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Fact & Folklore of Owen County

by Dixie Kline Richardson



Allisons: From Flatboats To Jets

When an Allison engineer was asked if the company could make jets, the answer was in the affirmative. The Indianapolis Allison corporation founder was dead before the jet age, but he was the innovator, the architect of the world-famous manufacturer of engines and the toughest transmissions in the world, a co-founder of Prest-O-Light, maker of the first auto headlights, a partner in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, a developer of Miami Beach, Florida, and all this started a century back in James Ashbury Allison's family.

This remarkable history begins in Maryland when John Birch Allison and his wife Elizabeth Higgins Allison, along with others, loaded their family and possessions in wagons, left Montgomery County's tobacco-growing area, crossed mountains, used water highways and upon arriving at the mouth of the Kentucky River, hitched their teams and made for Bourbon County, Kentucky. In the Spring of 1819, John Allison liberated his slaves there and relocated in Monroe County, the growing edge of Indiana and a place with new possibilities.

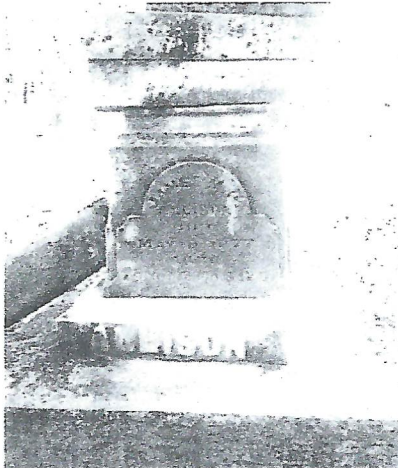
This couple had twelve children, heavy on girls, all born in Maryland and Kentucky. They lost a daughter in infancy, but raised the rest to adulthood. There were four sons: Noah Samuel, James Montgomery Higgins, (known as J.M.H.), John Fletcher, and Benjamin Asbury (named for Methodist preacher Francis Asbury).

At some time, most of the family moved to Owen County where the parents died. Noah and James M. H. started a mercantile business in Bloomington, but by 1828 they were sending produce to the southern states by flatboats from Owen County. Noah Allison's name appears frequently in Owen newspapers. He was known as a frugal, fair, resourceful and industrious merchant and in no time had amassed "a very handsome fortune." (His business in Spencer went on to be operated by his grandsons until they retired from their store to cultivate an orchard in the late 1920s.)

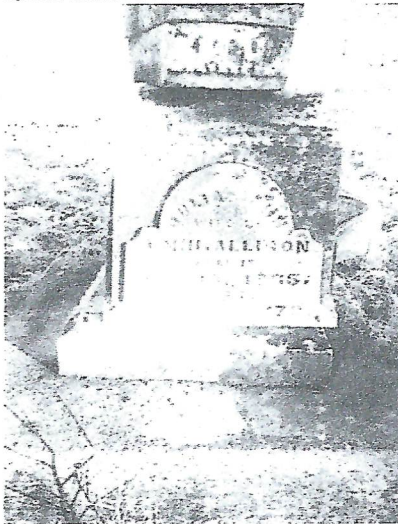
At twenty-two in 1824, James M. H. Allison married Julia Ann Payne. She died at eighteen. In June, 1828, he married Julia Ann Applegate, said to be the daughter of a wealthy Louisville tobacco merchant.

J. M. H. served as an early Spencer postmaster, and manufactured linseed oil. The two

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In need of restoration, the monument marking the graves of J.M.H. (above) and Julia Allison (below) in a small cemetery in a pasture at the site of Point Commerce, Greene County.

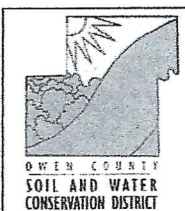


SWCD Annual Meeting To Be Held February 28 At Owen Fairgrounds

by Kelsey Thetonia
Executive Director,
Owen County SWCD

The Owen County Soil & Water Conservation District's 2015 Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, February 28, in the 4-H Building at the Owen County Fairgrounds. In years past, this meeting has been held at the end of January. However, due to the never-ending threat of inclement weather during this time of year, the SWCD board of supervisors has decided to move the meeting to a (hopefully) more promising date. Landowners are invited to attend this event to celebrate conservation and learn about the SWCD's accomplishments in 2014.

Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. and



the meeting will begin promptly at 6:00 p.m. Tickets will be sold in advance and will cost \$9.00 to cover meal expenses. Please reserve your tickets by Friday, February 20th so that we can provide

an accurate count to our caterer, Kimberly Hale of Family Catering. Family Catering is associated with Rice's Quality Farm Meats, Inc., located southeast of Spencer on Freeman Road. No tickets will be sold at the door; however, you can pick up and pay for your reserved tickets at the door. Thank you for your cooperation.

The SWCD staff and board members wish to thank all who support this event and our conservation programs throughout the year. We are looking forward to seeing you in February! Contact Kelsey Thetonia to reserve your tickets by calling 812-829-2605, or visit the SWCD office located at 743 East Franklin Street, Suite C, in Spencer.

Owen Valley Middle School Serving As Indiana's Pilot School For SafeTips App

by Michael Stanley
Staff Writer

A smartphone app similar to one being utilized by students and parents in several states is now available for those attending Owen Valley Middle School.

Mandated for use in several states, including Colorado where the community of Columbine was struck by tragedy in 1998, the app serves as an anonymous tip line for students and their parents to the school's principal, safety specialist, and school resource officers (SROs).

Aaron LaGrange, who serves as OVMS principal and as the Safety Specialist for Spencer-Owen Community Schools (S-OCS), along with Indiana State Police Senior Trooper Ryan White, began the project to implement the tool locally two years ago.

OVMS students recently received a tutorial from LaGrange on the new tool and were reminded that SafeTips isn't a replacement for dialing 911 and is a tool, not a toy.

The local project began after LaGrange and Trooper White heard a presentation by keynote speaker John Michael Keyes, whose daughter Emily was killed in a tragic hostage taking and shooting that occurred at Platte Canyon High School in Bailey, Colorado, on September 27, 2006.

"This was the seed that was planted to create what ultimately became Safe2Tell, which is the programming and tip line. Trooper White and I started looking



at that and asking questions," LaGrange said. "Interestingly enough, we discovered that no one else in Indiana had taken the next step to see what was involved."

As LaGrange and Trooper White progressively moved forward, the Indiana State Police (ISP) began receiving inquiries from school districts across the

state seeking to be included in the project. As state agencies began to get involved, the project was dropped by the ISP due to the rapid growth and potential for legislation to be written.

S-OCS, specifically OVMS, will now serve as the state's initial pilot school for the app. LaGrange said Clay Community Schools is in the process of exploring

implementing a version of the program.

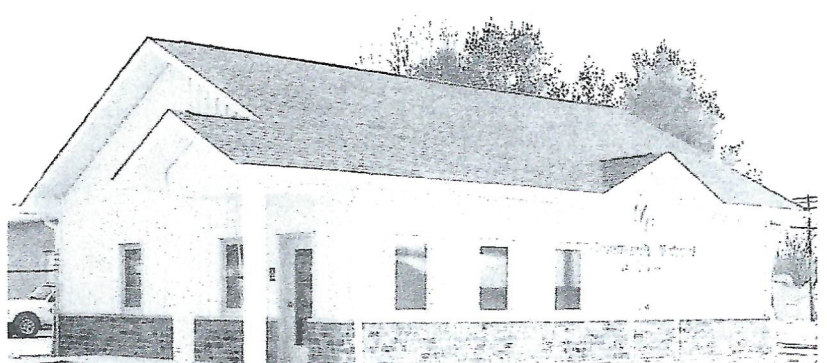
"I think we were a victim of our own success. Trooper White and I just wanted to focus on Spencer-Owen, but it got bigger and bigger. Ultimately, members of our legislative assembly saw the potential good a program like this could do and came forward to inquire about writing a bill for the entire state to do it. At that point, we said let's wait to try it so we know exactly what we are advocating for. At the same time, it got wrapped up in bureaucracy," LaGrange said. "What happened was we as a district backed up and decided to begin the pilot on a small scale with one building - Owen Valley Middle School. It's technically set up at all schools in the district, but right now, we're just teaching OVMS kids how this works. The hope would be that we would work out any questions or glitches, find it of value, and possibly expand it to other schools."

LaGrange said the measure of success for the application will be interesting to determine.

"If we get 27 tips, is it successful? What if we only get two? If I can go to a kid and they know that it's there for them, and they feel comfortable using it, then we are successful," he explained. "The reality is that I hope kids don't have to use it much, because that means things are going well and everything is functioning smoothly with and between students. If it's being

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CNG Relocating To New Office At Corner Hillside And Vandalia Avenues In Spencer



Community Natural Gas (CNG) is in the midst of relocating to its new office at the corner of West Hillside and Vandalia avenues in Spencer.

According to CNG Operations Manager Dean Kieffer the office will be fully operational starting Thursday, January 29.

"We're happy to be in a new location and to continue serving local residents," he said.

The new building will include a drive-thru with a night deposit. The new location also provides much-needed room for expansion in the office,

shop, and warehouse areas.

Kieffer said CNG has applied for an expansion with the State of Indiana to cover all of Owen County in an effort to help lower heating costs for local residents. A ruling is anticipated in three weeks.

Shown in the inset photo, left to right, are CNG employees Bill Herrington, Rita Shunk, Darren Hutcherson, Dylon Hutcherson, Justin Herrington and Dean Kieffer.

The local office is available by phone at 812-829-3505, and accessible online at www.communitynaturalgas.com. (Staff Photos)



Fact & Folklore of Owen County

by Dixie Kline Richardson



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brothers, only three years apart, remained partners in merchandising for some time and included younger John F. When James discovered a delta at the confluence of Eel and White rivers in Greene County, talk of a canal prompted the 19th century entrepreneur to envision a river town and with his brother John who had civil engineer expertise, he bought hundreds of acres of land in a prime commercial location. James' community spirit was evident in Owen County where he was surety on bonds for two county treasurers and served as an agent for the Owen County seminary, but he saw greener pastures on a bluff in Greene County. In 1835, Point Commerce was on the map. A storehouse was opened in the fall. There were plenty of customers in Eel River Township and over in Owen County, too. The market was expanding in trade as far south as New Orleans.

At Point Commerce, the Allison brothers' average purchases were \$30,000 annually, selling on time, and being paid in produce. They employed fifty to one hundred men. Point Commerce had a steam saw mill, grist mill, pork house, and a warehouse where tons of grain and tobacco could be stored. From fifteen to twenty-five loaded flatboats were sent down river each year. Hogs were bought by the thousands over time. According to James' son George, there was frequently \$40,000 in stored pork and produce waiting for the river to rise.

The community had cotton gins, carding mills, a tannery, distillery, three ferries, shops and stores. In its flourishing years there were harness, saddle and shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, coffin and cabinet craftsmen, bakers and brewers. James Minich, who married the Allison's daughter Martha Elizabeth, was the town doctor.

Goods were hauled in wagons from Vincennes and Louisville to Point Commerce and back. George Allison related how hundreds of "heavily loaded" wagons with four- and six-horse teams labored up a steeply inclined road from the wharf at the two rivers' junction. J. M. H. even chartered the steamboat "J. B. Porter" at New Orleans and crammed it with merchandise for his store.

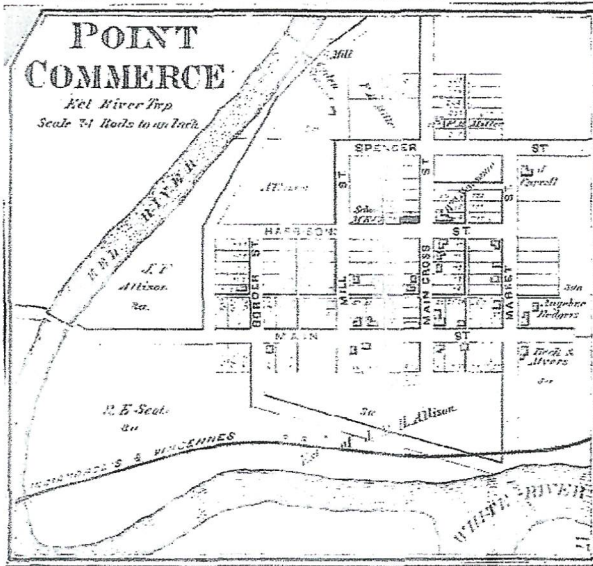
Along with his residence, James Allison built a hotel called the Junction House and installed a brother-in-law, Dr. David Shepherd, as manager. Because all the Allison were ardent Methodists, the town's only church was the Wesley Chapel building where people from miles around worshiped for half a century. It was largely financed and kept going by Allison financial aid, as was the brick school house.

John Fletcher Allison, known as John F., was the "on-road" representative of the Allison enterprises traveling to New Orleans, Louisville and Pittsburgh. He was a Whig serving twice in the House of Representatives and once in the Senate from the Owen-Greene district. Known as a popular orator, he campaigned for William Henry Harrison and was said to be "a relentless foe of slavery."

When the railroads came, he was a far-sighted advocate giving twelve hundred acres of land, worth \$8,000 then (figure today's value). He donated \$2,000 for rail lines and served as secretary without pay for a year on the board of directors of the Indianapolis and Vincennes Railroad.

John attended IU, served as Point Commerce postmaster, surveyed, was a Justice of Peace, a Mason, organized a militia company, and married a neighbor, Martha Spooner, with whom he had several children. He died in 1885.

There is adequate evidence that the two Allison brothers invested a fortune in Point Commerce. Its prime flourishing days lasted roughly twenty years. In 1841, two flatboats of twenty-one sank with freight lost. James made up the difference when people's pledges to pay for preachers and teachers and buildings weren't honored. He often paid taxes for his neighbors and waited in vain for them to repay in produce. His son George said, "He donated to everything and assisted his friends in their hour of need. Then when he lay sick and all thought on his death-bed in the summer of 1852, some men



The plat of Point Commerce from an 1879 Greene County atlas.

If You are a Stranger in a Strange Land,

And want something strange to talk about when you go home, read our advertisement and see what we offer in

FANCY GROCERIES.
LUNCH AND POTTED TONGUE, DEVILED HAM, CORNED BEEF.

PLUM PUDDING, PRESERVED GINGER,
SWISS AND EAGLE BRANDS CONDENSED MILK, CURTIS BROS. CANNED GOODS.

Hunting and Fishing Parties would do well to call and get just what they want.

WE ALSO CARRY A LARGE AND WELL SELECTED LINE OF

LUNCH AND POTTED TONGUE, DEVILED HAM, CORNED BEEF.
FROM NOW ON we will sell MASON'S SELF-SEALING JARS at POSITIVELY COST.

We are Sole Agents for the following Celebrated Brands of Cigars:
GOLD FLAKE, WHITE SWAN, OLD HELMET, ROYAL, PUNCH AND NO. 15.

SEE US AT THE OLD STAND,
Very Respectfully,
ALLISON BROTHERS,
SPENCER, INDIANA.

An 1899 advertisement for the Noah Allison branch's store in Spencer, a landmark business for many years.

whom he had befriended sent out false and misleading reports about him, which damaged his credit and brought on his financial ruin."

Always the speculator, J. M. H. advertised another of his real estate ventures in land laid out for a town and mill site he named Kossuth on the cross-cut canal in Clay County, halfway between Terre Haute and Worthington. He advertised this property of 120 acres and a half-finished storehouse for sale in the summer of 1856. Located near a canal lock, the site, he assured, would have "never failing water power."

The steam transportation dream expired when White River turned out not to be navigable; the canal project, dependent on locks and dams that failed, water levels that were unreliable, the coming of the railroads, and losses suffered by the Allison's not covered by insurance began the demise of the hilltop river town. A fire in 1854, a cholera epidemic in '61, a split-over onto the other side of the river with a new town called Worthington all brought Point Commerce to a steady decline.

In February, 1861, J.M.H. advertised in the *Worthington Gazette* household and kitchen furniture, and a large cook stove, "intending to leave the country the first of the month." Selling for cash and about half the value of the sale items, he also listed several hundred small peach trees ready to plant. In exchange for any items, he sought a yoke of cattle. (That year, nephew John W. from Spencer operated the One Cash Price Store at the Point.)

Noah Allison, the older brother, died in 1878; his Spencer business on the north side of the square passed to his sons. The fourth and youngest of the original Allison brothers, Benjamin

Ashbury, became a Spencer physician and an agent for war pensioners.

The *Owen County Journal* in 1870 reported that J. M. H. Allison was "again moved into the old Junction House at Point Commerce where he resided some 40 years ago."

On May 10, 1877, the newspaper announced that "J. M. H. Allison's remains passed down to Worthington on the 10 o'clock train this morning." He died in the home of his son-in-law, Dr. Minich in Indianapolis; Julia died there in 1885. Both are buried on high ground in the Point Commerce cemetery, now private farmland.

Thanks to their seven sisters, the Allison's had equally interesting brothers-in-law. Mary Ann married Dr. Amasa Joslin, Spencer's first physician; Mahala married Dr. David Shepherd. Matilda married freemason preacher and politician, Eli Price Farmer. Lucinda had married Joshua O. Howe in Kentucky; they lived in Bloomington. Elizabeth married Samuel Howe, a partner in the earliest mercantile business and brother of Joshua O. Louisville became Mrs. Julia Lathrop. Susan's husband was John Moore.

There is much more to tell about the many Allison's including one who served with Custer, vanished Point Commerce, and James A. Allison, but this record is to link a pioneering businessman born in 1802 and his grandson whose name is now a part of the history of Allison Transmissions, General Motors, and Rolls-Royce.

James M. H. and Julia lost several children including sons Charles of camp fever at Cheat Mountain during the Civil War, son Robert at twenty, and Rev. John Elisha Allison in 1863. It was their son Noah S. Allison,

named for his uncle, who became the father of the Allison Corporation's founder.

By 1870, J.M.H. and Julia with three sons were living in Hillsdale, Michigan. Noah clerked in dry goods, was a traveling salesman for the family wholesale grocery business and then another company.

He moved his family to Indianapolis in 1889 and started a knitting company, a collection firm, and a trade magazine. In Noah's last years he began a coupon printing business producing coupons that were used for currency. After his death, his widow Myra, (whose father was Ashbury Black), son James A., and other children turned that venture into an international concern.

To wind this lengthy story down: A school dropout, the mechanical-minded James Ashbury Allison by leaps and bounds became an entrepreneur-capitalist known the world over and forever connected to cars, engines, aircraft and "the greatest spectacle in racing."

He died in August, 1928 at his two-million-dollar estate, now the campus of Marian University in Indianapolis, at fifty-five.

In 2007, General Motors sold its Allison unit to two private equity groups for \$5.6 billion dollars. What would Jim Allison's Owen-Greene-Monroe counties ancestors have thought of that.

Arthur Scores Career-High 17 To Lead JV Patriots Past Mustangs

Staff Report

Owen Valley earned a rival 47-33 win over Edgewood last Thursday night at home, led by a sophomore center Jonah Arthur's career-high 17 points.

The Patriots established an early seven-point advantage, led 8-7 at the close of the opening quarter, and never trailed in the contest. OV received four early points from Arthur, along with two each from Robert Herrington and Ryne Heckman.

Tanner Ray added five points in the second quarter, along with a three from Hunter Sturgeon and another bucket by Heckman to increase the OV lead to 18-13 at the half.

In the third, OV maintained its lead with five more from Arthur, a three from Michael Light and a free throw from Nick Boyd to enter the fourth up 27-20.

The closing quarter saw the Patriots connect on 12-of-16 free throws,



Jonah Arthur

outscored the visiting Mustangs 20-13.

OV knocked down 16-of-22 free throw attempts on the night.

"With just under four minutes left in the game we decided to throw the floor, take time off of the clock, and attack when they trapped," OV coach Lucas Roberts said. "I put a lot of faith in my guys and they came

through. We took care of the ball." Arthur tacked on eight points in the fourth, accounting for his career- and game-high 17. He also pulled down eight rebounds and blocked two shots.

"Jonah had his best game of the year, during one of the most trying times of his life," Roberts added. "I'm really proud of him, our community, and how his teammates rallied around him."

Sturgeon knocked down six-of-six free throws, finishing with nine points on the night. Light connected on four-of-six from the charity stripe to help account for his nine points, while Nick Boyd added a basket. Ray ended the night with five points, Heckman four, Boyd three, and Herrington two.

OV (5-4, 3-1 WIC) travels to West Terre Haute tonight, Monday, for a 7:30 match-up against the West Vigo Vikings.

JV Clover Boys Remain Undeclared In Conference With Win Over Lakers

Staff Report

Cloverdale's junior varsity boys' basketball team erupted for 26 second half points en route to a 37-26 West Central Conference win last Thursday evening at North Putnam. The win improved the Clovers' overall record to 8-3 and 3-0 in conference play.

In a tale of two halves, the Clovers struggled to make shots right from the opening tip. The North Putnam Cougars held the Clovers scoreless over the first 3:30 of the game until Brayden White scored on a back door lay-up to get the Clovers on the board. Brennan Hall would add a basket and hit 1-of-2 free throws.

Trailing 8-5 at the end of the first quarter, the Clover defense clamped down and held the Cougars to three points in the second quarter. White, Nick Winders, and Ryan Heavener added one basket each, leaving the game tied 11-11 at the half. The Clovers used balance scoring from White, Winders, and Seth Pfaff to net 13 third quarter points. White drained two more field goals

in the third quarter, while Winders connected on two free throws and a field goal. Pfaff netted five points in the third quarter, as the sophomore penetrated his way through the Cougar defense, connecting on two field goals and going 1-of-2 from the charity stripe.

Winders jump started the Clover offense in the final quarter, as the freshman swished a three-point basket from the top of the circle and added a lay-up as the Clovers pushed their lead over the Cougars to double digits. The rest of the fourth quarter scoring came as the Clovers made 8-of-14 free-throws to seal the win.

Winders led all Clover scorers with 11 points, nine of them coming in the second half. Winders also picked up two steals for the game. White finished the contest with nine points, while adding four rebounds and two steals. Pfaff ended the night with seven points and seven rebounds. Heavener had six points, and Hall with four to round out the Clover scoring. Hall's defensive presence was also felt as the

junior picked up two blocks and two steals.

Next up for the Clovers will be a home contest against the Shakamak Lakers this coming Tuesday, January 27. Tip-off is set for 6:00 p.m. at Cloverdale High School.



February 2
6:00 p.m. - 7th & 8th grade girls' basketball vs. Eminence at Eminence.
February 10
6:00 p.m. - 7th & 8th grade girls' basketball vs. Southmont at Cloverdale.
February 12
6:00 p.m. - 7th & 8th grade girls' basketball vs. North Clay at North Clay.

WELCOMING PATIENTS TO OUR GREENCASTLE OFFICE

Jaime J. Ayon, MD, a physician with Oncology & Hematology Specialists, a Franciscan Physician Network practice, is now seeing patients on Wednesdays at Putnam County Hospital Cancer Center. He works in partnership with the cancer team at the hospital.

Dr. Ayon attended medical school in Ecuador and obtained his residency and fellowship training at Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow, New York. He offers patients comprehensive chemotherapy and infusion services to treat early and advanced stage cancers.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Ayon, call (765) 655-2581. Visit us on the web at FranciscanDocs.org



JAIME J. AYON, MD
Oncologist/Hematologist

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Franciscan PHYSICIAN NETWORK
ONCOLOGY & HEMATOLOGY SPECIALISTS



Putnam County
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