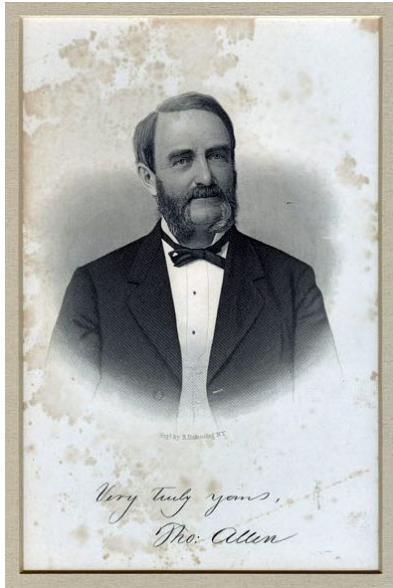


Then & Now – The Allen Estate - “The Pines”

33 Allen Hill Road

Background:



Hon. Thomas Allen (1813-1882)
was among the chief
incorporators of the Pacific
Railroad.

Hon. Thomas H. Allen Sr. (1813–1882) and Ann Clementine Russell (1823–1897) were married in 1842 in St. Louis, MI. He was among the chief incorporators of the Pacific Railroad and was elected in 1880 as a U.S. Representative to the 47th Congress. On April 8, 1882, he died in Washington, D.C., feeling that “he had left a portion of his work unaccomplished.” He left a respected legacy as a part of our nation’s westward advance. Thomas and Ann had 11 children and Thomas Allen Jr. (1849-1924) is the one that is the focus of this article.

Thomas Jr. (1849-1924) was born in St. Louis, Missouri. He later studied at George Washington University in St. Louis and in Germany. During his early years, he spent time in Germany, France, San Antonio, Texas, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. He had a talent for painting and enjoyed painting with oils, watercolor, and pen and ink. Mr. Allen served as president of the Arts Council in Boston, and director of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

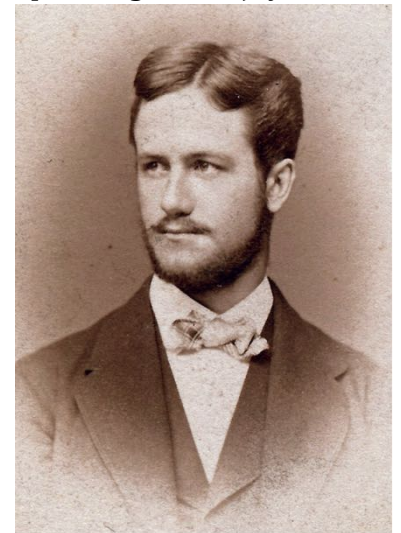
He married Eleanor Goddard Whitney (1856–1882) in 1880 in Cambridge, MA. They had one child Eleanor Whitney Allen (1882-1973). Unfortunately, his wife, Eleanor, died a month after giving birth to their daughter.

In 1884, Thomas remarried to Alice Ranney (1862–1949), and they had 3 children:

- Thomas Allen III (1887 to 1965) (we are referring to him as the III, though not named that)
 - He married Elizabeth Chapman 1915
- Eric Allen 1890-1890
- Robert Fletcher Allen 1892 -1903

Thomas Allen Jr.’s Connection to Princeton:

During the early 1890’s, the Allens started spending summers in Princeton staying at the Howard House at 16 Worcester Rd., which they shared with their friends, the Hamilton Perkins. It was during this time that both families decided to buy and build in Princeton. The Perkins chose one lot of land on the east side of Mountain Road which was originally used as a training field for soldiers during the Revolutionary War and built their house at 54 Mountain Rd. The Allens wanted a farm, so they in 1894, they purchased land and a farm from the Silas Fay, on the upper half of the west side of Allen Hill Rd. The only stipulation was that Gramma Fay could live in the house until she passed.



**Thomas Allen Jr. enrolls in the
Royal Academy (Kunstakademie)
in Dusseldorf in 1872 to learn
how to paint.**



Foundation Construction With Blasted Rocks All Around

The Allens wanted their privacy and a house to themselves, so, in 1895, they started clearing land and building their private residence on the highest part of this property to take advantage the southwestern views this location provided. 1895, marked the year Thomas also started farming the property, and raised raise cows, horses, and other livestock. They moved into their new home in late 1896.

Though their home's location had an ideal view, the ground where they built their home was solid ledge so a

great deal of blasting was needed to create an adequate foundation. They were the first in the area to integrate steel I-beams to support their home. Mr. Allen hired John Yonker Sr. as his first employee to head and lead his construction team. Eventually, John, his son Jacob and family, and lastly Ollie Nelson lived and ran the Allen Farm at 19 Allen Hill Rd. and worked to maintain the above mentioned Allen Estate, also called The Pines.

The house was a built in the shape of an "H" to support a large family and considerable staff. Its large hot-air heating system was really inadequate for winter living in such a windy spot. There was a gas generator to run the furnaces and there were provisions for entertaining guests who would stay for days at a time. The family brought all their servants with them, arriving by steam train from Worcester to Princeton Depot and then



Jacob Yonker Beside the Cart, his Father John Stooped Over and Ollie Nelson was the Third Man Who Worked on the Estate

by carriage to The Pines.



Grotto, Pond, Bridge in Front Lawn View Southeast

form of prairie style architecture from the early 1900s. It is only recently that the building had the original cedar siding covered though the original dental moldings remain. The stable section of the building still has the names stenciled on the wall of the horses kept there more than a hundred years ago. Another more elaborate stall, complete with windows, may have been for a more special horse used to pull their ornate carriage. The tack room contains a sink and on the second floor are the groom's quarters, complete with a private bathroom. A cistern on the second floor was probably put there to catch rainwater that may have been used to water the horses.

Ms. Eleanor Allen was an accomplished pianist; recitals were frequent and included miniature opera scenes. The boat house on the pond was for camping, swimming and ice cutting. The pond was



Monument on Circular Driveway

drained and cleaned each year to ensure clear ice for cutting. The ice was hauled from the pond to an icehouse on Echo Lake near the former superintendent's house on Mountain Road. There was a circular stone table for picnics and birthday parties on a nearby walking trail. For many years, it had a polypodium in the center as a permanent decoration, but a subsequent owner thought they were weeds and removed their careful planting.

Throughout the estate were walking and horse trails, which were decorated with Japanese statues and architectural elements for his family and guests to enjoy. As people traveled these trails, they might visit the Cliff Castle/Piano

Through the years, their property evolved as they planted an orchard with apple, pear, and peach trees; as well as beautiful gardens with fountains & waterfalls; built stonewalls, walking trails, and tennis court; and a carriage house for overflow guests and their horses and buggies.

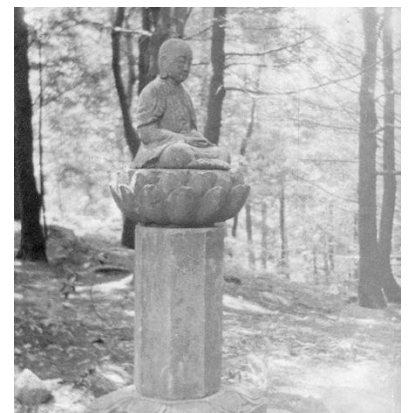


Granite Torii At Entrance To Walking Trail

According to current owner David Cruise, "The carriage house is more architecturally significant than the house." It is in the



Stone Table in Woods



Buddha on Lotus Stand on a Walking Path Through Woods

House and hear Ms. Eleanor playing her piano, view a beautiful sunsets, and/or visit the iconic goldfish/koi pond, boathouse, arched bridge and fountain. It was truly a magical place to visit and relax.

They also had built an Aladdin Kit (Built in a Day) Bungalow at 32 Allen Hill Rd. where Mrs. Alice Allen would occasionally stay with her maid. This bungalow eventually became a summer home for the Allen's son, Thomas Allen III. Today, it is a private home.



Tom III and His Dog

Spring 1896 Carriage House Under Construction

Our "Big Day" was the Fourth of July:

Ms. Eleanor wrote, "My father would put a notice at the Gregory Store inviting everyone to come and see the fireworks and to partake of ice cream and cake. The fireworks were set off from the little knoll near the entrance to our driveway. There were no Dixie Cups in those days – the ice cream came in great 25-pound slabs. We set two barrels across the driveway with a board on top, and my brother and I spent the evening slicing ice cream with a carving knife. The audience used paper plates and tin spoons, and for days afterwards we would collect them from amidst the bushes. Slicing ice cream for 100 to 400 persons was quite a job. We finally had to discontinue the fireworks because Mr. Perkins was afraid the prevailing wind would blow the rocket sticks onto the roof of his stable. So, after that we decorated the place with Japanese lanterns on bamboo poles along the paths in the woods, and we hired Chaffin's Band from Worcester to sit in the court and 'make music' such as it was!"



*Eleanor Practicing Her Swing
The Town Pound in Background*

These events were open to all town residents. The Allen's also started to build a small 6-holed golf course, on the land where the Bungalow is today to the Town Pound: it was never completed, They soon joined others in sponsoring the Princeton Country Club (1899-1919) located at Russell Corner.

Thomas Allen Jr. designed an elaborate arch for Woodlawn Cemetery in 1906, and donated it to the town as an entryway into the cemetery. An unfortunate accident happened when the arch was knocked off its perch onto a dump truck cab killing Fred Gates as he was exiting the cemetery with the dump bed still extended up in the dump position. The arch was never replaced, however; the Allen's replaced it with an iron railing and stone pillars.



Woodlawn Cemetery Monument 1906

After Thomas Jr. passed in 1924, the estate was used primarily by his daughter Ms. Eleanor Allen, as well as Alice, his second wife, and her family members as a summer retreat. The original three-story house was completely changed in the 1970's when it was purchased by Maxwell Reck. Eventually, the Percivals transformed the home into the contemporary-style structure it is today. It is now owned by the Cruise's and is maintained as a private residence.



Despite the alterations to the house, the grounds caught the Cruises' attention. "One of the major reasons we bought this is it only happens once in a lifetime to have a property with all these wonderful tree specimens," says Karen. "Even if I started something like this now, I'd never live to see the results." The landscaping includes several unusual specimens of trees and bushes. The rhododendrons are 15 feet high in several areas. A path in front of the house leads to a secret garden and there are remnants of a waterfall. "There are walking paths all over that lead to different vistas," says David. "You can be walking around and a vista will surprise you." Irrigation pipes are threaded through the woods and unusual vegetation grows all over the property.

Additional Recollections:

- Tom Jr's granddaughter, **Anna Lee Frohlich Nowles**, wanted to share the following stories about their families visits to the Allen Estate:
 - She felt she had a magical childhood because of the times visiting her grandfather, Aunt Eleanor, and the Allen Estate, as well as Comet Pond with its water activities. She adored her grandfather because of his imaginative, engaging ways. He loved to tell her made-up stories and encouraged her to act them out as they explored the estate grounds and buildings.
 - They usually stayed at the Tom Jr.'s bungalow, which was less formal than at the main house. As she and her brother grew, and their manners improved, they often went for family Sunday dinner at the main house. Her favorite dessert was chocolate pudding in a finger bowl. After dinner, each family member was given water and a lemon in a finger bowl with which to freshen up. From time to time, her grandfather would put a single goldfish in each bowl, and after dinner they would go out front to the Grotto and small pond to set the fish free. The first time her brother, another Tom, was allowed to join them all for Sunday family dinner, he waited with anticipation for chocolate pudding in a finger bowl. His grandfather gave him first a finger bowl with a lemon and water. He yelled, "all I get for dessert is water and a lemon"? Grandpa Tom was such a great kidder, and the chocolate pudding soon followed from the kitchen.
- **William Brooks II, wrote on 7/7/11**
 - When I was in my boyhood years, late 1920's, I began to learn about the big estate that was located on a hill just north of the town, to the left of the old cemetery and town pound. This was and is, today, a very large privately owned, piece of property. At that time, it was owned by the Thomas Allen family, with lots of acreage, made up of a working farm, where the farmer and caretaker lived. The land where the Allen's lived had lots of woods, a goldfish pond, a carriage shed, which housed the horse drawn vehicles and sleeping quarters for gardeners. There were many paths thru the property, all lined with oriental type structures leading to the fishpond, the farm buildings, and to a clay tennis court. Incidentally, in later years, I got to play on that court. The main house had a circular driveway, with a portico of an arched roof, with fountains and statues lining both sides and brick walkway approaching the main entrance. Other entrances were, of course around at the backside and the west end of the house. All the main buildings had red tiled roofs, which were visible from portions of the town. There was even a separate piano building, called Cliff Castle.
 - At that time, the family consisted of the grandmother, Eleanor and half-brother Thomas Jr. He married and had a son, Thomas (my age) and two daughters, Barbara and Elizabeth. I later had the privilege of being Barbara's chauffeur, at her wedding, which was held at the mansion. Young Thomas Allen lived with his folks in the bungalow cottage across the street from the main mansion.

- I shall remember fondly the Fourth of July celebrations that they held for all the folks in the town to enjoy. This event happened every year co-sponsored by one other family, the Washburn's (30 Mountain Rd.), either at their estate or the Allen's, with lots of ice cream, cookies, cakes and watermelon. It was usually held at the Allen's, because of the slope of their terrain and large lawn, on which to set up the desert tent, and sit and watch the fireworks.
- Young Tom and I became very friendly and engaged in whatever devilry we could dream up, such as tossing firecrackers off of the bridge, which overlooked the goldfish pond, to watch the fish come up to the surface and grab the firecracker as it went off. We were BAD!!!!!! He owned a pump BB gun, with which we also had a lot of fun.
- **William “Bud” Brooks III, added on 6/3/2016**
 - As a kid, I worked at least one summer (~1962) with Albert Kinard trying to keep the grounds somewhat presentable for Miss Eleanor Allen and guests when they came for a visit and for Tom around his bungalow. The three things I remember most vividly were: constantly weeding the brick lined gutters along the circular driveway, pruning the blossoms off the very tall lilacs, and weeding/pruning the walking paths through the woods. The lanterns and monuments were still there, as well as the tennis court, but I am not sure who kept it playable, at least not by Albert and me.

After Reading this piece, if anyone else has other recollections of the Allen Estate, please feel free to send it to us at princetonmahistory@gmail.com.

Resources:

Anderson, Joyce Bailey *Princeton and Wachusett Mountain* Images of America, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina, June 2003

Allen, Eleanor, “Recollections of Seventy Summers in Princeton” typed paper, date unknown, (Note: possibly written, circa 1962-1964). [A previous issue of “Then & Now”](#).

Princeton House Card File, compiled by Eleanor Allen, continued by Anita Woodward and Clayton Hubbard, assessors for the Town of Princeton (circa 1955).

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Worcester County, Massachusetts*. New York: F.W. Beers 1870.

Richards, L.J. *Atlas of Worcester County, Massachusetts*. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards and Co. 1898

Historical Narrative and Architectural Description, *Massachusetts Historical Commission*, Area G, Form #161, #186

A special Section of The LANDMARK, “Princeton home boasts a grand history”, October 22, 2009, by Phyllis Booth

Tom Allen Jr.’s [Hand Drawn Map of This Estate](#). Zoom in to see red irrigation & pumping lines.

Images from the Princeton Historical Society Collection, and research/assemble by William “Bud” Brooks with edits from Anna Lee Frohlich Robinson in 2023.

Photo Gallery



Cliff Castle/Piano House Facing South West



Boat House & Pond



Miss Eleanor on Pond Bridge



Bridge and Pond Fountain



Early Allen Estate and Farm with Very Few Trees

T



The Allen House, Carriage House, & Circular Driveway



Jacob & Mary Yonkers Farmhouse & Family



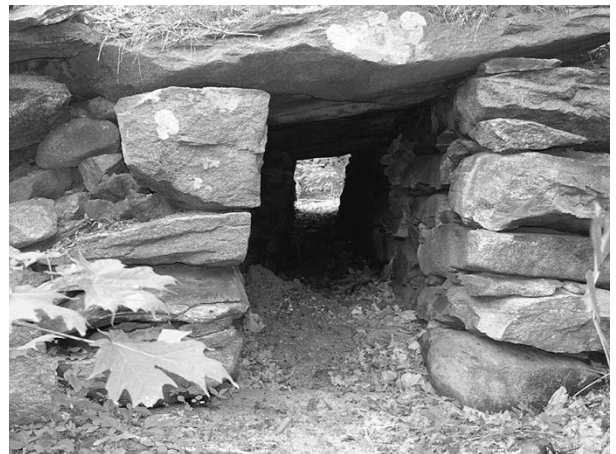
Barn & Animal Pen



Jacob in Front Of His Green House



1930 Allen Estate Haying



Cow Pass Under Allen Hill Rd.



Eleanor & Tom Jr. Playing Tennis on Their Court on Thompson Rd.



Miss Eleanor Playing Croquet on Their Side Lawn