

Early Allendale Had Plenty Of Strawberries For Market

Four To Six Boxcars A Day Left The Borough During June

By ROBERT COMSTOCK

Allendale — Life in the Allendale of 60 years ago was aptly described as the berries.

LEADING BOROUGH

Strawberries, four to six boxcars a day leaving the Erie Railroad station throughout the month of June, made the young Borough one of the leading strawberry centers in the East.

Every farmhouse in the Borough had an extra room or an adjoining cottage for an itinerant berry picker or his family. The going rate for berry picking was 1 cent a basket plus living accommodations.

After the close of the berry season in July, the "Boarders" shingles would go out on the gate posts of the farmhouses along Franklin Turnpike and Saddle River Road and the town was ready to take its place as a summer resort for New Yorkers until the extra rooms were needed to house apple pickers in the fall.

The Village Improvement Association headed by Albert L. Zabriskie promoted Allendale's summer offerings — hiking, fishing, swimming and tennis — and drew as many as 300 vacationists at the height of the season, almost doubling the Borough's year round population of 450.

END OF ERA

Allendale's status as an agricultural center was ended around 1900 by the very railroad which had originally nurtured it. Faster service and reduced rates enabled the New York markets to buy more profitably from produce centers further north.

It had been the Village Improvement Association which was primarily responsible for Allendale's first stretch of macadamized road and sidewalk in 1890 as well as the installation of 13 oil streetlamps in the business center about the same time.

The V. I. A. also sparked the community spirit which was largely responsible for the incorporation of the Borough in 1894, following a bitter controversy over the location of a proposed school in Orvil Township, of which Allendale was then a part.

When the Township Committee chose Waldwick as the site of the school, the campaign became an open revolt terminating in the incorporation of Allendale, Ramsey, Saddle River Borough, and Upper Saddle River on November 10, 1894. This move left Waldwick the only remaining community in Orvil Township.

Legend has it that the first white resident of what is now Allendale was a Frenchman whose identity is unknown. A box of coins dating from the Seventeenth Century was dug up by a later resident in 1860. First known residents were John Lauback, an Englishman and Powles Van Houtep, a Dutchman, who purchased

most of the present borough from the Lenni Lenape Indians in 1740. There was no government of any kind until 1798, when the area was included in Franklin Township. As the area was broken up into smaller municipalities the land now occupied by Allendale became part of Ho-Ho-Kus Township in 1848 and Orvil Township in 1885.

The Paterson and Ramapo Railroad was surveyed in 1847 and built through in 1850 and the tiny community took its name from the man in charge of this project, Colonel William C. Allen.

One of the first acts of the new Borough after its incorporation was the erection of a new school at Franklin Turnpike and West Allendale Avenue in 1895 to replace the 1-room school built in 1824 at Chestnut Street and the turnpike.

The establishment of a public library in 1900 marked the start of an era of development which continued sporadically until the depression of 1930. That same year a contract was closed with the Rockland Electric Company to erect and maintain a pole line in the streets to replace the oil lamps.

Conservative taxpayers managed to overrule a growing demand for a public water supply until a series of disastrous fires culminating in the Christmas blaze of 1909 which completely destroyed two buildings, and brought a full realization of the Borough's water needs.

A water system was installed and water pumped from Ramsey by the Mount Prospect Water Company starting in 1914 and the Borough built its own water supply plant in 1930. Public Service gas lines were installed in 1925 after a 10-year legal battle to have service extended into northwest Bergen.

First law enforcement agency in the Borough came with the appointment of an unpaid police committee in 1914, succeeded by a paid marshal in 1919. More men have been added through the years.

The present Public School was built on Brookside Avenue in 1929. Allendale has not radically changed since the start of the depression but a belated era of post-war building seems to be getting underway today. The Board of Education is currently conducting a survey to determine the most desirable way of adding more classroom space. And several developers have sizable subdivisions either under construction or on the drawing boards.

The Master Plan adopted by the Borough is designed to assure that Allendale remains basically rural in character and devoted almost exclusively to residential purposes.



ARCHER HALL in 1894. Until 1963, when the church's new 12 room education building was completed, all Sunday school classes were held here.

ALLENDALE 1964 -- Archer Memorial Methodist Church was dedicated in 1876 where it now stands, at Franklin Tpke. and Allendale Ave. The brown and white "church at the crossroads" is therefore as old as the world's first telephone, the Dewey Decimal System and the first catcher's mask used in baseball.

The Centennial Year, 1876 was also the year Central Park was completed, the first free kindergarten established in New York City, Colorado became America's thirty-eighth state and Rutherford B. Hayes was elected President.

Frank W. Brower, general chairman of Archer's \$103,000 fund raising drive, pointed out these historic parallels to emphasize how many years of faithful service the old church has rendered.

"The least we can do now," said Mr. Brower, "is to fix it up and put it back into respectable working condition, so it can continue to serve the community."

Part of the money raised in the mid-September drive will go toward renovating the sanctuary's flooring, wainscoting and plaster, repainting the walls and providing new pews. Plans also call for the modernization of Archer Hall, the church's fellowship hall. Both buildings were donated by O.H.P. Archer, a Summer resident of Allendale and an executive of the New York and Erie Railroad.

"Back in those early days, the congregation got off easy," Mr. Brower stated, "because there was no need for fund raising drives. When the church was completed at a cost of \$18,000-- incidentally, we have a bill dated Aug. 23, 1875, showing that work-- the announcement of the church's completion reads:

"There will be no money

solicited on this occasion to pay off the debt, as there is none. The whole of these expenses have been met by a gentleman after whose parents the church is named, and who calls it a Free Will Memorial to the Lord'