

Allendale: Looking Back

Advertising Supplement

Allendale history: a brief introduction

Within a few years after the discovery of the Hudson River by Hendrick Hudson in 1609, the Dutch erected a fort on the southern end of Manhattan Island. By 1623 this fortification was surrounded by a thriving village known as New Amsterdam, under the governorship of Peter Minuit. The Dutch included not only Manhattan in their province, but also western Long Island (Brooklyn), Staten Island and the Jersey Shore. While still under Dutch control, the colony was divided into four counties of which was Bergen. Some historians claim that Bergen County derived its name from the city of Bergen, in Norway, but this is probably incorrect, for Bergen is a Dutch word meaning "the hills."

In 1837 Passaic County was set off from Bergen, and in 1840 Hudson was carved from Bergen County. As early as 1693 the county had been subdivided into townships for governmental purposes. From that time forward, as the necessity arose, new townships were formed. Allendale's locality was included in Franklin township as is mentioned in documents as early as 1772. By legislative action, Franklin Township was officially established in 1798. It was named in honor of Govern William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin, and last royal governor of New Jersey. Hohokus Township was set off from Franklin Township in 1849. In 1885 Orvil Township was created by taking part of Hohokus and Washington townships. It was named after Orvil Victor, a resident of Saddle River.

In compliance with a petition signed by many citizens and by act of the Legislature, the Borough of Allendale came into existence on Nov. 10, 1894, being set off from Orvil Township.

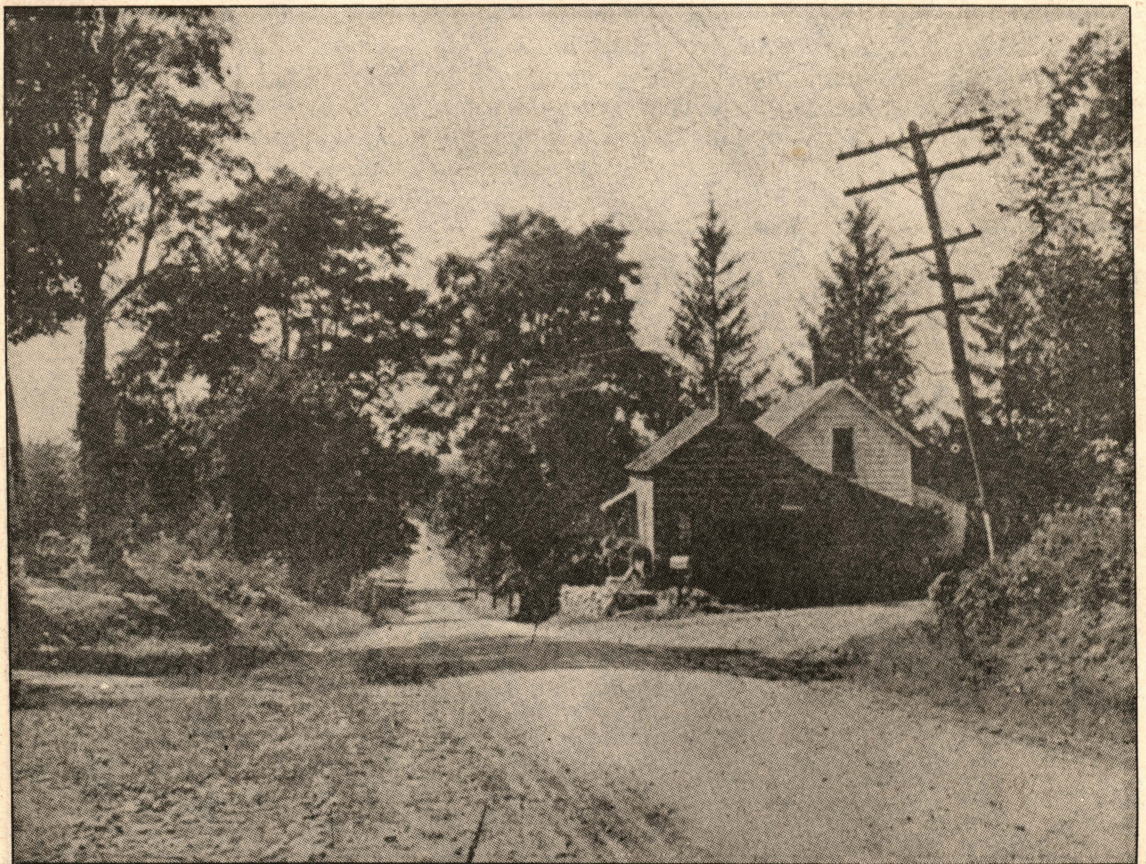
With the successful termination of the Revolution the entire country was intensely interested in the framing of the Constitution and organization of the government. As soon as these important matters had been attended to there was a national cry for better roads, and New Jersey was no excep-

tion. From 1800 to 1810 many turnpikes were chartered as toll roads: Franklin Turnpike was chartered in 1806. It ran from New Prospect (now Waldwick) to Ramapough (now Mahwah). During the earlier years there was a rough wood road running there Allendale but it was not until the chartering of the highway that a regular road was built. Through Allendale it did not follow the exact route of the pike as it is now known. The old Toll Gate house stood at the corner of the Turnpike and West Crescent Avenue until about 1932.

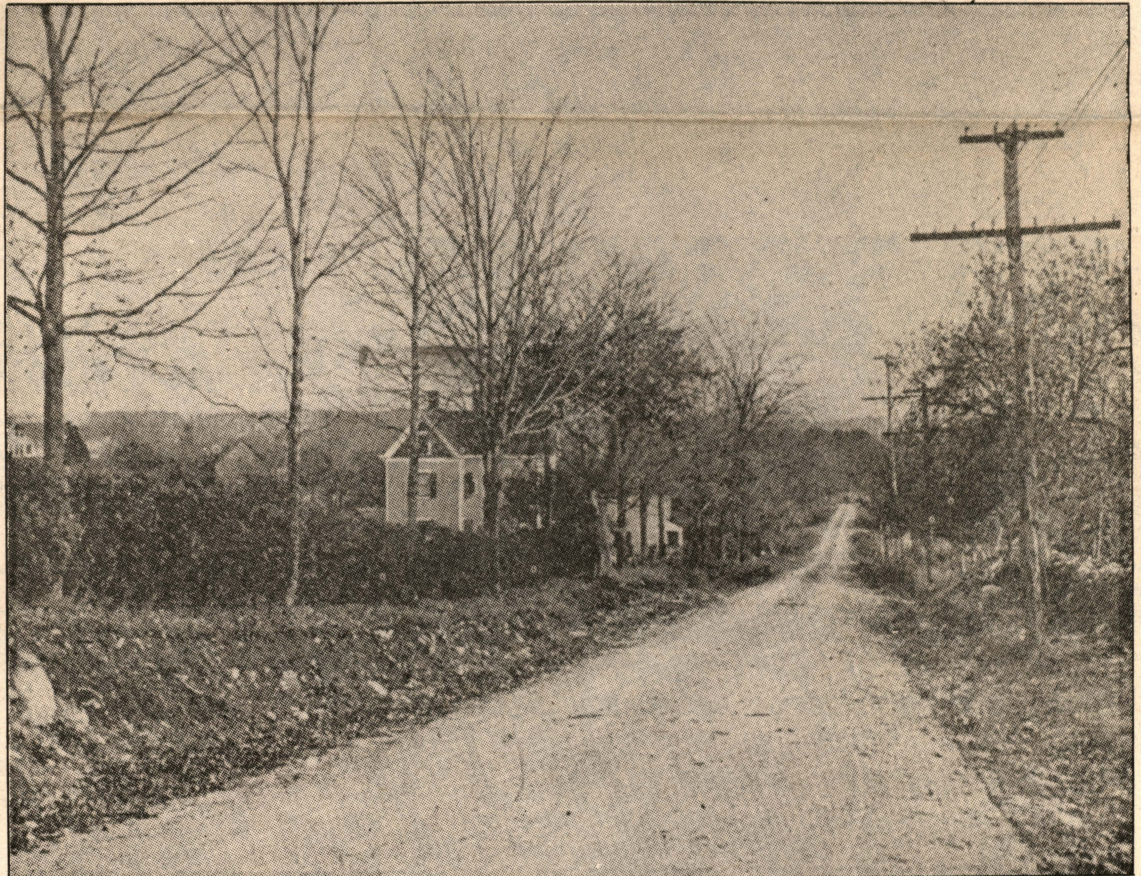
The most important event in the development of Allendale was the building of the railroad. The Erie ran south from upper New York state to Suffern and east to Piermont on the Hudson River. The Paterson and Long Dock Railroad ran from Paterson to Jersey City. The Paterson and Ramapo Railroad was organized at this period to connect the two systems, and surveys were made about 1846 under the engineering direction of Joseph Warner Allen, after whom Allendale was named. Colonel Allen was the father of William F. Allen, who directed the adoption of Standard Time in 1883. While working in town, the Colonel stayed with a John Ackerman family, who resided on Franklin Turnpike.

The town of Allendale is indebted to John T. Cunningham for much of the detailed information about the strawberry growing years in and around Allendale. Soon after 1800 laborers around Hackensack picked wild strawberries and took them to New York and sold them on the downtown streets. Soon the Bergen farmers, atuned to the demand of the market, selected the best of the plants, cross-bred and fertilized, and by 1840 had developed bigger and redder varieties. For more than 50 years the northern part of Bergen County and Passaic County went strawberry wild each June.

During the Civil War most of the men from Allendale served with the 22nd N.J. Infantry, under the leadership of Col. Cornelius Fornett. After the war Allendale became the home of many prominent business



Old toll Gate House



Hillside Avenue

and professional men. Many descendents of these pioneers still live in Allendale.

For many years in the late 1800's, Allendale was a noted summer colony. Nearly every farmhouse along Saddle River Road (now East Allendale Avenue) and Franklin Turnpike had a "Boarders" shingle tacked on its gatepost, and at the

height of the season as many as 300 vacationers patronized the town.

The borough was an ideal vacation spot, offering hiking, fishing, tennis and swimming. Largely responsible for the summer trade was the Village Improvement Association, Allendale's official civic body prior to its incorporation. Through its

efforts in 1890 the first sidewalks and the first stretch of macadamized road were laid on West Allendale Avenue. About the same time 13 oil lamps were installed along the street.

The above information was furnished from "A History of Allendale" courtesy of Lee Memorial Library.