

The Railroad Station District

Part VI



The present railroad station is actually the Borough's third depot. Two previous buildings were located on the northwest side of the tracks.

Marsha Stoltz

ALLENDALE — The Borough's second county-designated architectural district is comprised of 12 residences and commercial buildings that "represent stages in the development of Allendale and the area immediately south of the Borough's first and second railroad stations" from 1860 to 1920. Anchored by the present railroad station complex, this district also includes commercial and residential structures along Park Avenue and First Street.

The Paterson and Ramapo Railroad completed its track from Paterson to Suffern, N. Y., in 1848 and trains began to run through Allendale by the end of that year. The first railroad station — no longer existing — was built southeast of the present station in 1850, on a site donated by J. Henry Mallinson. The station was named after the man who surveyed the route, Colonel Joseph Warner Allen.

In 1852, the New York and Lake Erie Railroad gained control of this line and renamed it the Erie Railroad, with 12 stops each day in Allendale. Those stops were discontinued from 1857-59, during which time the station fell in disrepair. Henry Mallinson repaired the station and local demand encouraged service to resume.

The gravel-walled station was replaced in 1870 by a board and batten depot on the same site. It was constructed in "derivative Stick style using a design and materials similar to other Erie mainline and Bergen County train stations built in the late 19th century."

In 1902 the station was moved to the

west side of the tracks near Park Avenue. Later — perhaps in the 1930s — the station walls were covered with stucco. Materials otherwise remain original. Grade-level crossings on West Orchard Street, West Crescent and West Allendale avenues were eliminated by a Federal Works Agency project in 1939. The railroad tracks divide the town in two. Until these grade crossings were eliminated, town officials feared they could be simultaneously blocked by a stopped train and hamper the ability of fire-fighting equipment to reach emergency areas. As a result, the fire department maintained equipment on both sides of the tracks until the under-

enclosed ramps in vernacular Mediterranean stucco style.

Subdivision of lots along First Street and Park Avenue began about 1870. The homes that survive from that period "reflect late 19th and early 20th century demand for housing within convenience distance of the railroad depot," especially those along Park Avenue.

Among the earliest built were circa-1861 homes at 18 and 30 First St., and the M.J. Brown home at 84 Park Ave. The Downingsque-style cottage at 30 First St. was later owned by Smith Roswell, the town's first station agent in charge of shipping local produce and the operator of grocery stores near the railroad

buildings; the house's design is not."

No history is listed for any of the homes other than the Smith Roswell association. Mr. Roswell may have located at least one of his stores in what became R.V. Ackerman's Coal and Oil Company at One Park Ave. in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and is now Van Der Wall Heating and Avenue Printing.

The current Allendale Lumber and Millwork Co. at 55 Park Ave. houses the early 20th-century buildings of the Richard J. Christopher coal and lumber business. Mr. Christopher first ran the business with his brother, J.M. Christopher, under the name "Christopher Brothers," and later with his son, J. George, under the title "R.J. Christopher and Son." Lumber was brought by train from forests in New Jersey, Rockland and Orange counties in New York as well as Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Mr. Christopher served as president of the former First National Bank of Allendale from 1925 until his death in 1957.

Most notable of the six accessory buildings in this complex is the wood coal hopper which looms over the nearby railroad tracks. It is the only such structure left in the county and is especially important from the county's viewpoint because it still retains the coal-sorting machinery within its upper stories.

The town's original firehouse was built across from the railroad station in 1913 and was rebuilt on the same site after a fire in the 1960s. It is not mentioned in the district.

Although the district is one of only two designated for Allendale, the survey notes that "none of the district's buildings is outstanding architecturally."

"However," the survey concludes, "the variously-dated vernacular styles show both changing and eclectic tastes, and features from more than one style appear on some buildings."

(Next: Crescent Avenue)

County List		Girl Scout List*	
Date Built	Address	Date Built	Address
1861	18 First St	1870	18 First St
1861	30 First St	1899	33 First St
1876	34 First St		
1870	1 Park Ave		
1900	55 Park Ave		
1876	62 Park Ave		
1890	74 Park Ave		
1876	81 Park Ave		
1876	83 Park Ave		
1861	84 Park Ave		
		1887	146 Park Ave
		1870	185 Park Ave
		1899	194 Park Ave
		1840	271 Park Ave
1900	Erie Plaza Station		



Erie Plaza Station

track passes were constructed.

Erie Plaza, which now runs in front of the station, was probably paved after the crossings were altered. The station was used at some point as the post office, although the survey does not say when. Although the station "is now in good condition and well located for possible adaptive use," the survey notes that its lack of definitive history and loss of decorative detail "results in the station comparing less favorably with others of its type and age in the state."

Built in conjunction with the undertrack vehicle passages were two stair shelters and two

station.

Circa-1870 tri-gabled-ell homes were constructed at 34 First St. and 84 Park Ave. Interest in the Homestead-style home in the same period is reflected in houses at 62 and 74 Park Ave. The Downingsque influence from the same period can be seen in houses at 81 Park Ave. as well as the M.J. Brown house. With the exception of 83 Park Ave., "all have alterations to their original exterior fabrics."

The county chose not to include the adjacent Allendale Hotel in its survey because of alterations to the 1870 structure. But it did include a mid-20th century home at 65 Park Ave. "to give geographic unity to the district." The survey says about this "newcomer" that "the building materials of this house are compatible with those used in the other district

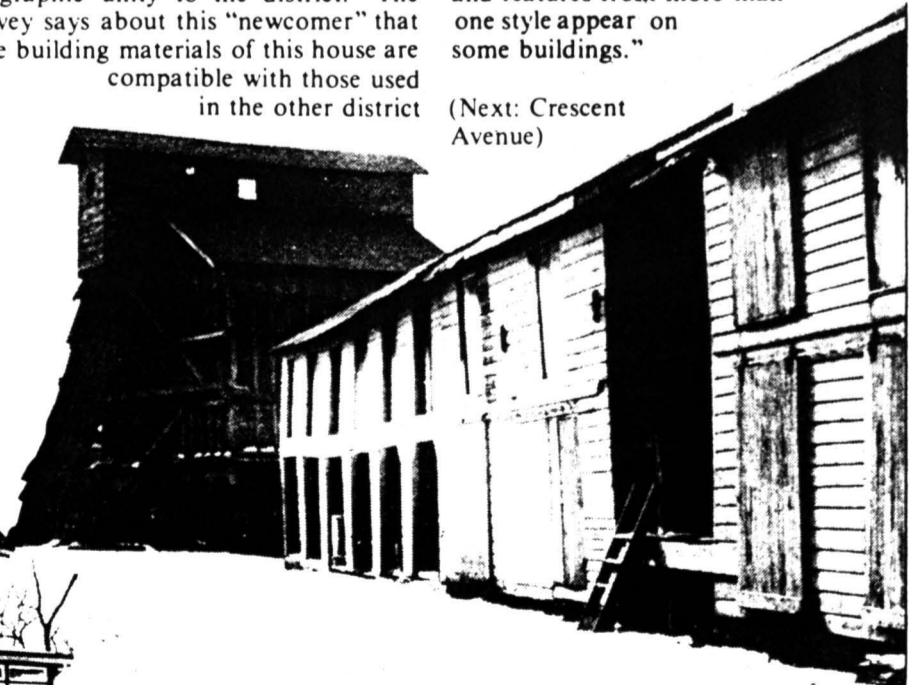


The Allendale Lumber and Millwork Co., left, has a long history in town, dating back to the early 1900s when it was run by the Christopher Family.



Smith Roswell, the town's first railroad station agent, lived in this home, right, at 30 First St. around 1876. He also ran grocery stores near the train tracks.

photos by Marsha Stoltz



Many old buildings in the district are still standing, including the county's only extant wood coal hopper with its mechanical works still in place inside the structure.