

## ***The Allensworth School***

The Allensworth School was the pride of the community. Many of the Allensworth Pioneers were born as slaves and prevented from attending school. Allensworth offered opportunity. Their children could attend a magnificent school and learn from an accomplished African American educator, Professor William Payne. The theme that governed Professor Payne's adult life was:

**“GET AN EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY WILL COME.”**

Professor Payne not only served as the school's first principal and instructor, but also as social director for the town's Youth Association, director of the town's water company, a member of the Trade Board, and officer of the Young Peoples Christian Alliance.

The town's first classes were taught in the unfinished Hackett home in 1910. Later that year, the Pacific Farming Company donated lumber, and the townsfolk contributed their labor to build a small schoolhouse. George Johnson, an Allensworth resident, was the carpenter.

The Allensworth School District was established in February 1912. In June, Allensworth's voters unanimously approved a bond of \$4,950 to acquire land, build a new school, and equip it. The school was completed in 1912. Josephine Allensworth had the first schoolhouse moved and remodeled to serve as the Mary Dickerson Memorial Library.

Allensworth's first teacher was William Payne. He had graduated from Denison College in Ohio, and worked as a teaching principal in that state. In 1906, he brought his family to Pasadena, California. There Payne had to take work as a janitor because local school districts refused to hire African American teachers. Between 1906 and 1908, he met Col. Allensworth and helped to plan for an African American community in California. Payne became one of the five founders of Allensworth.

As a teacher, he was known as “Professor Payne” and was respected and admired by his students. Henry Singleton recalled that Professor Payne “was the greatest man you ever saw. I just loved him. He was the type of man that he'd get out and play with us. We used to play tag and all sorts of games, but when the bell rang, tend to business, that was it. And he was no monkey business. I guarantee you, everybody that got out of Allensworth had a grammar school education, the best that you could get any place; otherwise you could not get out.”

In 1920, the Payne family left for El Centro, where Payne continued to teach. Elizabeth Payne McGee noted that her father “never gave up on any boy or girl.”

It is a tribute to the Allensworth pioneers that the school, which has always been the town's largest structure, stands today as a lasting statement of the town's commitment to education. The school housed many of the community's functions and organizations.

*From the Allensworth docent manual*

Activities involving both adults and children took place throughout the year. Among these activities were meetings of the Allensworth Progressive Association, the Women's Improvement League, the Debating Society, the Theater Club, and the Glee Club.

One of the most memorable events that occurred every year at the Allensworth School was the commencement exercise. Sunday opened this celebrated occasion and the graduation exercise held on Friday evening would close the weeklong annual event. African Americans historically have had a great desire for obtaining an education. This desire was in large part due to the fact that they had been systematically excluded due to the practice of slavery and later by "Jim Crow" laws. As a result, the Allensworth community grew and developed around an educational institution.

The school operated until 1972.

## ***The Carter Home and Livery Stable***

Warren and Maria Carter and their son Elmer ventured to Allensworth from Missouri in 1910. They owned and operated the Carter Livery Stable. Along with horses and buggies they rented wagons. The Carter livery Stable was a successful business at the time.

During Allensworth's early years, trains made regular stops at the Allensworth Train Depot. The trains brought customers, tourists, traders, pioneers, business people, as well as supplies and materials needed by the town.

Mr. Carter bought Lots 1, 2, and 12 of Tract 6; he and Elmer built their home and livery stable.

The livery stable apparently prospered. A newspaper account of Allensworth at the close of 1913 noted:

The Carter Livery does a splendid business. A string of fast horses and capable vehicles fill the needs of the traveling public  
(*The Oakland Sunshine*, Dec. 27, 1913).

By the fall of 1914, the business was run by Elmer Carter. Increasing preference for the automobile was already a threat to the livery:

In spite of the tendency of the traveling public toward the automobile, Elmer Carter still does a good business with the old fashioned mode of travel, namely, the horse and buggy. Mr. Carter has quite a number of horses and several conveyances which go to equip his livery stable.  
(*The California Eagle*, Oct. 3, 1914).

Celebrating Allensworth's first wedding, Elmer and Manottia Archer were married in May, 1915. They made their home in a small house across the street from the school. Around this time:

...the town's activity included the quarterly arrivals of a 50-book allotment from the county library. The books arrived by train from Visalia; Elmer Carter's Livery Stable delivered them to the reading room at the county's expense.

Elmer and Manottia's son Eugene was born in October, 1916. By then, the Carter family had sold their livery business to William Dotson. In 1918, Elmer Carter was earning his living with farm and ranch work. Joseph Durell recalled that around this time "in Earlimart, Elmer Carter and myself, we took over the Moore ranch. We did all the work for them."

In late 1919 or early 1920, all of the Carters—Warren, Maria, Elmer, Manottia, and Eugene—moved to Tulare. Their legacy to Allensworth is the Carter house, one of the community's original homes, which after ninety years still stands where it was built.

## ***The Phillips Home***

Sergeant James Phillips, his wife Birdie and their four children arrived in Allensworth in 1911. Colonel Allensworth invited soldiers from his regiment, the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry, to join the community; Sergeant Phillips was one of the soldiers to accept the offer. His family moved into a “portable” or sectional house. At least five of these homes were constructed here. The Phillips’ youngest child, Irene, was born in Allensworth in November of 1911.

Sergeant James Phillips served in the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, where he was acquainted with Colonel Allensworth. Early in the formation of the Allensworth Colony, Sergeant Phillips bought Lot 5 in Block 58 of the town site and some rural acreage, Lot 1 of Tract 13. He was scheduled for duty in the Philippines in 1911, and brought his family to Allensworth at that time. His son James recalled that Sergeant Phillips had ordered a portable house and that it was put up and waiting for the family when they arrived.

Sergeant Phillips was able to spend only a little time in Allensworth; he died in 1917. Sergeant Phillips was unable to settle here with his family while still in the service. In 1917 he retired from the Army in San Francisco, but was seriously ill and died a few months after retiring. Members of the Allensworth community signed affidavits to help Mrs. Phillips obtain her widows pension. The 1920 census shows his wife, Birdie, a widow with five children: Elizabeth, 20; Florence, 16; James, 15; Harry, 10. The youngest child, Irene, who was born in Allensworth, was 8 years old. Also listed with the Phillips family in 1920 were Sarah Porter, Birdie’s mother, and Sarah’s grandson, William Dry. Mrs. Porter bought Lot 6 of Block 58, adjoining the western line of the Phillips’ place, but lived in a small house near the Hindsman’s store.

The Phillips family was active in the community and are mentioned in many of the interviews with early settlers. Josephine Hackett, for example, recalled Irene as one of her best friends. The Phillips house was near the Allensworths, and the families became friends; Mrs. Allensworth gave Florence piano lessons. Birdie Phillips served as the town’s librarian from late 1919 until February 1926.

The Phillips house is of particular interest because it was a “portable,” differing from prefabricated buildings such as the Sears kit house in that roofs and siding came in sections rather than as individual pieces. James Phillips remarked that several other families had put up these structures, including the Blacks, Archers, and the Halls. The Phillips home, in this way, is important historically, as well as architecturally.

Portable houses were already popular in the 1880s. Articles about these structures appeared in The Manufacturer and Builder in 1887 and 1889. They ranged from simple cabins to elegant buildings designed for permanent use. The cabins shown in the May 1887 issue of The Manufacturer and Builder and the houses depicted in January and February of 1889 all stand on piers. Harry Phillips remarked of his home that “a dog used to sleep underneath there, so it was up off the ground.

Harry Phillips recalled that “There used to be a rod that ran around the side of our house.” His brother James said, “It was (an) ordinary frame shack. Was held together by cable... modern times, they call it a portable house...It came from a factory, and they put it together with big cables. A lot of cables would be anchored in the ground and buried in the ground.” In The Manufacturer and Builder's January, 1889 article on portable houses:

Fig. 4 shows one of the numerous styles of the company's 'knock-down' houses. These are perfectly portable. They are made so that the parts, being held together by bolts or iron rods, no nails or screws are needed to erect them complete, and there are none to be removed when the building is taken down.

The Phillips house was later modified and enlarged. Comments in the Allensworth interviews indicate that members of the family were still living there in the early 1930s.

## ***The Hackett Home***

James Hackett was a man of strength, integrity, and vision, dedicated both to his family and his ideals. Born into slavery in North Carolina, he became a teacher after Emancipation. In 1886, he, his wife Alice, and their daughter, Sadie, came west. Mr. Hackett operated several successful businesses and became “one of Alameda County’s most esteemed citizens,” donating both time and effort to his church and to African-American organizations. At the age of sixty, he left the well-established life in Alameda to pioneer at Allensworth.

Mr. Hackett, his son Arthur, and their friend, Abraham Stockett, began construction of the Hackett home in 1910. In the fall of that year, the unfinished house served as Allensworth’s first school. Both the house and barn were completed by 1912, but the place was used only as a vacation home for the first few years.

The Hackett’s stay began in November, 1916, when Alice Hackett moved to Allensworth with the family’s three youngest children, Alice, Grace, and Josephine, Mr. Hackett and fifteen-year old Paul arrived early in 1917. Although their grown children remained at home in Alameda, James and Alice Hackett and the younger children participated completely in rural life. Mrs. Hackett planted “a big vegetable garden,” extending west from the Hackett’s place to Young Road. Among the vegetables she grew were “cabbage, beets, turnips, carrots, salad greens...mustard greens.” Across Stowe Avenue, Mr. Hackett “raised cantaloupes and yams and squash.” He planted alfalfa on his property south of town, and, like his neighbors, struggled with the community’s water shortage. His daughter Josephine recalled:

...the farmers had to take turns irrigating their fields one at a time. Papa usually got his turn at night. Many times he was out all night in hip boots, irrigating his acreage.

Mr. Hackett constructed a deep earthen cellar behind the house, where milk and butter from the family cow were stored. Shelves held “rows of canned fruits, jams, pickles, and vegetables” put up by Mrs. Hackett. She hung hams and bacon slabs from the rafters and kept fresh fruits and vegetables under a table which “held whatever needed cool storage at the moment.”

Before leaving Alameda, James Hackett had shipped a freight car full of lumber, hardware, and second hand furniture to Allensworth. Part of the barn became a store. Josephine wrote:

Did Farmer Jones want a certain hard-to-find nut or bolt? A brief search among Papa’s nail bins would surely turn up that very article. Just as surely, George Hare would find, resting on a couple of rafters, exactly the right window frame for the house he was building.

Mr. Hackett made “periodic trips back to Alameda to select lumber and hardware.”

All three of the youngest Hackett girls graduated from the Allensworth School—Alice in 1919, Grace in 1922, and Josephine in 1923—and left to attend high school in Alameda. James Hackett, after a brief illness, died in January, 1924. Mrs. Hackett stayed on in Allensworth, always in close contact with her children.

In 1931 and 1932, Mrs. Hackett enjoyed the companionship of Sadie, three cherished grandchildren, and Grace. Sadie had been recently widowed, and had come to stay with her mother. Grace returned to teach at the Allensworth School:

By coincidence, just as I was ready for employment as a teacher, Allensworth School had a vacancy...My pupils included two nephews and a niece, the children of my oldest sister, Sadie. The children of Nannie Archer Gomez and of Helatha Smith...were my pupils.

In late 1932, Mrs. Hackett fell ill and went to Alameda for medical care. She died on December 2. Only nine days later, the Hackett home in Allensworth caught fire. Despite the efforts of neighbors with a bucket brigade, the house and the neighboring Stockett home burned to the ground.

The reconstructed Hackett home and outbuildings stand on the original lot, with every effort made for accurate placement and construction. These structures recall daily life in early Allensworth, and honor the pioneer family who made their home here.

## ***The Mary Dickerson Memorial Library***

In 1913, Mrs. Josephine Allensworth purchased the town's first school building and had it moved to its present location to serve as a branch of the Tulare County Library system. Abraham Stockett, a local carpenter, was employed to enlarge and modify the structure after the move. Mrs. Allensworth stated that her gift of the library to the town was to honor her mother, Mary Dickerson, to serve the community, and to provide employment for "a worthy young woman."

Portable wooden shelves, with space for a thousand volumes, lined the library's walls. Books were contributed by numerous individuals, including Col. and Mrs. Allensworth. An allotment of fifty books was shipped quarterly by rail from the Tulare County Library in Visalia.

Allensworth's library immediately became a popular source of reading material for information and for enjoyment. Henry Singleton remembered that he "practically lived there" and that Professor Payne insisted that the school children use the library. He assigned them work in the study of African-American history, in addition to their grammar school subjects. Elizabeth Payne McGee, one of Professor Payne's daughters, recalled the library as the best equipped small library she had ever seen. She remembered most of the townspeople reading a great deal.

The first custodian of the library was pioneer W.H. Hall's daughter, Ethel, who served from July 1913 to August 1916. Mrs. Louise Dotson was custodian from September 1916 to late 1919. She was followed by Mrs. Birdie Phillips, who held the post until February 1926. Mrs. Sarah Hindsman was appointed custodian that month. Early in the 1930s, the library's books and magazines were moved to the Hindsman Store. After Mrs. Hindsman's death in 1937, Zebedee Hindsman served as custodian. The library closed in September, 1943.



## ***The Allensworth Hotel***

The Allensworth Hotel was situated in town within easy walking distance of the Santa Fe depot. At the time the hotel was built, Allensworth provided goods and services for transient businessmen, drummers, and ranchers, as well as for the townspeople and their friends and relatives. Considerable traffic through the town came via rail.

Before Santa Fe completed a spur track to Alpaugh, five miles west of Allensworth, the town had a regular freight business. Grain grown in the Tulare Lake Basin, west of town, was shipped from the Allensworth depot until the Alpaugh spur, completed in 1914, diverted the grain business. In 1913, the December 27<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Oakland Sunshine* referred to a grain warehouse standing approximately 100 yards from the railroad, as the largest between Los Angeles and San Francisco, with a 50,000 sack capacity. Commercially grown grain from nearby ranches was stored at the warehouse until it was shipped out on the Santa Fe. Laborers and ranchers involved in handling the grain were a ready source of business for the hotel and other commercial establishments.

The Allensworth Hotel was built in 1910 and opened that year. Elizabeth Dougherty, a wealthy African American business woman in Oakland, purchased the property and financed construction of the hotel. It is doubtful that Miss Dougherty spent time in Allensworth; the hotel was her investment in the town and its future. She hired John and Clara Morris as managers. Mrs. Morris operated the hotel until sometime around 1915. Other proprietors of the Allensworth Hotel during its first two decades were:

Mrs. Elvia Woods  
1916-1917

Mrs. Reginana Mattox  
1922-1924

Mrs. Nannie Coleman  
1917-1922

Mrs. Alice Hackett  
1924-1927

John and Clara Morris moved to Allensworth from Bakersfield where they had operated a successful catering business. During the Morris' five year tenure at the Allensworth Hotel, John Morris, a machinist, serviced well digging machines, traction engines, and various other mechanical irrigation equipment widely used in the local agricultural business.

A night's lodging at the hotel was available to travelers for \$0.75. Local residents often used the facility also. In particular, the youth used the hotel's dining room and player piano for their periodic parties. Furniture would be moved and tables stacked so that there was ample space for the evening frolics.

## ***The Hindsman Home and Store***

Zebedee and Sarah Hindsman arrived in Allensworth in 1911. They purchased Lots 2 and 3 of Block 42, on which they built a handsome, glass-fronted store. They also acquired an adjoining property, Lot 7 of Block 42, where they built their home. Early residents of the town recall a well-worn path connecting the store and the house.

Hindsman's general store was the largest store in Allensworth and the town's longest-lasting business. The stock included bulk and canned goods, men's work clothing, tools and small luxuries such as cookies and candy. Allensworth provided enough business for both the Hindsman and Singleton general stores, located within a block of each other.

Reporting on Allensworth on December 27, 1913, *The Oakland Sunshine* noted:

Z.M. Hindsman Company conducts one of the largest general merchandise stores in this section of the valley. Drummers make their regular trips here and place within the convenience of all choice and standard staples.

*The California Eagle*, in its front-page article on Allensworth, October 3, 1914, reported:

Z.M. Hindsman and his wife constitute the firm of Z.M. Hindsman & Co. This firm carries a very large stock of general merchandise and does a large business. Mr. Hindsman is president of the Municipal League, and is a whole-voiced booster for the good of Allensworth and the welfare of the Negro everywhere.

Zebedee Hindsman was a member of the committee formed to guide the Allensworth community following the death of Col. Allensworth in September 1914. Mr. Hindsman also served the town and the surrounding area as a Justice of the Peace, an insurance agent, the owner of a real estate company, and a notary public.

Sarah Hindsman ran the store with her husband; both are listed in the 1920 census as retail merchants. In February, 1926, Mrs. Hindsman was given charge of the Allensworth Library. By the early 1930s, the library's collection had been moved to the Hindsman's store, where the books and other reading materials were shelved in the southeast corner. When Mrs. Hindsman died in 1937, the library remained at the store. Mr. Hindsman served as librarian until 1943, when he resigned, and the library closed.

In May 1944, Zebedee Hindsman married Josephine Johnson, who also lived in Allensworth. She, like Sarah Hindsman, became Mr. Hindsman's work partner. In his will, which directed that all of his property go to his wife, Mr. Hindsman wrote that "We have worked together to improve our house and surroundings...." He died in April, 1950 and is buried in the Allensworth Cemetery.

## ***Milner's Barbershop***

A neat barber shop is operated by Mr. Frank Milner, a young man of energy and tact, who came here to visit the colony about three years ago, and who never left. He is one of the young men of the race that many about the cities might emulate with success. Mr. Milner also owns several pieces of outlying land.

*The California Eagle*, October 3, 1914

The Milner barber shop is first class in its accommodations. Plans are already drawn for a large building, the sand and molds being on the ground for the creation of a cement block house, containing barber shop, pool room, bath, cigar stand, etc. Mr. Milner is a young man of excellent business acumen and a valuable asset to Allensworth.

*The Oakland Sunshine*, December 27, 1913

Frank Milner arrived in Allensworth from the Bay Area in 1911 and set up his first barbershop in a small frame house just west of the present site. In 1914, he built a concrete block structure here. Josephine Hackett recalled its construction:

Mr. Milner and helpers mixed sand and cement together, poured the mix into a press, and soon a rectangular block would be formed. As these became dry and firm enough to hold together, they were put into place to form the walls of the building. A large picture window was installed in the front wall, and a stationary barber's pole was cemented into a hole just outside the front door and painted with the customary red and blue stripes.

Milner's barbershop played an important part in the early Allensworth community. The men of the town met at Milner's to argue over "all manner of agreements and disagreements." (Armilda Archer Smith noted that "Women didn't go in barbershops in those days.") The community orchestra, organized by Joshua Singleton, practiced in the shop.

In the early 1920s, as Allensworth's economic problems grew, some of the early settlers moved on. By 1924, Frank Milner had established his barbershop in Tulare. He was in business there for many years, and among his customers were men who had once been his neighbors in Allensworth.

When California State Parks acquired the property for Col. Allensworth State Historic Park, only the concrete foundations of the barbershop remained. The reconstructed building is a tribute to the memory of Frank Milner and his shop. It stands also as the only concrete block structure in pioneer Allensworth.