood." (May 19, 1900)

"There is a 'fresh' young man in our village who, it is said, heats his shaving water every morning by the fire of his own genius." (May 26, 1900)

"In this neighborhood the white potatoes are so large that our farmers are painting them green and selling them for watermelons. They won't bring anything as potatoes. They are of the 'lyre' variety." (June 30, 1900)

"One of our smart alecks remarked the other day that the weather wasn't warm enough for him yet. We would advise him to 'go below' where he belongs." (August 11, 1900)

"Another dance Friday evening (5th). We have no Lent in Allen as most of our people are Methodists. One of our friends, who, by the way, is a Methodist, remarked the other day that he didn't believe in 'that required you to be good 40 days in the year.' Another friend that happened to be in the crowd replied that 'it was better to be good 40 days in the year than to be ornery as the dickens from year end to year end.' The Methodists are still lying in a semi-comatose state."

"William, the pet goat belonging to Mr. Trey Vickers, died suddenly last Sunday morning of indigestion, aged 30 years. William - or Billy as his intimate friends call him - ate a rather hearty supper on Saturday night and it is supposed that this had something to do with his sudden demise. His supper consisted of the following dainty dishes: Seven links of chain, four galvanized nails, two tomato cans, an old hat, one half a box of Paris green, one hame strap and a gum boot. If say one thinks such a meal as this won't give him that tired feeling, let him try it some night. Of course this does not apply to a politician. He can eat and drink enough to mortify a goat." (April 6, 1901)

"Our friend and neighbor, Mr. Van Gunby, has the "epizootic" this week. We can hear him over a half a mile away. He let go a sneeze in George Phillips' store the other night that put out all the lights, broke three window panes, and jarred about a bushel of plaster off the wall. He is a regular walking

earthquake and is dangerous when in a closed room." (Dec. 14, 1901)

Politics in the Village of Allen in the Early 20th Century

Editor's Note: The following statements are extracted from the Allen News columns in the Salisbury Advertiser and in the Salisbury Courier in 1900, 1901, 1906 & 1907. Any opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor of this newsletter and most certainly not those of the Allen Historical Society, which by its charter is pledged to be completely apolitical! Once again, as in the previous column, the author is presumed to be Dr. John I.T. Long.

"To show that McKinley prosperity struck the farmers here this year, in the neck, we will name a few who did not clear ten dollars an acre on strawberries. Among them being Messrs. William Cathell, John Whayland, C.C. Vickers, Allen Phoebus and Elisha Dennis. Mr. Simms was "lucky" enough to lose \$16.00 on his crop. As to potatoes this year, they have barely paid for the barrels they were shipped in, fertilizer bills not included. Prosperity indeed!" (*Salisbury Advertiser*, July 7, 1900)

"The Democratic Club of Allen is in first class working order now and expects to do some first class work between now and the 6th day of November. Democrats are falling over each other in order to have their names enrolled as members of this, the first Democratic Club ever organized in Trappe district. They all seem very anxious to do something for the Democratic party this fall, and intend that Trappe district shall take her old place this year as the banner district of the county. Here is the official family of the Club: President, Roscoe Jones; First Vice-President, O.P. Jones; Second Vice-President, P.A. Malone; Secretary, Raymond Allen; Treasurer, J.Walter Huffington; Sergeant at Arms, Wm. S. Williams; The Club meets every Thursday evening at 7:00 o'clock."

"The Republicans here are vigorously whistling in regard to this district, but it is

known that they are doing it largely for the reason that actuated the traditional boy as he wandered through the grave yard after dark. Whistle on, boys, it will help to stave off that lonely feeling." (Sept. 1, 1900)

"Practically speaking, a more unnecessary, senseless war than that which is being prosecuted in the Philippines was never waged. We shall lose if we win. There is a name for individuals who play this kind of game, and the name is quite as applicable to nations that play it. The folly is becoming intolerable, and as they are possessed of reason they will terminate it by shriving McKinley and electing Bryan."

"We would like to call the colored voters' attention to the fact that Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Republican candidate for vice president, referred to the negro troops that fought at Santiago as "smoked yankees" and that he practically charged them with cowardice. We would like to call their attention to another fact which Col. Roosevelt did not mention, that the colored cavalry at Santiago saved Col. Roosevelt's command from a deadly flank attack in which it would have fared disastrously. When Col. Roosevelt made those charges, however, he was not a candidate for vice president." (Sept. 8, 1900)

"We wish that every Democrat and Anti-Imperialist Republican would get together in this district and wipe the McKinleyites off the face of the earth politically. Turn out, Democrats, and help us do that. The club meets every Friday evening at 7:00 o'clock." (Sept. 29, 1900)

"Some of our Republican friends remarked after the passing of the State Census Bill, that a new census was an unnecessary expense, the Federal count was correct and so on. We all admit that it will be pretty expensive, but who made it so? The Republican party, and great is the pity that the Republican party of Maryland cannot be made to "father" the bill. Oh, yes, the Federal census was taken in an "up to date" manner, especially in St. Mary's

County where only two enumerators and one prominent attorney have been arrested. It is certainly wonderful, when you come to think of it, how the Census officials at Washington were found out that the enumeration in that section of St. Mary's had been "padded," as only 520 names were placed on one enumerator's list that didn't belong there, not quite one half of this number being colonial gentlemen, every one of whom died a short time before the Capital was removed from St. Mary's City to Annapolis. The Republican party of Maryland should feel proud of the whole affair."(March 30, 1901)

"Allen people are very much pleased with the Republican county ticket that was made out at Salisbury last Tuesday and predict for it a good majority in old Trappe District in the coming election. While it is known that every Republican will vote for this ticket from top to bottom, it is evident from current reports that a few Democrats will give the ticket a complimentary vote." (*Salisbury Courier*, Sept. 7, 1907)

February 17, 1906

"Mr. Editor, some folks might wonder what kind and how large a place Allen is and to give our readers some idea, I will attempt to describe it: We have one church, a parsonage, a large Sunday School, two week-day schools, four stores, a post office with twice-a-day mail, two R.F.D. routings running through, a lodge room, one doctor, wheelwright and blacksmith shops, water mill with grinder, crusher and sheller for corn, canning factory, two nurseries, two steam saw mills in sight of the village and about fifty-three families composing a population of about one hundred and sixty persons, and out of that bunch you can only find about fifteen Republicans, and to show how law-abiding we are, there is no officer of any kind nearer than five miles." (*Salisbury Courier*)

Henetta Harris
born c. 1810

by George Shivers

I don't know very much about Henetta Harris, but I have reason to believe that I owe her a great debt of gratitude. In fact, had it not been for her it is possible that I would not be here to write this piece. I must add, however, that much of what follows is based on supposition and perhaps educated guessing, largely based on an oral history that has come down in my family.

This begins with a story that came down in my family through my grandmother, Emma Huffington Phillips. She was born on November 3, 1871 to Jesse Huffington (1830-1910) and his wife Hester Ellen Parker (1842-1903). The Huffington farm was located along what is now Collins Wharf Road, very close to the farm where I grew up. According to the story, my grandmother, as a toddler, got a little too close to the hearth and the hem of her long skirt caught fire. Fortunately there was an African American servant in the household at the time, and she acted quickly to douse the flames before any harm was done. Sadly by the time the story reached me that wonderful woman's name had been lost to our history. In searching the Federal Census data for 1880, however, I found that there were two African American servants in my great-grandparents household. Henetta Harris was one of them, and in 1880 she was 70 years old, at least as reported on the census. The second was Charles H. Smith, age 15. It is the former, however, who is important in the context of the story I inherited.

Of course, I do not know for a fact that it was she who saved my grandmother, since I expect that that event would have occurred several years before 1880, perhaps about 1873 or 1874, when my grandmother would have been two or three years old.

I wish that I knew more about this lady to whom I probably owe so much. I don't know for example how long or for sure why she was in the household of my great grandparents. She was not listed there in the

Federal Census of 1870. In that census there is, however, a Hetty Harris, age 60, living in the Hungry Neck district of Somerset County. In the same household are Adam, age 40 and Horrace, age 34, probably her children. I do not believe that this is the same person, although the age corresponds, in part because of the discrepancy in the given name, but also because according to the story I heard from my mother and aunt, the woman who saved my grandmother had been a slave in the Huffington household. This seems quite possible, since, to my dismay, I know that my Huffington

ancestors were slaveholders, and slavery was not abolished in Maryland until 1864, just seven years before my grandmother was born. To research this a bit further I examined the 1860 Federal Census Slave Schedule for Jonathan Huffington, Jesse's father. He owned 26 slaves in that year, 19 males, ranging in age from 4 to 60, and 7 females, ranging in age from 1 to 55. If Henetta Harris was indeed 70 years old in 1880, then neither of the female slaves listed in 1860 corresponds exactly to her age. Two, however, are very close, one aged 52 and a second aged 55. Since the ages given in federal census documents are frequently far from exact, it is at least possible that one of these women was Hanetta Harris. Sadly, since slaves were considered property, no names are given in the census record.

What happened to Hanetta Harris after 1880? She disappears from any official records I have found after that date. I can surmise that she remained in the household of my great-grandparents until her death, since my Cousin Helen Porter inherited from her mother, Ella Huffington, my great-aunt, a small wooden trunk purported to have belonged to the servant who saved my grandmother from the flames. At Cousin Helen's death, that trunk passed to my sister, Emma, fitting, I think, since she bears our grandmother's name. This is further evidence that the Hetty Harris listed in the 1870 census in Hungry Neck was not Hanetta Harris, since the former appears to have had children who might have inherited her property.

As I noted at the beginning of this article, I have based much of this story from an oral history that has come down in my family and to what can best be called "educated" guesswork. The only documented evidence of the association of Hanetta Harris and the family of my grandmother, Emma Huffington, is the 1880 census which places her in that household. In any case I am grateful to her or to the forever nameless woman who saved my grandmother's life.

Reviving the Siloam Campground in the 1950s

Camp meetings began to be held on a plot of land near the church and village of Siloam in 1894. The church itself (Siloam Methodist Episcopal Church) had been established in 1874 and was rebuilt in 1894. Camp meetings were a regular part of summer life in the Siloam-Allen area until 1946, when the last meeting was held.



Siloam Campground with Pavilion in background where services were held. "Tents" to the right

For a decade the property was abandoned to nature and soon grew up in trees and underbrush. The small, clapboard, open-front "tents" were moved away or fell into ruin. By the mid-1950s only one remained.

It was at that point that a group of devoted members and friends of Siloam church joined forces with the idea of creating a park and a church hall on the property. The late Rosalie Fields wrote in a brief history of the Siloam Church, "It was during the ministry of the

Reverend Fisher that the dream to build a Church Hall on the old Camp Ground began to develop into reality. Everyone from the community gathered on the camp ground site with picnic lunches. Bringing also rakes, axes, trucks, and other implements and equipment, and with a combination of many hours of labor, determination, and fellowship, they cleared the land of trash and underbrush - making way for the building."



Folks Gathered for Clean Up: 1.Wm. Smith; 2. Marion Abbott; 3. Ella Bounds Smith; 4. Hattie Renshaw Abbott; 5. Agnes Peterman White; 6. Austin Banks; 7. Purnell D. White; 8. Parker Jenkins; 9. Genova Banks Jenkins; 10. Ray Hare; 11. Austin Widdowson; 12. Dirk Widdoson; 13. Bruce Widdowson; 14. Joyce White Widdowson Webster; 15. Earl Wilson; 16. Mary Belle Bounds Campbell Hager; 17. Eleanor Rae Denson Cook Forse; 18. Lawrence Denson; 19. Lula Bounds Denson; 20. Hilda Malone Bounds; 21. Beulah Hare



Samson Gale



David White



Beulah Hare led the efforts to clean up the old camp ground



Lunch time in front of the last remaining tent

Many happy events were held at the Siloam Community Hall and the camp ground park during the four decades between the mid-1950s and the 1990s, when Siloam Church closed. Subsequently the camp ground site and community hall were sold, and the hall was converted into a private residence.

Store of Wonders: Remembering the Peninsula Farm Market in Allen

by George Shivers

As a child growing up in Allen, one of my favorite places was the Peninsula Farm

Market, owned by David and Mary Lee Kolb. The store had been established by Mary Lee's father, Jesse M. Pollitt in 1924 and he operated it for a number of years in conjunction with an auction block on the property, where the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture reported that more string beans had been bought and sold than anywhere else in the world!

When I first remember the store it was being managed by Raleigh Cathell, who had rented it from Mr. Jesse. Then in 1950 the Kolbs purchased the store. At different times my older brother Jack and my mother Lillian worked there part-time. One of my great pleasures in life as a child was perusing the comic book rack. I would often sit down on a soda pop crate, as I remember, to read a comic or two, and I think my mother actually bought me a few of them! My favorites were Donald Duck and Superman, and I didn't care for Mickey Mouse at all for a long time, although I did later become a fan of the Mickey Mouse Club, especially of Annette Funicello!

The candy case was another favorite spot in the store. I liked the little wax figures that were full of some kool-aid-like liquid and also the candy cigarettes - and this from a man who has never smoked a cigarette in my life! Well, I take that back, I remember once as a teenager when some of us (who shall forever remain nameless!) found a cigarette butt outside the community hall and hid behind the shrubbery to try it out. I don't remember who had matches, although they were certainly readily accessible in the kitchen of the Hall. As I recall, I took one puff, choked and that was my one and only experience with a real cigarette! Other favorites at the store were Tasti Pies and Tasticake chocolate cupcakes. Abuse of the latter may explain why I can no longer consume chocolate at all without fear of a migraine! Two of my favorite soft drinks were Truade and Grapette. I discovered a couple years ago that some bottling company is still distributing Grapette through

Walmart, but the new version didn't live up to my childhood memory.

In the fall of 1966 I began graduate school at the University of Delaware. As it turned out either I was not ready for graduate education or Delaware was a poor choice. I suspect it was a combination of both. At any rate, I withdrew very early in the first semester. Then I faced the question of what was I going to do with myself for the rest of the year? I fully intended to try grad school again the next fall, but at a different university. At some point during that year Douglas Nichols helped me get a job in the plant at Wayne Pump (I don't think it was Dresser Industries yet!) It was very kind of Douglas, but I was even more miserable there than I had been at the University of Delaware. I'm probably the most mechanically challenged person anyone could ever imagine. My task was about as simple (and for me mind-numbing) as you can get - drilling holes in steel washers eight hours every day, five days a week. I don't remember how many weeks I lasted. I'm sure it was no where near as long as I remember it. Amazingly I wasn't fired, but quit I did. The point of all this is that it brought me to what might be called the second chapter of my experience at Peninsula Farm Market, for Mr. David Kolb offered me a job for the remainder of that year.

Back then I certainly needed the money, but in retrospect, as I recall all the fun I had at the store (along with some pretty hard work, I might add), I think I would have done it for free! I sure hope Miss Mary Lee doesn't ask to be reimbursed though! Perhaps store-keeping was in my genes. My grandfather, George M. Phillips owned a general store in the center of the village beginning in 1900 and continuing until his death in 1933. The store and adjoining residence was built on the lot previously occupied by the store of Joseph S.C. Allen and his brother William F. Allen. After my grandfather's death, my mother assumed management of the store until 1946, when she and my grandmother decided it was time to quit. My mother, Lillian, never lost the knack for salesmanship, however, as she

sold Avon products from the 1950s until her death in 1983. Her sister Polly (Pauline Best) always asked why she didn't sell something that made more money - like real estate!

Anyway, I found myself working at Kolb's store and more importantly enjoying it. I don't think I've ever laughed so much either before or since those months I worked there. Mr. David was truly a barrel of laughs, and I can still hear his hearty laughter in my mind, and the dynamic of kidding between him and Miss Mary Lee was wonderful. Others who were working part-time during that period were Miss Leila Hitch and Miss Mildred Nichols. We all got along splendidly. One thing that I remember about Miss Mildred was that she was deathly afraid of snakes. One day she went into the back room for something. Suddenly there was an ear-splitting shriek from the nether regions of the store, and I felt a rush of wind and a blurred vision pass through the store at near the speed of light! It was Miss Mildred and I don't think she stopped until she reached the old post office at the head of Pollitt Road! When she finally made her way back, we learned that there was a big black snake curled up in one of the boxes!

I wish I could remember all the funny stories that Mr. David told during the months I was there. Miss Mary Lee's father, Mr. Jesse, was also a master story-teller and he was often in the store during the time I was working there. Unfortunately, I don't have the rich memory for stories that they did. Mr. David and Miss Mary Lee's son, David Kolb, Jr., better known as Butch, inherited his grandfather's and father's story-telling talent, and I'm told that before his untimely death he wrote down some of that Allen folklore. I hope that someday those stories will see the light of day once more! Another master story teller who sometime came to sit in the store and chat was Mr. Dick Bounds. He did tell a good story, but you had to have a lot of patience to listen all the way through; a fast talker Mr. Dick was not!

Sometimes I worked in the evening and so was in the store at supper time. Back then there was a little kitchen in the rear of the store and Miss Mary Lee often prepared meals there. I especially remember her chili. That was something that my mother didn't really make, and so it was ambrosia for me, and I've not had any better in all the years since!

I think that another important detail about the store is that it was, along with the village post office, without any doubt, the most integrated place in the village. Almost everyone, both African Americans and Whites, stopped there each week, whether to purchase a convenience item or to do the week's major shopping. When Miss Lula Nichols retired as postmaster in 1967, Miss Mary Lee was appointed to replace her and eventually the store building was expanded to include the post office (which remains there.)

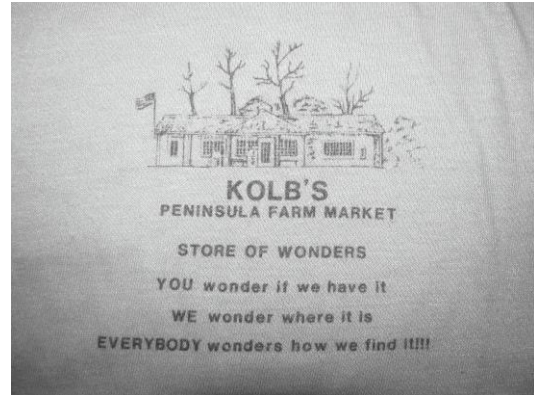
Of course, not everything was fun and games. As I said, there was a lot of hard work. I think by far the hardest was when Mr. David asked me to paint the interior of the store! This was no small undertaking, and I was and am anything but a professional painter. I usually wind up with as much on myself as I do on whatever I'm painting, but I guess I did all right, as no complaint reached my ears at any rate. As I recall, that project went on for many weeks. Everything had to be removed from the shelves, and they had to be washed before they could be painted. The work needed to be done before the summer season, which was the busiest time when all the migrant farm workers were back for the seasonal work.

The migrant laborers would come in trucks and buses in the early morning before going to work, often at lunchtime, and then again in the evening after the day's labor had ended. When I worked there, the size of the store had been doubled in order to install a soda fountain. When the crowds descended, we needed someone at the main cash register, at the meat counter and at the soda fountain. Since the store also had gasoline pumps,

things became even more hectic if someone wanted gasoline when the crowd of workers was there. I often worked at the soda fountain, mostly dipping ice cream and making milk shakes. I truly hated the milkshake blender, because it invariably gave me a shock when I turned it on! It so happened that the big glass jar of pickled pigs feet also sat on the counter at the soda fountain. These were a favorite of the workers, so I would have to stick my hands into the jar and dig out one of those disgusting (to me) feet! Back then there were no vinyl gloves required for food service in a country store, but I did try to wash my hands frequently. Usually immediately after I dug out a pig's foot, someone would order a milk shake, so a quick wash of the sticky hand and on I went for shock treatment!

Peninsula Farm Market sold almost everything, including, in addition to the usual groceries, hardware, beer and wine, work shoes and clothing, hunting and fishing supplies, and then there were the cases of what might unkindly be called "dust catchers," meaning gift items, and even some jewelry as I remember it.

Now, as to the title of this piece, "Store of Wonders". Some years back Butch (I assume) designed a T-shirt, which was available for sale in the store! The insignia on the front of the shirt is typical of Butch's creativity and sense of humor. It is pictured below. The back of the shirt has an even larger drawing of the store (and post office, with the words "Fish & Wildlife Conversation Headquarters" encircling it.



I'm truly sorry that with Butch's illness and death, there was no choice but to close the business. I have no doubt that much of the merchandise is still there, perhaps waiting for some enterprising soul to resurrect the business. In the meantime, I and many more Allenites are left with some very precious memories of the good times spent there.
