

Oldtimers Recall Allendale's Past

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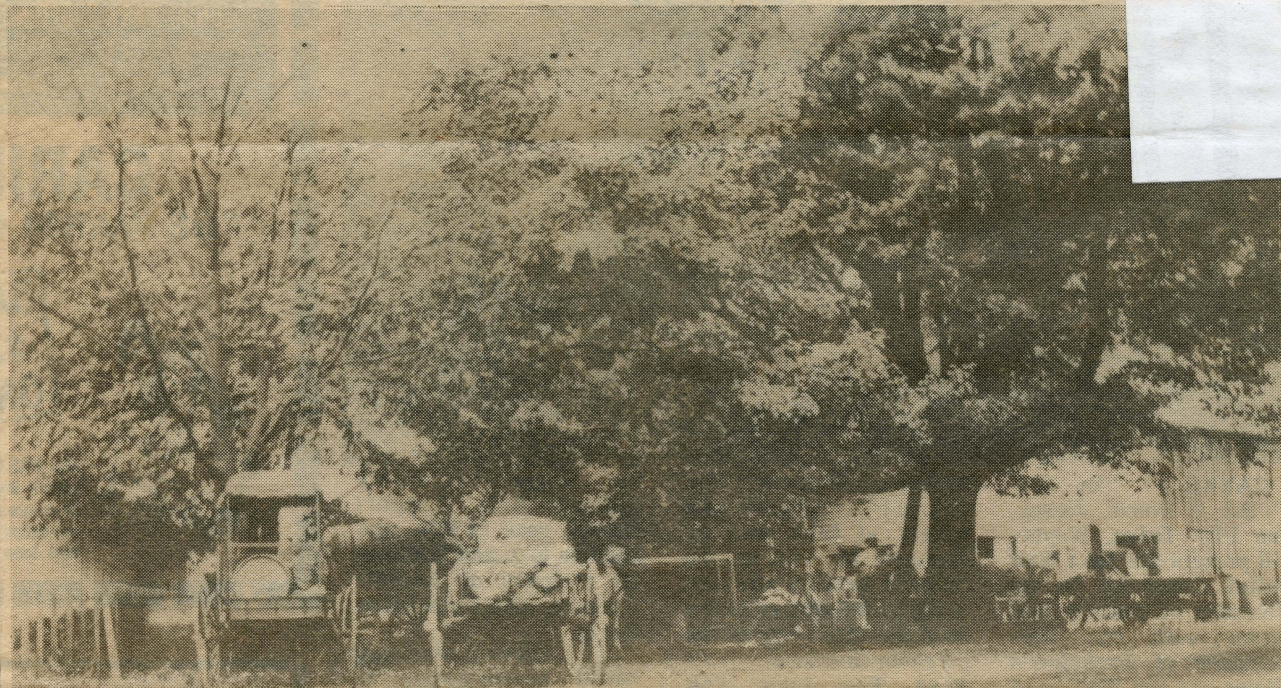


Photo Courtesy of Russel Mallinson.

Taken in 1905, this picture shows farmers waiting to get cider made at the Mallinson cider mill.

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by Terry McGovern

ALLENDALE - The Allendale Historical Society sponsored a special program last week during which four elderly residents recalled the simpler time of their shared youth.

William Buhlman, May Selfridge, Russel Mallinson, and a returning resident whose appearance was unscheduled, Laura Barret Haviland, all reminisced about life in Allendale right after the turn of the century.

During the informal program, the four speakers conversed with their audience, many of whom also shared memories of those earlier days. Often the group would wonder aloud about whatever had happened to a character in a particular anecdote, only to find he or she sitting in the third row.

The Historical Society and some of its members also exhibited a fine collection of irreplaceable photographs and news-clippings. These provided a backdrop and inspiration for the memories of everyone involved.

Mr. Mallinson told of the cider mill his family owned and ran when he had been just a "little codger". The up-to-date mill produced 300 to 400 gallons a day, at a cent and a half per gallon. Farmers always got the cider from their own apples; thus, in a system often fairer than that of today, those with rotten apples received rotten cider.

Mrs. Haviland recalled how children would rush from the one-room schoolhouse to get a drink of that same cider. A single metal cup, one shared by all, would be taken from its nail and held under the sluice from which the fresh cider poured. Often the children stayed to watch the wheel-right and shoeing operations the Mallinsons' also owned.

Mr. Mallinson lived next door, at the site where Van Houten Realty now stands. The nine-room house was built in 1870, from solid chestnut. Its center, the kitchen, had

eight doors leading from it, all about two inches thick.

The Mallinson family got their water from an open well. Mr. Mallinson's father, rather than worrying about bacteria counts, kept a live trout in the well to kill bugs. His wife lived to be ninety-seven. His son Russel is living in the last quarter of a century which is younger than he.

Mrs. Haviland's family owned two livery stables, the older of which was situated where the Exxon Central Garage is now. She and Mrs. Selfridge remembered being tomboys, and sneaking over the fence behind the school to pick chestnuts illegally. The town had once been dense with chestnut, butternut, and hickory trees. Mrs. Selfridge recently visited what she believes to be the last hickory tree in the borough.

Allendale had also once been the strawberry center of the area. Ten or twelve boxcars a day would leave the train station, located on land donated by Mr. Mallinson's father. Mr. Buhlman recalled picking strawberries at the site of what is now "the Waldorf Astoria". An appreciative audience soon realized Mr. Buhlman was referring to the Allendale Nursing Home.

Most of the memories had to do with area swimming holes, roller-skating on the newly-paved Franklin Turnpike, and the dances at nearby grange halls. The four speakers remembered the first moving pictures, shown in tents or at the fire house. They remembered stealing rides by jumping on the runners of a passing sleigh, until the driver realized and chased them off with his horsewhip.

And everyone recalled sleighriding this time of year. Mr. Mallinson especially remembered that long before the construction of Route 17, eight or ten kids would get onto a toboggan on a hill in Allendale, and then push off on a ride deep into the Saddle River valley. A single ride would last the night.