

End Allendale Chapter As Old Toll House Falls



Finis was written today to another chapter in West Bergen history when workmen tore down the old Toll Gate House on Franklin Turnpike, Allendale. The building has stood, as shown above, for more than a century and a quarter.

Built in 1891 to Take Fees From Drivers on Dusty Franklin Turnpike, Toll House Is Razed Today

Last resoundings of a wrecker's bar and cleaver this morning spelled the final chapter of the life of one of North-west Bergen's landmarks, the old Toll Gate House, Franklin Turnpike, Allendale, forlorn survivor of the day of the stage coach and post road. Declared a danger to public life and property by Fire Chief George Megnin, the old building was ordered torn down by Building Inspector Raymond P. Arlt through the owners, the estate of the late Ellen Storms.

SERVED 85 YEARS

What a story the old structure could tell of the life that has passed before it up and down the old turnpike—a story even the oldest residents of Allendale can only reconstruct in part as memories fade and persons who could remember the day when tolls were collected have long since passed.

The frame building was erected in 1891 when Franklin Turnpike was constructed and opened as a toll road. The house was at the toll gate and was used for that purpose for eighty-five years until shortly after the com-

one of the elephants bridged the building.

The structure has taken its last breath. Accurate facts of who the toll-takers were are no longer available. To even the oldest Allendale resident the story of toll gate house is "ancient history." But to all, the hill up the turnpike to Ramsey will continue to be known as Toll Gate Hill and the ruins of the old brick foundation will perpetuate its memory.

The turnpike, incidentally, was named after Governor Franklin, last of the colonial governors of the Jerseys and a son of Benjamin Franklin.

In those early days stage coaches and tumbling ox-drawn produce wagons made their way up and down the pike, which then wound through Allendale center several hundred feet west of the present highway of the same name. Horses, fresh from the change made at the old inn and livery kept by Bampers in Waldwick, had a long, steady pull from Allendale up the hill to where they could rest while the driver exchanged words with the gate-house keeper.

But in those days, just as today, folk were wont to evade paying just dues, and before long traffic started to sneak around through the old Paterson road, now Crescent Avenue, and enter the turnpike a few feet above the gate house. To stop this, the gate was for a time moved several thousand feet north to an old building that now stands as an antique shop.

MOVED THREE TIMES

Three times the old gate house was moved as the highway broadened and Crescent Avenue became a County highway.

Back in '63, long after the highway was made a free public thoroughfare, Charles K. Christopher purchased the building and grounds from John Van Horn. Christopher there raised a family, including a daughter, Kate, born in the house, who lives on Malinson Street, Allendale. The place was later sold to Garrett Ahlens, who eventually sold for \$500 the point of land and building to Mrs. Ellen Storms.

Mrs. Storms built an addition to the place and for years made it a part-time residence. At one time she conducted a small grocery and confectionery. Later she prided herself on her collection of bric-a-brac. An ardent collector, she would accumulate a host of old articles and then, tiring of them, offer them for sale, and begin again a new collection.

During her time the place was also occupied by her granddaughter and husband, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Koster, who for a time lived in the back portion until they purchased their present property nearby from the original strip.

For a long stretch the place was occupied by many families who came and went as most any venal estate becomes. Many large offers to purchase the property for business purposes had to be refused by Mrs. Storms because the local zoning ordinance placed it in a residential zone. Upon her death the property went to the five grand-children and is being held in estate.

FIRE TAKES TOLL

Time wore on the vacant structure and soon pranks of passing youths took many of the widow pieces. That shortly before midnight, June 19, 1933, the rear of the place was set afire. Allendale firemen saved the structure, and upon collection of the insurance money the heirs resolved to use it to repair the building and to put a family in at almost no rent to keep the place from being vacant.

At that time an effort was also made by Dr. C. H. von Glahn, pastor of the Archer Memorial M. E. Church, and by the local paper, to have a local organization formed to purchase the property and preserve it as an Allendale historical museum. These efforts failed.

Then Sept. 5 another midnight fire, declared incendiary, put the place in so sad a state that it was beyond repair. Again on election night, November, Allendale police heard of plans of youths to fire the structure and thwarted them. The fire chief's recommendation for removal was made later that month.

One reminiscence recalled by Mrs. Koster was of a man who several years ago stopped in passing, looked at the old place, and laughing declared, "Why, this is the house the elephant pushed off its foundation. It seems a circus was traveling on the turnpike and through some accident,