Introduction

Revised March 2012

This sketch was originally written and posted during the summer of 2005. In late October of that year I spent a week in New Jersey and Virginia researching William Allen and all of the friends and family I could identify. The result is that there was much in this sketch that needed revision, and at that time I deleted what was clearly wrong, modified things that could easily be reworked to conform to what I now know, and added an interesting story here and there. In 2010 I completed a thorough history/biography of William Allen, during which I identified more facts and suppositions that needed correcting. As of this update, I have corrected the significant errors, though the sketch remains incomplete. The "rest of the story" is, of course, available in the book.

William Allen came to America from Northern Ireland as an eighteen year-old youth in 1729, accompanied only by his brother David. He gave birth to several long lines of descendants who, with each generation, are less connected to the world he knew. Since visiting the old Allen farm in Larne in 1994, I have been interested in finding out more about him. The genealogical record that has been put together by such researchers as Carrie E. Allen, Vella Miller, Philip Allen and others over the last century has been tantalyzing in the hints it gave about his life, but it wasn't clear to me that they had exhausted the possibilities of the records that are hidden away in various libraries and county archives. Thanks to the internet and to a couple of well-stocked libraries in the Bay Area, I've been able to substantially broaden the range of information on him. And the trip back east generated that much again in the way of documentation of his life.

William Allen lived in interesting times--one might even say tumultuous times, if the American Revolution can count as such. His life took irregular and unexpected twists and turns. He gained much during his eighty-eight years, and lost much as well. This expanded sketch attempts to flesh out the man and his times more fully. There is still much to be explored, and not everything that is hinted at in the existing records can be proven, but we have enough information to expand what has heretofore been told with some degree of confidence.

Note: It is quite possible that, even with the latest round of revisions, there are still errors of fact in this sketch. It is based on incomplete records and in some cases on conjecture, either by me, or those who preceded me in this research. If any reader knows of such errors, a notice of them would be appreciated. In addition, it should go without saying (but I will say it anyway) that what appears here is my take on William Allen's life. I'll bear responsibility for the questions I've raised and the particular spin that I've put on things. Others are free to look over the source documents and arrive at their own way of interpreting the story told there.

Douglas Allen
Orinda, California
March 25, 2012

In the Old Country

William was born on the outskirts of the small town of Larne in County Antrim on the Northern Ireland coast on Feb. 2, 1711 to Robert and Janet (Hare) Allen--one of twenty-three children in that family. At the doorway to adulthood he set out on a fantastically risky adventure, leaving home and family behind forever to brave the uncertainty of life in a frontier land thousands of miles away. Why did he do this? To understand, we need to look at both the socio-political context of life in Larne in the 1720s and the particular circumstances of his family.

Northern Ireland, until the early 1600s, had been a land of Irish Catholics. Since the 12th century they had been under pressure from the Norman kings of England, who were trying to extend their rule over all of Britain and Ireland. The attack on Ireland began under Henry II (r. 1154-1189) when, armed with the support of the Pope, he began diplomatic and ultimately military efforts to "pacify" the island. Not having the time to devote to managing the enterprise himself, he turned it over to his youngest son John in 1185--who botched the effort and had to return to England in shame (thus earning the nickname Lackland). This was the famous Prince John of Robin Hood fame, who was later forced to sign the Magna Carta (in 1215) under pressure from members of the nobility.

Over the centuries, the combination of Irish tribal chiefs, Norman barons, and English kings all trying to control Irish affairs led to an increasingly complicated political situation, punctuated frequently by armed conflict. In one such affair, King James I (r. 1603-1625 - and, yes, of "King James Bible" fame) defeated the Irish lords who ruled the northern counties of Ireland (known collectively as Ulster). He jailed one and forced two others to flee to the European continent. Many Irish peasants were driven off their land as a consequence. In order to secure the area more permanently, James began what was called the Irish Plantation. He encouraged English and Scottish lords to occupy the land, bringing settlers with them. The Scots, especially, were enthusiastic at the prospect. Times were tough in Scotland in the early 17th century, and the possibility of getting free land only a few miles across the Irish Channel was too tempting to resist. During the 1600s, County Antrim, and the town of Larne especially, became almost totally populated by Scottish Presbyterians, though there were a few English Anglicans and Irish Catholics in the area as well.

This was the century of religious wars between Protestants and Catholics throughout Europe. One's religious convictions had political ramifications, since church and state were decidedly not separate. As a consequence, a three-tiered society evolved where Anglican "conformists" ruled by virtue of their acceptance of the official ("established") Church of Ireland; the Irish, as "papists" were cast to the bottom tier where they suffered major deprivations, both political and economic; and the Scottish Presbyterian "dissenters" occupied a tenuous middle ground. Because they did not accept the authority of the Church of England (the head of which was the English monarch), they were excluded from holding public office much of the time, and found it difficult to participate fully in the economic life of the country. While they shared the Anglican disdain for "papists," their "dissent" from the established church (which was interpreted by the ruling authorities as dissent from the authority of the government) made them outsiders in their own way. It is interesting, and somewhat ironic, that

their disdain for both lower and higher rungs on the socio-political hierarchy sprang from the same cause: disagreement over religious doctrine and religious patterns of governance. Both Catholic and Anglican Churches were governed from the top, through bishops who reported to a single head of church (pope and king respectively). "Dissenters" (the term applied at the time to Presbyterians, Quakers, and the like) favored church rule from the bottom up, with local congregations firmly in control of their own affairs--including the choosing of ministers and other church leaders.

In addition to being in the middle of this rigid socio-political hierarchy, the Ulster Scots (as they came to be identified) also suffered from the general economic restrictions which the English enforced against Ireland. The main export trade of Northern Ireland at the end of the 17th century was wool. By law, it could only be sold to English merchants, not traded directly to other nations. The natural result was a buyer's market, with prices set by the English. The linen trade which evolved around the turn of the 18th century partially offset this, but it was subject to the same kinds of restrictions.

Partly as a result of this economic squeeze at the hands of the British, Irish landlords began to raise tenant rents. "Rack-renting" was devastating to small farmers who operated on the basis of long leases (31 years was standard at the time). A severe hike in annual rents when it came time to renew the lease could drive tenants off the farm, creating significant unemployment problems throughout the community.

As a "final straw," during the late 1720s, and occasionally throughout the rest of the century, the region suffered years of famine. While not as severe as the potato blight of the 1840s, they spurred many Scots and Irish to head across the Atlantic in a search for survival. During the 1720 to 1776 period somewhere between 250,000 and 400,000 Scots-Irish made the journey. (Note: "Scots-Irish" is a term usually applied to Ulster Scots in America, not in Ireland.)

The Allen Family in Northern Ireland

The Allens came to Northern Ireland from the Lowlands of Scotland, probably from Greenock, a town along the Clyde, down river from Glasgow. They first settled near Ballygalley on the Antrim coast in the 1620s. They were tenants of James Shaw of Greenock, who had received a land grant from the Earl of Antrim. As far as we know, they lived under his protection at least until the 1660s, and probably well beyond. (This information comes from census records of the 1660s.) During this time, William's grandfather Robert, probably the son of the original Allen emigre, lived and died.

One account of these years states that Robert Allen "took a prominent part in the war James II waged in Ireland for regaining his crown." This bit of hyperbole is misleading. It is likely that the entire family became embroiled in the conflict, since most of the Presbyterian population of Northern Ireland had to repair to Londonderry in the spring of 1689 to avoid the carnage of war. The seige of that city lasted from April to August, killing tens of thousands of the refugees through bombing and starvation. Though we have no evidence of their participation in this event, it is unlikely they would have survived if they had remained at home.

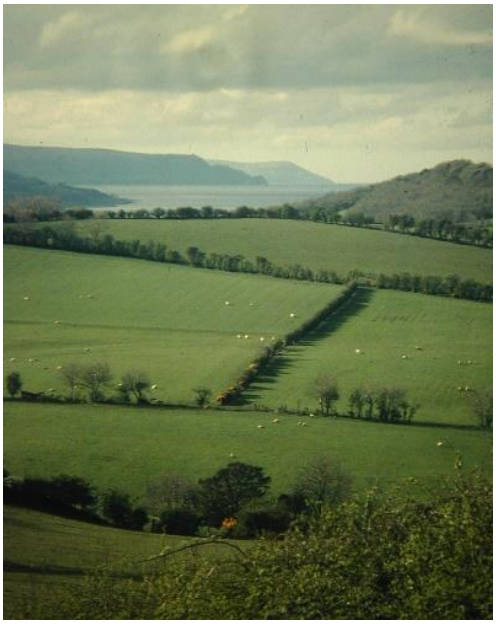
William's father Robert (b. 1676) has always been associated with his farm in Ballycraigy, just north of Larne. It is most likely that he settled there when he came to adulthood in the mid 1690s. His farm

was in the area held by Patrick Agnew, who would have been his landlord. He married Janet Hare (b. 1679), daughter of William Hare of Larne (a tavern keeper) in 1695.

Robert was reported by his descendents to have been a ruling elder in the local Presbyterian church starting in 1715. As of 1712, there were two congregations in Larne, when the congregation of the "Old Presbyterian Church" split over the selection of a new minister. Robert's name does not appear in its records, so it is most likely that he was a member of the new "First Presbyterian Church", the more conservative of the two.

Robert and Janet were quite long-lived for their time. He died in 1770 at the age of 94. Janet lived until 1754, age 75--remarkable in that she had 23 children. Of these, eighteen are said to have lived to maturity. We have the names of a few of them:

- Ann (c. 1700)
- Mary (c. 1703, married Samuel Smith in 1721)
- David (1710)
- William (1711)
- Jean (c. 1712, married John Hay in 1729)
- Thomas (b. 1720, married Janet Neilson June 1, 1749)
- Patrick (baptized March 8, 1721, married Ann Knox)



The Allen farm was about two miles north of Larne in a district called Ballycraigy (pictured here, looking north along the Antrim coast). It sat on a hill which slopes down to the North Channel of the Irish Sea to the east, and has a wonderful view of the surrounding countryside. On a clear day one can see Scotland in the distance. The property was in the Allen family until the early 20th century. As of 1994 it was still agricultural land, though just barely. The town of

The graveyard of the local Church of Ireland has a head stone for the family, though it has been separated from the grave itself. It reads:

"Here lieth the body of Janet Har who died March ye 31, 1754 aged 75 years Who was wife to Robert Allen of Bally-Craigie and he died 1770 aged 94 years. Also his son Thomas Allen who died 15th August 1804 aged 84 years Also the remains of Martha Anne widow of the late John Boyle of Ballycraigie died 7th January 1866 in the 93rd year of her age."

Larne has expanded to what is apparently the property line. No house or other structures remain.	(This is just a guess, but Martha (b. 1773) may have been Thomas Allen's daughter.)

There are still descendents of William's brother Patrick Allen living in Larne, whom we met when visiting there in 1994.

The Atlantic Crossing

So, what would induce two young men, eighteen and nineteen years of age, to get on a small ship and head off to a land that most knew only by rumor? The lack of economic prospects, surely, accounts for much of it. The economy was in tough shape. They were in a difficult societal position as dissenters. Food had been scarce the previous few years. They were from a large family and, as younger sons, probably not in line to inherit any land. By 1729, there would have been many mouths to feed in the family. One more factor needs to be added to this mix: that there were concerted efforts made by shipping companies to encourage such emigration.

Much of the impetus for American colonization during the 17th century had come from Englishmen who had received land grants in the colonies and were looking for settlers to work the land. These grantees saw the prospect of significant profits through the production and sale of raw materials which were to be sent back to England. To make this system work, they needed people to settle on the land and either raise the crops or cut down the timber that would be shipped back across the Atlantic. However, this work required much labor, and the families who initially settled in America usually could not provide for their own survival and also generate these materials without help. While black Africans were increasingly being imported as slaves during the 17th and early 18th centuries, they were used mainly in the southern colonies (as well as in the Caribbean and South America). The New England colonies used a few, but the Mid-Atlantic colonies came to rely more on indentured servants--people who had to borrow funds for their ocean passage and who would sign a contract to work for four years or so after arriving to pay off their debt. The general pattern was for ship owners (or captains) to advertise for and sign up a shipload of non-paying, but contracted, passengers. They would then sell those contracts to farmers and other people needing labor when the ships docked in America.

The voyage generally took eight to ten weeks and could be relatively pleasant or rather wretched, depending on the weather, the quality and quantity of food that was provided, and whether or not disease broke out among the passengers (who were packed in pretty tightly). Upon arriving at an American port (Philadelphia in the case of William and David) the servants would be paraded on deck to prospective buyers and their contracts sold at auction. Histories of this time report that approximately 90% of the Scots and Irish emigres came over using this arrangement.

Early Years in the New World

Probably the strongest piece of evidence for an indenture contract is that William and David went in different directions upon arrival: David to Pennsylvania, upriver from Philadelphia, ultimately settling in Mt. Bethel township of Northampton County (north of Easton), and William "to live with a Quaker

family in New Jersey"--which almost certainly means West Jersey, somewhere up the Delaware River from Philadelphia, which was settled primarily by Quakers in those days.

Why would two brothers, knowing no one in this strange land, and being young and inexperienced, split up at this critical moment? Certainly not unless they had to--and having their contracts purchased by men living in different colonies seems as good an explanation as any.

Earlier narratives of William's life had no information on David. The assumption was that he had disappeared. Recently, though, his will, a deed, and a lawsuit--all from Northampton County, Pennsylvania, have been discovered, which give us a bit of an idea about his life. The will mentions William, though, and confirms that they kept in touch with each other. It also indicates that David and his wife Isbaell had no surviving children, which perhaps explains why there is so little about him in the genealogical record. More on these documents later.

A final piece of information that supports the argument for an indenture contract is that after four years (1733) in West Jersey, William settled near Freehold (Monmouth County) in "East Jersey" and married Alice Berry. The specific four-year wait and the move east (something on the order of 40 or 50 miles, depending on exactly where in West Jersey he was located) suggests that he met her after his indenture expired.

Before moving on to Freehold, though, let me add some thoughts on his time with the Quakers.

Open to our speculation is the relationship William would have had with his Quaker family. At this time, Quakers were not above purchasing indenture contracts or even owning slaves, though in the middle colonies, as stated above, slaves were less used than indentured servants. In the 1740s, there was a movement within the Quaker community to abandon the use of unfree labor, but that came well after William had come through the system.

The normal pattern would have been for a servant not to live in the family house, but in an out-building of some kind, which normally he would have built himself. His duties would have been agricultural--tasks for which he would have been at least somewhat trained, except that in America of these years one of the primary jobs would have been to clear land by chopping down trees and cutting them up, in part for firewood and in part for shipping back to England. This would not have been a skill used much in Ireland, but learning it would have prepared him for developing his own farm down the road. Histories of indentured servitude make the point that these years indenture were great training for life in the colonies. Not only were young men able to adjust to the American climate (decidedly different from that back home), but also the culture. They were able to pick up needed farming and/or craft skills and also learned how the agricultural markets worked. In addition, they could make valuable contacts in the community which would be useful once they were out on their own.

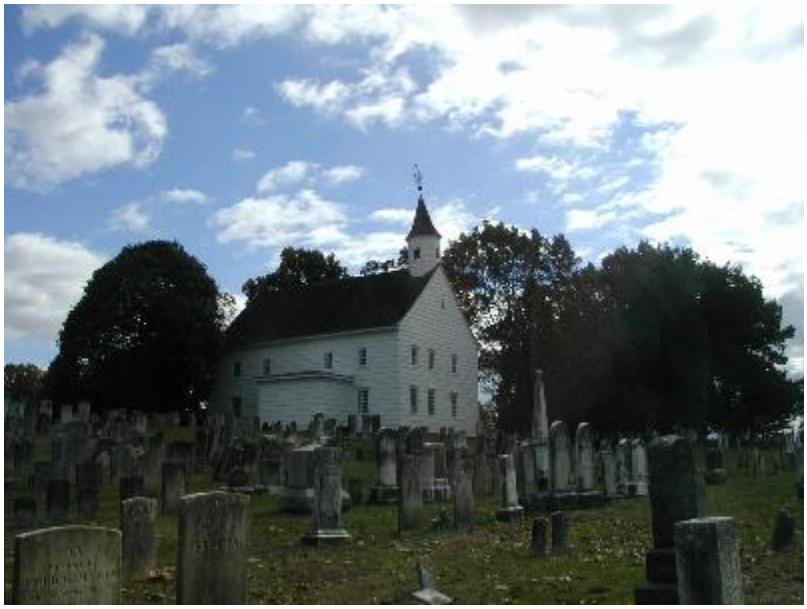
The Allens were a devout Presbyterian family, and William maintained his membership in that church throughout his life. It is interesting to speculate as to how he might have gotten along with his "Quaker family in New Jersey." Masters of indentured servants could be fair or cruel. They could help their servants get ready for independent living or not, as their temperament dictated. It is probably fair to guess that a Quaker family would have been more helpful than most, especially as all the evidence suggests that William was ambitious, hardworking, devoutly religious. He and his family were probably a good match for each other.

A related question is how well William's Presbyterianism matched with his master's Quaker affiliation. Would he have ever gone to Quaker meetings? How well might he have gotten to know people in the Quaker community that his master belonged to? How far might he have had to go to join a Presbyterian congregation? There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that there was some degree of tolerance among the two groups--even intermarriage. But, given the strong affiliation the Allens have always had with the Presbyterian Church, it is unlikely that William had more than cordial relations with the Quakers. It is a reasonable guess that William would have gone to some trouble to join a Presbyterian congregation as soon as possible.

Indentured servants, once they had fulfilled their obligations, were to receive certain considerations. These were governed by both custom and law. In New Jersey at this time, "freedom dues" would usually include: "seven bushels of corn, two suits of clothes, two hoes and an axe." Land--usually on the order of fifty acres--was often given, though it's not clear whether this came from the master's holdings or the colonial authorities.

In William's case, we're not sure where his initial stake was, though it's pretty clear that he got one, since he did indeed become a farmer (not all did) and, in the end, he was a fairly wealthy one. What we are sure of is that after his indenture he married Alice Berry and lived near Freehold, New Jersey (Monmouth County). While there, he was a member of the Old Tennent Presbyterian Church, a few miles west of town and which still exists today, though in a new (1752!) building. A possible explanation for this chain of events lies developments within the Presbyterian congregation in Freehold.

According to the historical records of the Old Tennent Church in Freehold, the congregation there called a new minister in 1730 (John Tennent) who was revitalizing the church after many years of decline. In the early 1730s The congregation was expanding and they built a new church, which was completed in 1734. My speculation is that young William, released from his four years with the Quakers, was drawn to this church by the reputation it must have generated throughout the colony. Upon arriving there he probably would have helped complete the new building. What we know for sure is that when the pews of the new church were rented out in 1734, his name appears in pew number 30, along with several other single men of the congregation. Across the aisle, in plain view, was the pew of John Berry and family (pew 21). If John's sister Alice was sitting there it affords an easy explanation of how they met.



Old Tennent Church (1752 building) as it looks today.
This "new" building stands on the same footprint as the 1734 building.

William and Alice had two children. Sarah was baptised January 8, 1735 and died in infancy. Janet (or Jane) was baptised April 1, 1736. Alice died fairly soon thereafter, but whether as a result of complications in childbirth we don't know. Evidence suggests that at this point William gave up the child to Alice's brother John Berry and his wife Isabela. The record is sketchy, but on December 11, 1756 Berry gave permission for the marriage of Jane Allen to Ephraim Herriott. In the marriage bond he calls Jane "a yong weoman I have Brought up from her infantcy. [sic]"

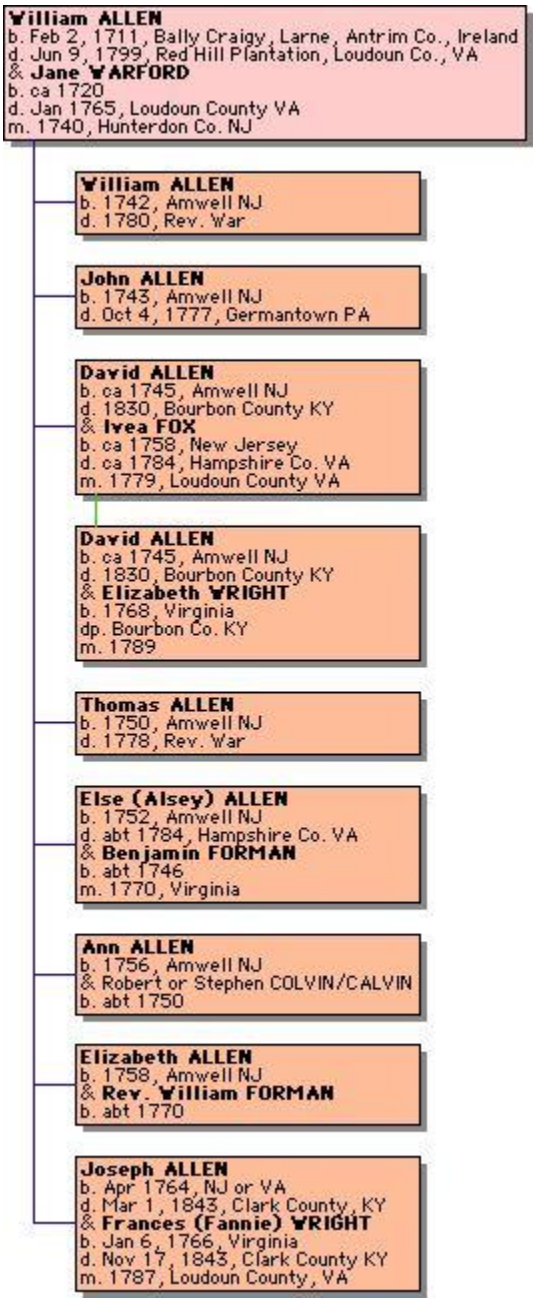
As a side note, Alice Allen and Isbela Berry are listed as receiving communion in the Old Tennent Church on June 8, 1735. John appears to be the son of Henry Berry, who was a carpenter and died in 1739 in Monmouth County. John was the executor for the estate, in the place of his older brother Henry (Jr.) who had moved to Perth Amboy.

These two deaths (Alice and Sarah) are the first of many that William endured. Why would he have given up his new daughter to compound the loss of his wife at this time? Perhaps the answer lies in the general circumstances of his life at this point. He was only twenty-five years old (perhaps twenty-six) and only recently out on his own. His farm was probably not yet profitable, if he even had one at this point. He would have been emotionally devastated at the loss of his young wife, and if he had no prospect of remarrying in the near term, taking care of a young daughter could have been an untenable situation. In the midst of this, John and Isbela, perhaps

being more established, could easily have offered to raise their niece, leaving William free to put his life back together without the responsibility of raising a daughter he was not prepared to provide for.

Whatever the actual events, we find him next in Amwell Township of Hunterdon County a few years later, remarried and starting his family anew.

The Middle Years



After leaving Freehold, William went back to West Jersey. We don't know the exact sequence of events, but he ultimately purchased three different parcels of land near Kingwoord in Amwell Township. The largest of these (449 acres) was about a mile from the Delaware River and just a few miles north of what is now the town of Stockton. In the 1730s, Hunterdon County was in the early stages of white settlement, the area having been purchased from the Leni Lenape Indians only in the 1703-1710 period. The initial settlers came from farther south in West Jersey (Burlington County and the area around what is now Trenton), from Pennsylvania (across the Delaware River) and from East Jersey. Quakers made up the bulk from the first two migrations; Dutch, English, Scots, Scots-Irish, and Germans from the latter. These groups initially settled in distinct areas, but increasing disputes over property ownership and the wave of religious fervor known as the Great Awakening gradually brought them together into a larger community.

Disputes between the proprietors of New Jersey and yeoman farmers dominated local politics during the first half of the eighteenth century. The former had title to much of the colony through grants from the British crown--most of which were given in the 1660s by Charles II. These grants were not well managed, often conflicting with each other. Descendents of the original proprietors expected annual quitrents to be paid to them by the farmers living on their land. However, many of these farmers had settled without permission of the proprietors and had no intention of paying them rent. In addition, many groups of settlers had purchased land directly from local Indian tribes and felt they had clear title in their own right. In the 1730s and 1740s there were increasing incidents of violence as agents of the proprietors contended with local farmers over occupancy and rent payments. As far as we know, William managed to avoid direct confrontation in

these conflicts, but they would have made his life much more interesting just being in proximity to them.

The Great Awakening arose in this environment and was both fed by it and contributed to it. Because the proprietors were predominantly Anglican and the farmers predominantly members of dissenting Protestant sects, their conflicts over property naturally evolved into conflicts over political philosophy and religion. The anxiety caused by the uncertainty of their land claims made them more susceptible to the messages of the itinerant preachers who traveled through the colony during this time. The religious message of salvation through personal submission to God reinforced their resistance to the secular authority of the crown and its "illegitimate" church.

Economic differences coalesced with religious differences and generated two distinct ideologies that competed for power in the decades leading up to the Revolution. As a part of this ideological development many of the settlers forged both religious and political ties in their efforts to resist the pressure they were getting from the Anglican authorities. The late 1740s saw them acting in concert across county lines in ways that began to look like a rebel government. The Presbyterian Church also drew many people to it because its style of church government better facilitated cooperation beyond the congregational level. Minor differences over doctrive were overlooked in the desire of building a stronger resistance to royal authority.

Actually the Revolution might have started in New Jersey in the 1750s but for a change of governorship, in which the new incumbant began looking for ways to compromise rather than exacerbate the conflict. Jonathan Belcher, a New Englander by birth and a man who was sympathetic to the cause of the settlers, found ways to bring some of their leaders into his administration and gave their grievances a fairer hearing in colonial courts. Much of the energy of the "insurgency" faded in the first few years of his rule.

The Great Awakening probably did impact William directly. George Whitfield made trips through New Jersey in 1739 and 1740. One of his stops (on April 25, 1740) was in Amwell Township, where he preached to several thousand people. The chances of William being in the crowd are very good.

Somewhere around 1743 or 44, William married Jane Warford, born about 1725 (possibly 14 years his junior). Her family had been in the colonies since the mid 1600s and were quite well established. It appears that many of her ancestors were from England, some having spent time in the West Indies (Barbados), some in New York (then New Amsterdam). Her father, at his death in 1769, owned a farm in Kingwood Township on the Delaware River, a mile or two from William's farm. Her older brother Job ran a tavern at Coryell's Ferry (now Lambertsville) from about 1748 until his death in 1757. The Warfords had lived in the Freehold area of Monmouth County during the 1710s and 1720s and Jane, along with her siblings, was born there. The marriage with William took place in Hunterdon County, but it is not clear if her family had moved there before 1740 or if she came to the west side of Jersey at the time of their wedding.

While in Amwell, William and Jane had eight children. The various reports of their birth years (even birth order) are inconsistent, but the most specific reports list:

- David (1745)

- John (1746/7)
- William (1747/8)
- Thomas (c. 1750)
- Else, sometimes spelled Alse (c. 1752)
- Ann (1756)
- Elizabeth (1758--some say 1761)
- Joseph (1764)

Some sources report that Joseph was born in Virginia; some say New Jersey. This confusion comes, I think, from the circumstances of their move south, which is covered in the next section.

Other than producing children, we know little of William activities during the next twenty-five years, except that he did very well economically. While there he owned three different pieces of property--of 90, 180, and 450 acres. The latter he appears to have developed into an impressive farm. He put it up for auction in 1771 and announced the event in The Philadelphia Gazette. The description is quite glowing:

"TO be SOLD by way of public vendue, on Tues, day the 16th of April next, and an indisputable title given, a plantation, commanding a fine prospect, and pleasantly situated, containing 460 acres of land. be it more or less, lying in the township of Amwell, county of Hunderdon, and western division of New Jersey; 260 acres of which is woodland, and chiefly well timbered, the remainder excellent for all sorts of grain, agreeable to the climate, with a large complement of meadow. which produces yearly a competible part of good timothy and English grass. The whole well watered, and enclosed with good fence. The said tract may be conveniently divided into 2 separate lots, as may best suit the purchaser, or purchasers; as the buildings thereon are commodiously adapted to each, consisting of one stone dwelling-house 2 stories high, with a cellar under the whole, and a good log kitchen, also, a good stone barn, compleatly finished, viz. 30 by 48 feet; the other being a snug frame building, not quite half a mile from the aforesaid mansion house. As also, good orchards of excellent fruit, both for quantity and quality, at each of said buildings, too tedious to be enumerated here. The whole being contiguous to sundry places of worship, and excellent fisheries, the river Delaware being within a mile of the premises. As also grist and merchants mills, and compleat stores, where the best price is given for country produce: there runs adjoining a large run of fresh water where the curious or ingenious may improve thereon. The whole of the aforesaid will be warranted and defended by the Subscriber hereof. For further particulars, inquire of the subscriber, living on the premises. who will give proper attendance on the day of Sale, when the conditions will be made known. WILLIAM ALLEN

N. B. The chief motive which induces the Subscriber to make sale of the aforesaid, is owing to a considerable purchase of lands that he made in Virginia government, which requires his commanding eye towards the improvement of the same."

The only way he could have generated this much improvement and also saved money for the Virginia investment would have been by selling his excess production over the years. In New Jersey at this time, the main exports were wheat and timber. These would have been shipped to cities such as Philadelphia and New York, as well as been sent overseas to England. The produce from the orchards would have been sold more locally, but still generated extra cash. His description of the

local area--the number of churches and mills available along with the quality of the produce markets--suggest that things had come a long way very quickly during his time there.

The existence of the second house raises the question of why it was built. The answer probably lies in the fact that his older sons would have been in their mid to late twenties by the time the property was sold and one of them, at least, might have wanted his own place to live. (Again, see the next section for more on this.)

One last point: The phrases "indisputable title given" and "will be warranted and defended" in the advertisement suggest that buyers would still have been sensitive to the possibility of challenges to their ownership, even in 1771. Indeed, the ongoing controversies over land titles were not totally settled in New Jersey until well into the nineteenth century. I detect a certain amount of pride in William's wording that he is able to give these assurances to prospective buyers.

For better or worse, the farm did not sell that year. He had mortgaged it to a Capt. John Anderson (of Freehold) in 1769 and remortgaged it to a Nathan Beakes (of Hunterdon County) in 1774. We don't know, at this point, when he finally disposed of it.

Other things we know about his time in Amwell:

- He helped settle several estates of deceased neighbors. His name is listed as helping with an inventory or acting as executor for the estates of William Sherman (1740), John Thatcher (1749), John Luke (1751), Jomes Tobin (1759), and John Ruckman (1767).
- He advertised for help in capturing a runaway slave--a mulatto named Jack--in June 1771.
- He bought a piece of property on the boundary of Hopewell and Maidenhead Townships jointly with Isaac Green, a man who had lived with/worked for him in Virginia in the early 1770s. They held the property until 1785.

During the 1760 to 1775 period, William Allen shifted his operations from New Jersey to Loudoun County, Virginia. This was not a straight-line move though. The record of deeds from the two locales and the Virginia tax rolls, especially, give a very confusing picture of this time. It's hard to say exactly when he "moved." See the next section for details."

The Move to Virginia

Somewhere in the 1760 to 1775 period, after thirty-plus years in New Jersey, William Allen moved his family to Virginia. This move is somewhat mysterious, both in terms of the motives behind it and the process by which it happened. The traditional story is that the family moved in the winter of 1762/63, and, in fact, William did purchased 900 acres in southeastern Loudoun County (on the North Fork of Broad Run) from a John Sasser on December 21, 1762. (He is also reported to have purchased 1150 acres in 1759 in partnership with a cousin, Joseph Allen, and a business partner, John Violett, but after looking at the records of that transaction, it is clear that this purchaser was a different William Allen. I have dubbed him "Bad Bill" because he appears in the Loudoun County Court records several times for various nefarious activities.)

The 1762 purchase date is not indicative of the move date--as much as previous biographers have wanted to use it for that purpose. Not only had William not sold his New Jersey farm in 1762, he continues to show up in other New Jersey records for several years. In addition, he does not consistently appear on the Virginia tithable (tax) rolls until the mid 1770s. Beyond that, it is clear from the total record that William did what many well-to-do "planters" did in the 18th century: he speculated in land. We need to rely on other evidence to determine when he actually made the permanent move to the south.

The situation is complicated, and I'm not going to review all the evidence here. Readers interested in slogging through it should download these two documents: **"William Allen - Paper Trail"** and **"William Allen - Timeline."** In the meantime, though, I can say a little about the property he purchased and what was happening to the family in these years.

The 900 acre parcel was part of the Northern Neck proprietary owned by Thomas, Lord Fairfax of England. The land in this region, which included everything between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers (about six counties worth of land), was not sold outright to settlers, but rather leased in a somewhat feudal manner. The purchase price gave the holder the right to live on the land and dispose of the property through sale, but each year a quitrent was due to the proprietor--this in lieu of the personal and/or military service that were features of traditional Medieval tenancy. Failure to pay meant that the property reverted to Lord Fairfax. William's parcel came to him through a series of owners that included:

- Catesby Cocke, who received the original patent from Lord Fairfax in 1739 for an 1856 acre tract in that part of what was then Prince William County.
- William Elizey, who was of the gentry class (and also a land speculator) had purchased this entire tract by 1760 or so, most of which he resold in smaller pieces.
- John Sasser, who purchased the eastern (approximately) half of it parcel from Elizey in July 1761 for £180 Virginia currency--half of what William paid for it eighteen months later. (Good deal for Sasser!)

The manor house at Red Hill Farm as it looks today.

Settlers did not own their property outright until 1781, when Lord Fairfax died. At that point the new State of Virginia finally nullified the proprietorship and granted the lands to the occupying tenants. The property purchased by William (which came to be known as Red Hill Plantation (later Red Hill Farm) was held in the family until 1884.

(An interesting side note: Patrick Henry's plantation in Charlotte County, Virginia was also called Red Hill. He died there three days before William died at his own Red Hill.)

Virginia of the mid-eighteenth century was becoming something of a paradise, compared to many places in the colonies. The land was relatively fertile, the climate was far enough south to lessen the impact of northern winters and far enough north to attenuate the intense heat of southern summers. The hardships of early colonial life were pretty much behind it, especially in the Tidewater and Northern Neck areas (though in the Piedmont and Blue Ridge farther west things were still relatively undeveloped). Tobacco was a lucrative cash crop, and even without a major investment in land and slaves, one could lead a relatively prosperous life.

Loudoun County, to the northwest of what is now Washington DC, had been settled but not totally filled by mid century. It had been split off from Fairfax County in 1757 (home of such notables as George Washington) and was developing its own political and social character by the time the Allens arrived, Many of the new settlers were "dissenters"--not conforming to the predominant Anglican Church. This put them in somewhat the same position dissenters held in Britain, Ireland and New Jersey, but their numbers were such that their political and social power was not insignificant. In addition, historians of Virginia have argued the Virginia elite did a better job of building trust with the non-Anglican members of their society. In general, the picture is more of benevolent paternalism than the legal and political squabbling that took place in New Jersey.

Another fact that helps us understand the move was that in those days groups of families would often move together. This was a practice especially followed by the Scots-Irish. In the Allen's case, it appears that several families joined them in the move to Virginia: four Fox brothers (Absalom, Ambrose, Amos, and Gabriel--William's brother-in-law), Ephraim Herriot (William's son-in-law), John and Abraham Warford (Jane's brother and nephew), and John and Catherine Skillman, though apparently they didn't all make the move in the same year.

In the middle of this transition, and with a new baby in the house (Joseph, b. April 1764), Jane Warford died (January 1765). There is some confusion about where Joseph was born and where Jane died. Some sources report that it was in New Jersey, some say in Virginia. Based on the amount of family activity in New Jersey during these years, my money is on the northern home for both events.

At the time of Jane's death, William had several young children in the house: Joseph, at less than a year old, would have been a special challenge; daughters Ann and Elizabeth were not yet teenagers. Though the older siblings could have picked up some of the slack, and neighboring wives probably gave short term assistance, William was in need of a long-term partner. Accordingly, a year later he married Sarah Cox (b. 1726 in Middlesex, New Jersey). She was also recently widowed, having been married to Christopher Beekman and living in Griggstown, New Jersey. They had married in 1741 and had seven children, the youngest being just a baby when her father died of smallpox in 1764. The oldest were in their early twenties, with her daughter Catherine recently married to John Skillman, also of Middlesex County. Sarah reportedly brought her younger children with her when she married William, which would have dramatically changed the dynamics of the Allen household.

Though the Allen genealogical records haven't recorded the state of William's family at this time, Beekman family records give us the names of Sarah's children. With a little imagination we can reconstruct the state of things in 1766:

- William's younger children by Jane Warford: Else (14), Ann (10), Elizabeth (8), and Joseph (2)
- Sarah's younger children by Christopher Beekman: John (16), Sarah (15), William (11), and Elizabeth (3)

Sarah's older children by Christopher Beekman (Christopher Jr., Catherine, and James) and William's older sons by Jane Warford (William, John, David, and Thomas) were adults by this time. We have indications that they were still associated with their parents, though somewhat inconsistently. The picture is fuzzy in detail, but a general pattern emerges. What I see is a dramatic shift in family culture because of the merger. The older children, especially William's, drifted away from the new blended family and formed a social network of their own. This did not happen immediately, but over time. The best indication of this is the fact that those who survived the Revolutionary War ended up living in Hampshire County, Virginia rather than in Loudoun County with William and Sarah. The younger kids were raised in the new family constellation that centered on the two couples of William & Sarah and Catherine and John Skillman.

In short order, William and Sarah had three children of their own. One report says two daughters (who died in infancy) and a son, James (b. October 15, 1769). Another report lists Samuel, Hester, and James as the children of their first three years together, again with the first two dying young.

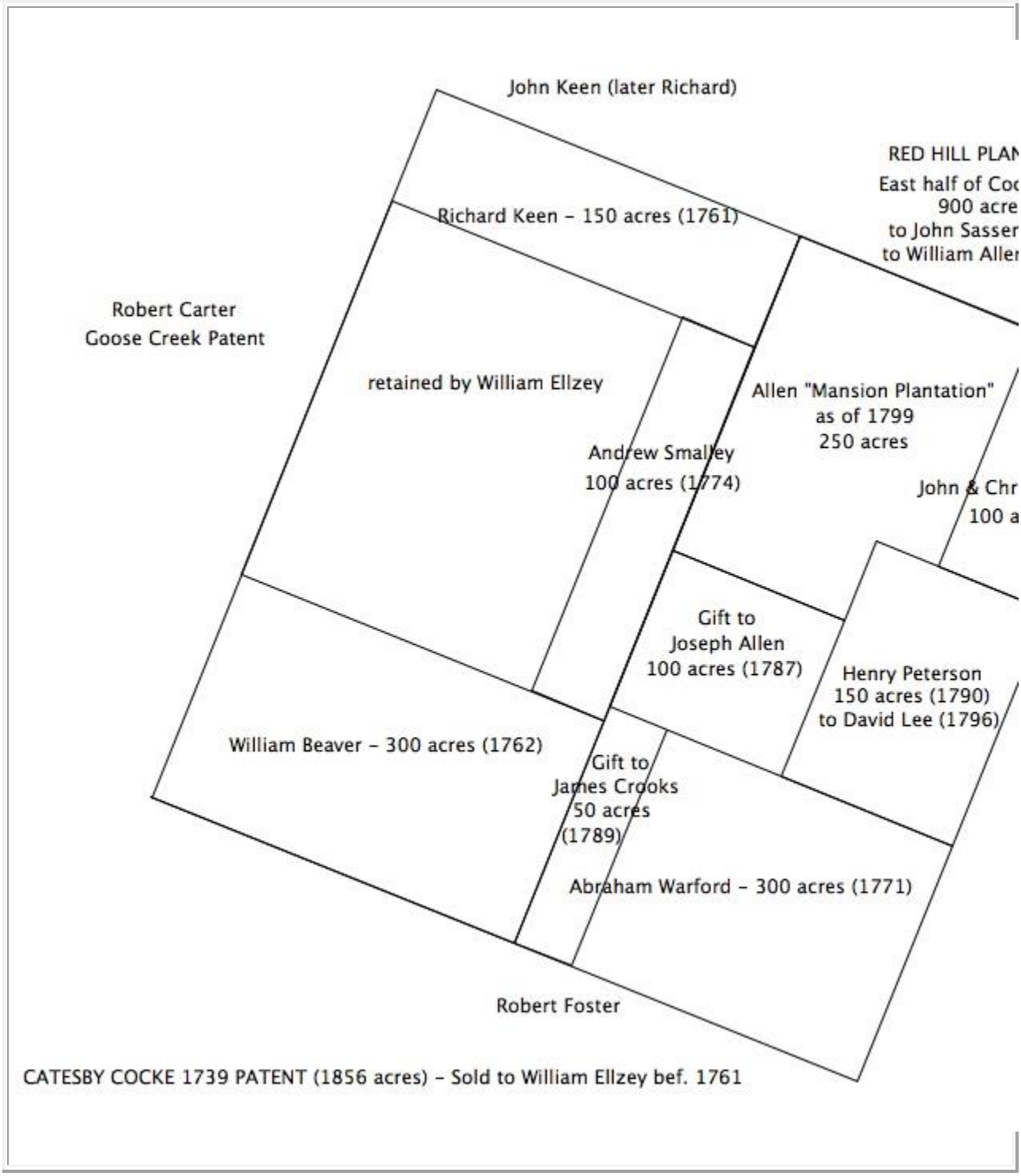
Adding it all up, it looks like William (late 50s) and Sarah (early 40s) would have had eight or nine children in tow in the late 1760s, ranging in age from infancy up to late teens. Only two or three would have been boys, and only one of these, William Beekman (13), would have been old enough to be significant help on the farm. Sarah, on the other hand, would have had a lot of help from the four adolescent girls in caring for the infants and toddlers.

It seems to me that the real impetus for the move to Virginia came after this blending of families. For William and Sarah, it would have been a wrenching transition. Both would have been dealing with the loss of longtime partners. The Amwell farm would have had little attraction for Sarah, and after the loss of Jane Warford, William might not have been too comfortable there either. A couple of events happened in 1769 that might have tipped the balance in favor of moving once and for all:

- John Warford (Jane's father) died--cutting one more of William's ties to the New Jersey neighborhood.
- Catherine and John Skillman, along with some other families in the area were pressing to move to Virginia.

Whether Catherine and John led the effort to move, or whether they followed Sarah and William's lead, this year seems to mark the real transfer of family assets and energy to the south. Though they weren't through with New Jersey for several more years, William starts showing up on the Virginia tax rolls more consistently in the early 1770s. And the financial transactions we see in New Jersey seem to be focused on raising capital to develop the Virginia property.

Part of the capital to develop Red Hill came out of the land itself. During the thirty years after he bought it, William sold off pieces of it--mostly to relations. The diagram below shows the whole of the Catesby Cocke patent, with the dates of purchase for the various sub-parcels marked.



On another topic: William's brother David, died in Pennsylvania in June 1776. His will had been written in 1774, the same year that he sold his farm near Mount Bethel. The inventory of his estate was completed June 29, 1776 and the whole was recorded at the Northampton County Court July 6, 1776. In the will he left Twenty Pounds to his "Brother William Allen now living in the Jerseys" and three of William's children also received money: John (£5), David (£30), and Janet (via her husband, Ephraim Herriott (£30). Why he didn't leave anything to William's other children is an open question.

There apparently was a problem in executing the instructions in David's will, which evolved into a legal dispute between William and David's executors. It still had not been resolved by the time William's wrote his own will in 1796, because he mentions it--leaving it to his son Joseph to pay the debt if the executors prevailed in their suit. The most probably explanation that I can come up with is that John Allen had died as a result of the War by the time his inheritance was delivered--or shortly thereafter. David's executors might have wanted to see the money returned. William might not have thought that was warranted-- might, indeed, have given the money to Joseph and some of the other children instead. The truth, unfortunately, is not available.

Revolution

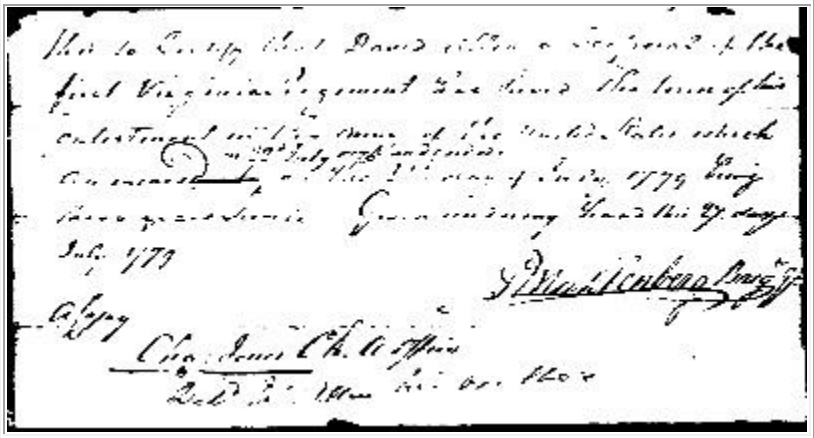
The move to Virginia coincided with a shift in the political winds in the American colonies. With the conclusion of the French and Indian Wars (1763, known as the Seven Years War or the Great War for Empire in Europe), Britain began a series of maneuvers to get the colonies to help with its war debts. Gradually, the resistance to these efforts evolved into the American independence movement, and the Allens appear to have been very involved in it. The main evidence for this is that at least four of his five sons enlisted in the Continental Army and three of them died during the fighting: William, John, and Thomas. We have no reference to David joining the army, and while this is not conclusive evidence that he did not, we also have his marriage in 1779 to suggest he wasn't directly involved--at least not for long.

As a bit of background, George Washington had been commissioned during the summer of 1775 by the Continental Congress to build a force that, on paper anyway, represented all the colonies. Previously, colonial militias had been under the control of each colonial authority. New England, having been in the forefront of the independence movement, had provided most of the troops until early 1776 when recruitment efforts were made farther south. Regiments were being assembled in Virginia as early as March 1776 and these were apparently involved in the siege of Charleston, South Carolina a few months later. Members of the early Virginia regiments also joined Washington in New York City in September 1776, just in time to be caught up in the rout of the American army by the British. Washington's hasty retreat from the colonies' largest city, the dash across New Jersey, and the counter-offensive against Prussian and British troops at Trenton and Princeton in the last week of the year are well described in David McCullough's book, 1776 .

In addition, some Virginia riflemen were at Valley Forge during the winter of 1777/78. In 1778 General George Rogers Clark (older brother of William Clark, of "Lewis & Clark" fame) had a contingent of Virginia riflemen with him on his campaign in the Ohio Valley.

William Jr., John, David, and Thomas would have been thirty-four, thirty-three, thirty-one, and twenty-six, respectively, at the beginning of the war. We know nothing for sure about the circumstances of their service, but there is some evidence to suggest possibilities:

- A fragment of a will for William Allen of Loudoun County, Virginia, which was recorded on 14 March 1776 states, in part: "Soldier being joined in the Army: TO brother my clothing when Joseph is 21; Sister Else, my Horse and Saddle; Sisters Ann and Elizabeth, All remainder of my estate to be divided equally." The will was probated April 10, 1780. The list of siblings is too accurate to be happenstance.
- Payroll records for a Private/later Sergeant John Allen, of the 1st Virginia regiment document that he returned to service in May 1777 after being absent since the previous October. According to the records, he was killed October 4, 1777, which happens to be the date of the Battle of Germantown, Pennsylvania--in which the 1st Virginia Regiment participated and took heavy casualties.
- A Certificate of Service for a David Allen, serving under Peter Muhlenberg who commanded the 8th Virginia Regiment of the Virginia Line (state army rather than U.S. army) starting in January 1776. This David served from July 22, 1776 to July 22, 1779, at which time he was discharged for having completed the terms of his enlistment. Serving in this unit may well have put him at Valley Forge during the winter of 1777/78. The date of discharge coincides nicely with our David's marriage to Ivea Fox in 1779. (See below.)



David Allen's discharge from the Virginia Army:

"This to Certify that David Allen a Corporal in the First Virginia Regiment has served the term of his enlistment in the army of the United States which commenced on 22d July 1776 and ended on the 22nd day of July 1779, being three years service. [illegible] my hand this 27. day of July 1779."

P. Muhlenberg, Brig. Gen.

There are records for other Virginia Allens with these given names, but these are more plausible than most. We can't say for certain that the above records are for William's sons (though the will for William, Jr. is pretty convincing), and we have no evidence for Thomas yet, but it's a start at putting together a picture of what the family's war experience might have been.

Son Joseph was too young at the beginning of the conflict to join up (twelve in 1776), but the story has come down through the years that he enlisted before the end of the war and, at age 17, was in

the assembled masses when Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown, Virginia in 1781. The colonial army at that event included both regular Virginia "Continental Line" soldiers and members of the Virginia militia. Which one Joseph might have joined is an open question.

The loss of three sons had to have been a hard blow for William (not to mention the rest of the family). Allowing young Joseph to join up, even toward the end of hostilities, must have been an extremely difficult thing to do. One wonders if they considered it a fair bargain to have paid such a price for independence from Britain.

The Later Years

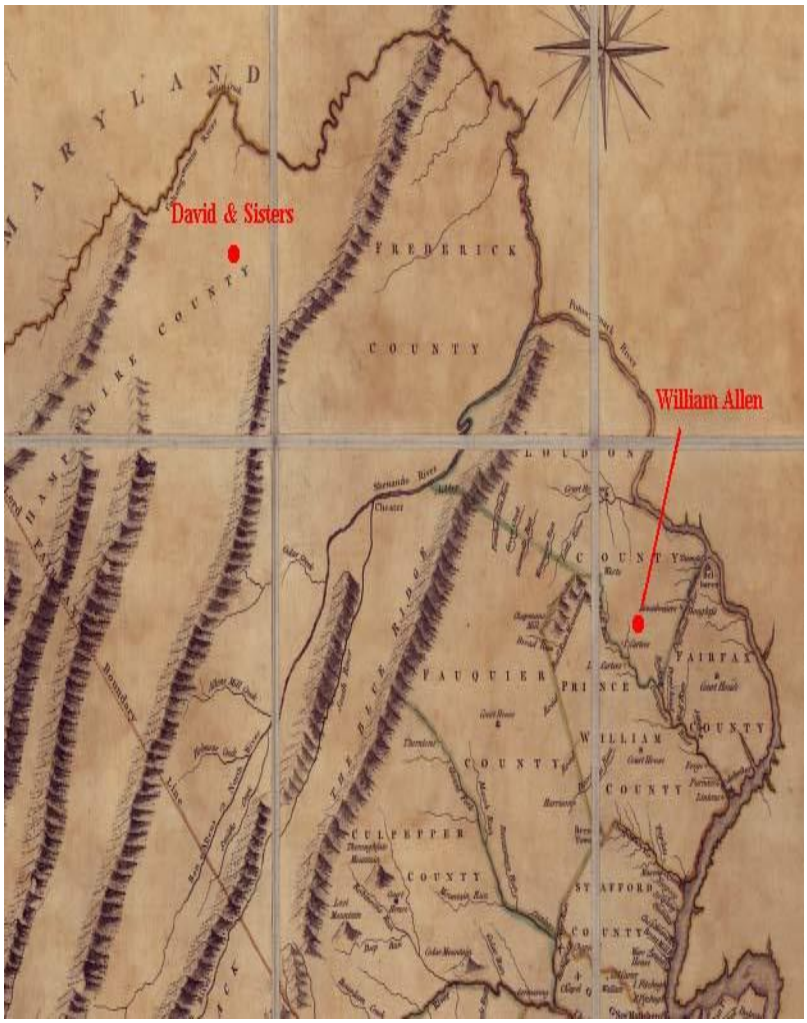
In spite of the war, life went on. In 1779, son David married Ivea Fox, his first cousin on his mother's side. (Ivea was the daughter of his mother's sister, Ann Warford, who had married Gabriel Fox and lived near the Allens in both New Jersey and Virginia.) They had three children: Margaret (Peggy), William, and John. By 1781 they were all living in Hampshire County, up in the Appalachian foothills (since the Civil war, part of West Virginia), along with her parents and David's sisters' families. They all appear in the "Heads of Families" lists of 1781, 1782, and 1784 for that county:

- Ephraim Herriott (who married David's older half-sister Jane in 1756 and who had six children at the time)
- Benjamin Forman (who had married David's younger sister Else and had four children--according to the current day Forman family research, this marriage took place in 1770, when Else was 18)
- Rev. William Forman (who married David's younger sister Elizabeth and had two children and one slave in the household)
- Robert Colvin or Stephen Colvin/Calvin (one of whom probably married David's youngest sister Ann). The records on the Colvins/Calvins are sparse and two different latter day families lay claim to the Colvins who lived in Hampshire County at this time. My money is on Stephen, but it's not a settled issue.

There were several other Formans and Berrys in the area. The Berrys, of course, were the family that raised Jane Allen after her mother Alice Berry (William's first wife) died--though it's not established that the Virginia Berrys and the New Jersey Berrys were the same family. While John Berry does not appear in the Hampshire County list, it is possible that the Berrys who do are his children. The Forman family had lived near William in Hunterdon County, New Jersey in the 1730s, and at least some members of it had come to Hampshire County, Virginia in the first wave of white settlement in 1725/26. This helps explain how Else (first) and the rest of the Allens ended up there.

Exactly how William's children and their spouses came to be in this frontier setting by the end of the war is undocumented, but this thin evidence suggests that the Allens and Foxes living in Loudoun County knew of the Formans and Berrys living up in the hills. There are several possible explanations for the moves, but the following seems most plausible to me:

- Contact between the families continued through the 1760s and in 1770, Else Allen was courted by Benjamin Forman and joined him in Hampshire County.
- David, after his army discharge in 1779, married Ivea Fox and the two of them moved to Hampshire County. Soon thereafter they were followed by her parents, Gabriel and Ann Fox, though it's also possible that the Foxes had moved to Hampshire County earlier and David moved there to be with Ivea.
- Through these connections, Elizabeth and Ann Allen would have met William Forman (a cousin of Benjamin Forman) and (Robert or Stephen) Colvin, respectively, and joined the folks in Hampshire County during the late 1770s or early 1780s after their marriages. (We can guess that they married after 1776 because their brother William, Jr. named them, but not their older sister Else, in his will that year.)



Since William's older sons, William Jr., John, and Thomas were of adults well before the war, it is entirely possible that they had married and started families before they were killed. Unfortunately, we have no suggestions in family records that they did, and to date have found no other documentary clues to say one way or the other. William Jr's will is the one piece of evidence we have and it clearly rules out any wife, children, or real estate for him.

Joseph, the youngest of Jane Warford's children, married Francis Wright on August 10, 1787. 'Fanny' was of either Scottish or English descent--different sources give different accounts. Robert Wright and Margaret Braden lived in Loudoun County from 1772 through (probably) 1789. They were quite well-to-do, her father Robert leaving substantial property to the family in his will. As noted above, upon Joseph's marriage, William gave him 100 acres from Red Hill Plantation to live on, and the young couple did not join the other siblings in Hampshire County.

Joseph and Fanny Allen had ten children, six of whom were born while William was still alive. All but one survived and had families of their own. (John, the third child (b. 1792) was killed by a falling tree at age twenty.) We have an interesting description of Joseph and Fanny, albeit a much later one, from one of their grandchildren. John F. Lander said of them in an 1895 letter: "Grandfather Joseph was a tall and slender man, florid complexion, and hair white as cotton from the first I knew of him. A staunch and devoted Presbyterian; never missed having family prayers, and I have knelt on such occasions asleep on foot! I believe Grandmother Allen (Frances) was one of the best women I ever knew. How I enjoyed, as a little boy, standing and looking into her precious face as she sat and smoked her pipe."

Elder brother David married a second time in 1789, this time to Elizabeth Wright, Fanny Wright's sister. We don't know what happened to Ivea Fox, though a safe assumption is that she died from disease or complications in childbirth. One source gives her year of death as 1787. David had eight more children by Elizabeth: Elizabeth (b. abt. 1790), Joseph (abt 1792), Asa Everett (1794), Francis, David Jr. (1805), Alfred (abt 1806), Harrison (abt 1808), and Ivea (abt 1810). (Some of these birth years are recorded in genealogies; some are conjecture based on marriage dates.)

Robert Wright and his wife Margaret moved to Hampshire County to be with David and Elizabeth probably around the time of their marriage. Robert died there in 1803.

The last of William's children, James Allen (b. 1769), was born to his third wife Sarah Cox Beekman, and married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Lee, married January 24, 1793. He had six children by her that we know of. His second wife was Martha Hughes. She had two children with James: John F. (b. 1823) and Mary Ann (b. 1825).

The last decade of William's life had its moments. Besides the suit with brother David's executors, he had a run-in with the Smalley family, who lived just west of him. In 1787, William Smalley, one of the brothers in that family, had sold him a mare. William expected the horse to provide him with colts as well as decent field work. When she didn't, he refused to pay Smalley for her, claiming that Smalley had misrepresented her true age. Smalley sued in County Court and won. In 1792, William counter-sued, asking for injunctive relief on the original judgment. The case dragged on until September 1794. After wading through many depositions and a couple of court sessions, the court dimissed the whole thing.

In a separate situation, Henry Peterson, who bought a section of Red Hill in 1790 (see diagram in the section on Virginia) ended up owing William a substantial amount of money. William's will of October 1796 gave son David £50 out of the hoped for settlement, which was being pursued by son James in the Loudoun Court at that time. Peterson sold his 150 acres to David Lee a couple of months after the will was written. In all probability, William was paid off at that time. (David Lee, by the way, was the father of Elizabeth Lee, who had married son James in 1793).

Open Questions

The move to Virginia raises interesting issues, some of which I mentioned above, but they deserve more attention.

Though only a couple hundred miles from New Jersey, Virginia was culturally, politically and economically quite different from its neighbor to the north. Settled primarily by the English, its society was dominated by Anglicans who saw religion in very different terms than Scots-Irish Presbyterians and Quakers-- the two groups William had spent the most time with in New Jersey. In addition, the deism that evolved in the area as part of the Enlightenment would have been even more objectionable to the Allens than Anglicanism. (As evidence of how seriously Presbyterians took their faith, we can look at brother David's will. In it he left money to the "Congregation of Mount Bethel, so long as they continue to adopt & maintain the Doctrines as at Present taught by [the synod?] at New York & Philadelphia." In addition, money was to go to "Indigent Students in Divinity at Nassau Hall or Prince Town College, so long as there be any there studying the Same." He was obviously very committed to a particular way of looking at the world. The evidence is strong that many Presbyterians felt much the same way.)

According to Thomas Jefferson, in his Notes on the State of Virginia , Anglicans had a strong hold on the legal apparatus of Virginia until after the Revolution--even though the population was by then about two-thirds dissenters. Even when he wrote the Notes in 1781, the transition to total religious freedom was not yet complete. I would suspect that, even though, legally and economically, William would have been better off in Virginia than in Ireland, in some ways his move to that colony would have felt like a step backward into the old social milieu. That this was tolerable to him was probably due to the relative isolation of life on the farms of the time and the presence of many others of like mind in the vicinity.

Revolutionary politics in Virginia were probably more to William's liking. Virginia's House of Burgesses was one of the more democratic institutions in the colonies. It took the lead (along with Boston) in challenging British efforts to expand control over the colonies in the 1763-1776 period. The Presbyterian Church, much more than the Anglican, was a fount of democratic thought. Since its inception in the mid 1500s, power within the church was derived from "the people"--the congregation. Those who held leadership positions did so at the behest of those lower in the church hierarchy, no matter at what level. That Virginia would have evolved a strong democratic tradition, even though continuously under pressure from the royal governor, would have warmed the heart of William and his family.

Economically, Virginia was agricultural, with fewer towns and cities than other colonies. Much of its wealth derived from exporting tobacco as a cash crop to England. Tobacco farming was supported by slavery and, while not every Virginia farmer owned slaves, those who were well off tended to get that way by relying on forced labor. William Allen (and most of his relations and friends) lived within that strata of Virginia society that occasionally owned a slave or two, but did not depend on them for large scale cultivation of tobacco.

There are three pieces of evidence that indicate that the Allens, at various times, owned at least one slave:

- The June 1771 ad in The Philadelphia Gazette requesting assistance in capturing runaway Jack, a mulatto with curly hair and a bowlegged walk. William offered a forty shilling reward for turning Jack in to "any of his Majesty's goals (jails)... and reasonable charges, if brought home, paid by me."

- A March 1777 report by Gabriel Fox to the Loudoun County Court in the matter of John Skillman's estate, where he refers to "one negro wench sold to Wm. Allen"
- The April 1787 tithable list for Loudoun County lists the Allen household as having one slave.

This evidence is sufficient to confirm that William Allen wasn't so averse to the practice of slavery that he wouldn't purchase one. But the record is spotty at best. It does not seem to have been a consistent practice for him. Indeed, in the Loudoun tithable list for 1777, he is not listed as having one. That list would have been put together within a few months of his purchase of the "wench" from Skillman's estate. It is quite possible that the ownership was a temporary thing, perhaps to facilitate Fox's trying to clear property out of the estate. Furthermore, no slaves were mentioned in William's 1796 will.

The same cannot be said of his children. All three who survived him (David, Joseph, and James) disposed of numerous slaves in their wills. And we know that Robert Wright, father-in-law to David and Joseph, gave away fourteen slaves in his will of 1803. Fannie and Elizabeth Allen were given negroes already "in their possession."

It begins to look like slave-owning came gradually to these families. Robert Wright and his wife Margaret, before their move to Hampshire County around 1789, do not appear to have owned any slaves--with the exception one named Patience, who shows up on the 1785 tithable list. How he came to have fourteen of them eighteen years later is a matter of speculation. Robert and William are not a good sample to generalize from, but one possibility is that slavery became acceptable to them as their children grew up and left home. Both seem to have come to the practice only in their sixties and seventies. The next generation, however, was not so slow to engage in it--a lesson in ways corruptive influences can eat away at the most religious of temperaments.

There is one final question that has occurred to me, totally unrelated to the above. That is the fact that none of William's sons was given the name Robert. Convention at the time was to use grandparents' names for the first and second children--sometimes maternal first, sometimes paternal first. The Allen family generally followed this practice: Janet, David, William, Jr., Elizabeth, Thomas, and Ann were all named for grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. But there was no Robert among William's thirteen children. Did this indicate some falling out with his father? And could this have had something to do with his migration in the first place? And does it add to the case that he and brother David came over using an indenture contract (i.e., without his father's support)? The name came back in the next generation--both Joseph and James named their fourth sons Robert--but the gap is tantalizing, if not conclusively significant.

(I suppose we should consider one other possibility: that way back in 1737 or so, Alice Berry died giving birth to William's first son, who also died. This boy could have been named Robert after William's father--but if he did not survive to be baptised, we would never know it.)

Legacy

In the closing years of his life William Allen had a substantial family surrounding him. His third wife, Sarah Cox, lived until 1797, preceding him to the grave by two years. Two of his three surviving sons had married and were living on the land that William had purchased close to forty years earlier.

Joseph had five children before William's death; James had probably three or four. Sarah's daughter Catherine Skillman Edwards, still lived nearby and two of her children owned land cut from the original Red Hill purchace. The number of grandchildren (and potentially great grandchildren) parading about was considerable. William was by any measure a successful man, both in terms of his financial accomplishments and the size and closeness of his family. By all accounts, he was respected in his church and in his community. But these achievements came with a terrible price. Along the way he outlived three wives, lost three sons to war, gave up one infant daughter for adoption, and buried three more. There are also reports (and evidence) that the daughters who made it to adulthood died at relatively young ages. In addition to his own pain, he had to watch son David suffer through the loss of a wife, too.

If we run the numbers--a perhaps cruel way to look at it--the picture is bleak. He gave life to thirteen children. Only five survived him (Jane, David, Ann, Elizabeth and Joseph). He had the help of three women along the way, none of whom were with him at the end.

William Allen left this world on June 9, 1799. According to family tradition, he was buried, along with Sarah Cox, in the graveyard of the local Presbyterian Church at Gum Spring, now Arcola--the graveyard of which is now the parking lot, according to one source. (However, during my visit there I could not locate the church, and no one I spoke to knew anything about it. I deal with this mystery in more detail in *Reconstructing William Allen*.) William's eighty-eight years spanned the bulk of the 18th century, a time when his adopted land made a daring transition from colonial backwater to, even at the time, one of the largest nations in the world.

As noted above, after his death most of the Allen clan pulled up stakes and left it all behind. In 1800, son Joseph sold his 100 acre parcel to his half brother James and moved his family (and slaves) to Clark County, Kentucky--only recently become a state. Within five years, David moved from Hampshire County to Bourbon County, Kentucky, along with the Herriotts and at least some of the Formans. From there, later generations of Allens moved to Indiana, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa and beyond--each generation of children forsaking the legacy of its parents in order to provide for itself.

James, who stayed behind, saw his children move to Tennessee and Illinois. Only one grandson remained behind at Red Hill: John F. Allen (b. 1823), the youngest but one of all William's grandchildren, married but childless as far as we know. He tended the farm until his death in 1884, and was buried (along with his parents) in the family graveyard on the property. He left the farm to a cousin, John Gulick.

Wrap-up

Historians like to look for meaning in the stories they tell. The meaning of this story is complex, carrying elements of hope, pride, sorrow, shame, and sadness. It is, in many respects, the American story writ small--on the scale of one family. Immigrant nation. Westward movement. The breaking of old patterns, though not necessarily old connections. Perseverance in the face of loss. Building (sacrificing) for the future. Expediency in the face of need. And rejecting the past in order to fulfill that most human of needs: to do it on one's own.

In assessing the significance of all this, we need to remember that William Allen would not have judged his life in these terms. What his life meant to him is easily quite different from what it may mean to us. This is an okay thing. Social context changes; values change; and a historical perspective evolves which mandates new ways of looking at past events. I hope this description, though it may not represent William's way of looking at the world, brings him to life, at least to some extent, to his descendents today.