

RALPH ALLEN (abt. 1575-)

"The name of Allen (or Alan, Allyn, Alleyn, as it is variously spelled) goes back into history almost to the beginning of record. There are fifty-five coats of arms of separate and distinct Allen families in England alone. Their descendants may be counted in the thousands.

"Alen of Alewy, Bard of Britain, had for ancestors a long line of British Kings, born about the year 1 A.D. Alana, Chieftain, slain on the field of Camlon, A.D. 542. Alan, a saint, born at Brittany, France, went from France to become a member of the College of Illyd in Glamorganshire. He had three sons who were members of the same College and of the Welsh Church.

"Alan, a Sargeant of the Army of William the Conqueror, was rewarded for this service and became, next to the King, the wealthiest man in all England. He had four brothers, one of whom located in Scotland, marrying an heiress. Their grandson Alan married Eva, daughter of Lord Tippernair, and became Steward of Scotland. They head the Stewart and Allen lines in Scotland and their descendants founded New Scotland, Albany County, N.Y. . . . Thomas Allen was Sheriff of London Town in 1414. Sir John Allen was Mayor of London 1524. Edward Allen, (1566-1626) actor and friend of William Shakespeare founded Dalwick College, 1619.

"This work, however, begins with one Ralph Allen, born probably in Thurcaster, Leicestershire, England; buried in a churchyard in Windsor, Connecticut, where he was known as 'Olde Mister Allen.' He came to America, leaving England Mar. 20, 1635, with his two sons, one of whom, at least, had crossed the Atlantic previously. Others of his family came to America at a later date. Their descendants have been recorded here with as much accuracy as possible. Many are not included due to lack of records. Informative sources include private papers and letters, as well as public records, official documents, histories and biographies." ¹

In the first page of the above genealogical record is a single and brief statement about Ralph: "No record of parents, marriage, or occupation. He came to America from Thurcaster, Leicestershire, England in 1635 with his sons, George and Samuel." ² (map 1 #13)

George remained in Massachusetts and settled in Sandwich. If Ralph chose to move on to Windsor in the Connecticut River Valley where his death and burial is mentioned, it may be assumed that he could have followed his son, Samuel to that place at a later time.

The writings of Frederick Freeman gives assurance that Ralph and his son George were among the first arrivals to the area that became Sandwich, Massachusetts, a settlement founded at the upper side of western Cape Cod, just off the coast of Cape Cod Bay and a few miles above Buzzard Bay. (see map #2) At this time the earliest settlements of Cape Cod, Sandwich, Barnstable and Yarmouth, became vested with the rights of towns under the jurisdiction of the Plymouth Colony. These towns apparently were identified, as a whole, with the Pilgrim interests. Some of the settlers of Sandwich were of the Rev. Scrooby congregation and were less in the interest of "the merchant adventurers." ³ The so-called 'merchant adventurers' were a group of immigrants who had purchased a grant from the English Crown to explore favorable areas to be settled - grants that claimed large plots to be subdivided for settlements.

In the settlement of Sandwich, Ralph and his son, George, took an active part in apportioning the lands to the planters. It is stated that the ones so appointed "must consider well the estate and quality of every person, as also the quality and condition of the meadows, and to appoint to every man such a portion as shall be esteemed equal and suitable to his necessity and ability and that in the division of the said lands these rules and orders shall be observed. . ." 4

These rules provided for further allotments of land elsewhere to be added "as there shall be cause and necessity and as conditions shall require . . . That all such portions of land shall be to every person to hold to them, their heirs and assignees forever . . . That sixpence an acre be allowed for the surveying, measuring, and laying forth of said land to be paid by the planter to the one who had been assigned to the apportioning." 5

These settlers felt no obligation to England. The legislative body of the Plymouth Colony wrote its own drafts which granted settlements the right to start a new town and the settlers bargained with the natives, paying whatever satisfied the chief to make the transaction legal and, hopefully, binding. In most cases the English settlers were anxious to keep on friendly terms with their Indian neighbors.

Early in the annals of Sandwich, special legislation was enacted by the Plymouth Colony Court at Plymouth upon the town of Sandwich, due to religious dissensions that were exhibited to an unusual extent. The dissenters were in most cases persons of dignity and of noble character.

"They had a high respect for divine ordinances of the church, but also for religious freedom and unfettered thought. They were supporters of their pastor, but not often partial to the inspiration and gifts claimed by the clergy who not only preached their sermons on Sunday but dictated the word of God in matters of civil law and punishments for offenders. Plymouth's influence was at this time paramount and the Cape towns were bound to submit to the Colony's severe rules of social subjection." 6

Among many others who fell into disfavor for speaking out, were our Allen ancestors of Sandwich, Mass.

"Ralph Allen, Sen. and Richard Kerby, of Sandwich, were bound over 'to answer for deriding and vilifying speeches of and concerning God's word and ordinances' - twenty pounds each, with two sureties each in the sum of ten pounds. Presentments were also made of Ralph Allen, Sen. and wife, George Allen and wife, William Allen and several others of Sandwich, 'for not frequenting the public worship of God, contrary to the order made June 6 of the present year.'

"For the following year, 1652, Mr. Prince of Eastham assisted the Plymouth court in performing its ordinary amount of business in regulating the morals and correcting the municipal deficiencies of the several Colony towns. The Cape received its proper share of these attentions, Sandwich being presented 'for not having a full supply of powder, and fined;' Ralph Allen, Sen. and Richard Kerby, of Sandwich, presented 'for speaking against God's word and ordinances,' sentenced to pay five pounds each or whipped . .' Such offences as was rendered to Mr. Samuel Mayo, 'for having a child by his wife five weeks and four days before the ordinary time of women after marriage. Besides all this, 'rumors' having reached the General Court, ' of a scandal that is laid on the government, publicly delivered, and after inquiry the offender had to 'vindicate the colony.' " 7

"These and similar charges must, in justice to the accused, be received with much allowance for the constriction put upon the least dissent from the dogmas of the day or the prophesyings of bigotry and self-conceit." 8

When the Quaker religion made its entrance in New England, the persecutions inflicted upon them, over many years, were harsh and merciless. The 'Colony control' was extreme in its enactment and exacting in its fulfilment and Sandwich had more than its share of stress and suffering as a result. The amazing thing, as seen from a distance, is that the desired quelling was not really accomplished. They may have succeeded to some extent in their effort to put down open riots or rebellion but the spirit of searching for the truth is innate in man, and not to be dictated by the rulers.

Mr. W. E. Woodward in his book "A New American History," 1937, reviewed the early Puritan situation with some insight into what must have been the yearnings of the colonists whose hearts were bent toward those freedoms their souls had hungered. The restrictive rules of the Puritan leaders were inflicted out of fear. Anything contrary to the Puritan thought was a threat to God's will. The restrictions and rules of conduct were thought necessary to avoid Satan's victory. Mr. Woodward had this to say about the conditions that existed at the period of the 1600s.

"The Puritan's fierce attitude toward other religious beliefs was so extraordinary that it resembles a mania to the modern mind - a collective mania in which all sense was lost. Consider the Quakers . . . They abhorred luxury, vanity, idleness and sensuality. So did the Puritans. Nevertheless, whenever Quakers appeared in the Massachusetts Bay Colony they were persecuted with a most astounding venom. In 1660 several of them were hanged just for being Quakers; among them was one woman. On other occasions they were whipped and driven out into the woods.

"The Puritans would not tolerate any dissent - not even the least flicker of dissent - from the Puritan belief. It goes without saying that everything in print was scanned and rigorously censored. But the censorship went much farther. Eavesdropping became an art; overheard conversations were reported. Loose talkers often found themselves in a peck of trouble.

"The ideal of the Puritan was sanctification which meant not only personal purity but the observance of taboos. This network of constraint was essential to the Puritan life - and, in a larger sense, to the Puritan state. Without it the Puritans would have been nothing more than a collection of people. They were unified by inhibitions.

"But man cannot live by bread alone, nor can he be wholly repressed. An inhibited man, cramped by the weight of community judgement is just as likely as not to run to sadism if not the complete obliteration of self.

"The flood of piety which submerged the Puritan community did not prevent crime. There were as many murders, and rapes, and as much stealing in the Massachusetts Bay Colony - in proportion to population - as any where else. Neither did the restrictions silence the dissenters.

"At Salem there lived a minister of the gospel named Roger Williams. One rarely meets, or hears of, a personality so argumentative and dogmatic. Mr. Williams was completely sure of himself; he expressed his opinions at any time or place, and if his listeners did not agree with him, he rarely pitied them.

"Mr. Williams was a Separatist, but he was different from the Plymouth Separatists. All they wanted to do was to separate from the Church of England and establish a bare, God-ridden church of their own, while Roger Williams believed in absolute religious liberty. He did not care if people were agnostic, Christian, Jew or pagan.

"The baleful eye of Governor Winthrop, a Puritan in the strictest sense, was upon Mr. Williams and his preaching of religious toleration, as well as the separation of church and state, finally finished Williams. He escaped again and again from banishments and, after living among friendly Indians, in the Spring of 1636 he went to Narragonsett Bay, bought some land from the Indians and built some houses at the head of the bay. A few friends joined him. They called their village Providence. That was the beginning of the state of Rhode Island.

"Democracy and religious freedom were basic principles of Roger Williams's republic. During his time it was the only place in the civilized world where a citizen could comport himself as one does in the United States today - every man could vote, a man could enter any trade or calling. There was no censorship of papers or books. All this happened while the people in Massachusetts, especially the leaders, looked on with contempt. In spite of all the restrictions that the Puritan leaders placed upon the populous, democratic thought flowed yearningly in the hearts of many freedom loving souls." ⁹

The key to much of the Plymouth Colony's special legislation, for the restricting of religious and civic differences, was fear. The security of the settlements was of such a high price that any disunity was regarded as a threat to their very survival as a community. It is no wonder, when these considerations are realized, that the founding fathers of New England felt that the laws must be strict and the punishment for offences severe. Perhaps they did not perceive the similarities, in principle, of their customs to the afflictions they had endured in England and from which they had escaped. They justified their actions, now classified as persecution, as the will of God.

Through the records of these prosecutions of the law, we are made aware that Ralph had a wife with him at Sandwich and it is likely that more of his family other than George and Samuel, mentioned earlier, had come with him from England though some may have followed later. The records available, however, gave no report to indicate any relationship of Ralph to other Allens that appear, except for his two sons, George and Samuel.

The descendants of Ralph and his wife increased as the generations passed and, though our line of Allens ceased when their granddaughter, Joan, married Clement Briggs, the name of Allen is common in all the States of the Union.(7-8)

The information given earlier, stating that Ralph was "buried in a church yard in Windsor, Connecticut where he was known as Olde Mister Allen," ¹⁰ would indicate that he must have migrated to that early town, near Hartford and Wethersfield (map #6) to be with his son Samuel, for a time at least. The record made no mention of a wife so she may have died earlier at Sandwich, Mass.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. #50 preface pp.i, iii | 6. ibid, footnote p. 204 |
| 2. ibid | 7. ibid, pp. 204-5 |
| 3. #137 pp. 139, 162-3 | 8. ibid footnote p. 205 |
| 4. ibid, p, 162 | 9. #68 pp. 51, 52 |
| 5. ibid, pp. 162, 163 | 10. #50 preface p.ii |