

# Allen, John Frederick (1847–1924)

## LESTER DEVINE

Originally trained as a secondary history teacher, a career long Adventist educator, Lester Devine, Ed.D., has taught at elementary, secondary and higher education levels and spent more than three decades in elected educational leadership positions in two divisions of the world Church, NAD (1969-1982) and SPD (1982-2005). He completed his forty years of denominational service with a term as director of the Ellen G. White/Adventist Research Centre at Avondale University College in Australia where his life-long hobby of learning and presenting on Adventist heritage issues became his vocation.

John Frederick Allen was a pastor in Queensland, Australia.

## Early Life and Conversion

John Frederick Allen was born in County Sligo in Northern Ireland on April 1, 1847, and raised in a farming family.<sup>1</sup> His parents were Jane and Henry Allen. A clerk in early adulthood, John at 37 years of age married 26-year-old Mary Allen, known within the family as Polly. Soon after their marriage, the newlyweds immigrated to Australia, arriving on the ship *Liguria* in Melbourne in January 1885.<sup>2</sup> Their son Frederick was born in Victoria later that year.<sup>3</sup> In 1888 Polly died in childbirth, and their second son died 23 days later. Named Thomas Henry Allen, he shares his mother's grave, and John was left raising the infant Frederick on his own.<sup>4</sup>

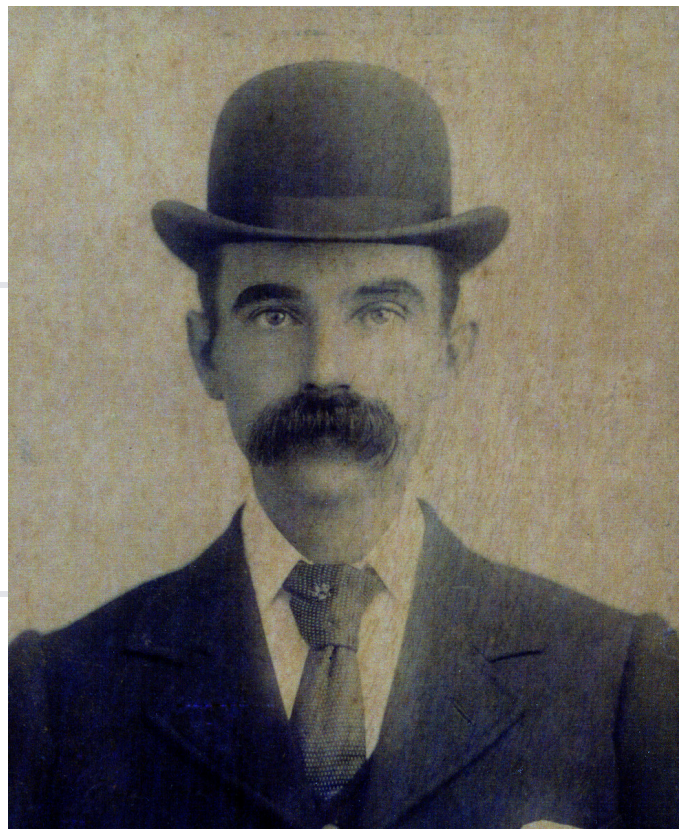
By the late 1890s, John Allen had left farming in drought-stricken Victoria and was the stationmaster at Bunbury in Western Australia. John attended a tent mission in Bunbury run by Pastor Craddock who spoke fearlessly on the mark of the beast, and this message had huge appeal to John, who was a leading Orangeman in the Western Australian Protestant community at the time and, according to the family, a member of the Black order. John arranged for Pastor Craddock to repeat his address for the entire membership of the Lodge, and they were surprised that the preacher knew so much about Masonry yet was not a member of the Order. Pastor Craddock's messages inflamed the Bunbury Roman Catholic community, and Lodge members feared for the safety of the young Bible worker, Emily Appledorf, who was part of the mission team. So the Lodge arranged for various members to follow her at a distance wherever she went on her church work and thus ensured her safety from molestation, something she did not know until years later.<sup>5</sup>

Emily had trained at Avondale College in 1898, as a member of the very first class, and was soon invited back there to teach English and rhetoric. During her time there, she would often visit Ellen White at her home, Sunnyside, and found her to be a rather retiring personality with a natural shyness. However, when she received a special message, she would lose that shyness and would display a regal dignity, and when she rose to speak, her clear ringing tone commanded attention.<sup>6</sup>

## Career and Ministry

In 1899 John Allen kept his first Sabbath. He resigned from his position as stationmaster at Bunbury, and three months later took up canvassing work in Tasmania under the supervision of Pastor Harold Harker, not knowing that some three decades later his son Percy would marry Harold's daughter Win!

Some two years later, John Allen was invited to take up ministerial work.<sup>7</sup> In December 1900, he married Frances Emily Appledorf at her parents' home in Tasmania. She was 23 years old, and he was 30 years her senior. Eileen, born in 1903, was the first of seven children born to the marriage, with George, Percy, Eulalia, Edgar, and Olivette soon also joining the family, and finally Teddy.



John Frederick Allen  
Photo courtesy of Lester Devine.

John and Emily worked for 10 years in Tasmania and Flinders Island before being transferred to Queensland<sup>8</sup> John was ordained into the gospel ministry on September 3, 1911, at the Queensland camp meeting, when he was 64 years old.<sup>9</sup>

With the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, John's son from his first marriage, Frederick, joined the Australian Army and was soon sent to Egypt for training and later joined the Gallipoli campaign against the Turks. A century on, the Allen family has a document collection known as the Gallipoli letters, and among them are letters Frederick wrote to his father from both Egypt and Gallipoli.<sup>10</sup> Also part of that collection is a letter of condolence from Frederick's commanding officer, Lieutenant Cheesewall, addressed to the "Reverend Allen," who shared the news of Frederick's death the previous day, November 11, 1915.<sup>11</sup> He had been on duty with four fellow soldiers in a dugout when a shell had landed in their midst and, on exploding, had killed them all instantly.

Pastor Allen continued in full-time ministry in Queensland for eight years until failing health made his retirement a necessity.<sup>12</sup>

## Later Life

He retired with his family to Cooranbong, New South Wales, near Avondale College, where the mild climate made it possible to have a good garden and thus be largely self-sufficient food-wise. In 1920, the seventh and last of Emily and John's children was born. As the date of his birth was the same day of the year, November 11, that Frederick had been killed in action five years earlier, this last son was named Frederick James "Teddy" Allen in memory of his much older half-brother. Raising such a large family on the limited wage of a pastor, and later on the even more restricted income in retirement, the family struggled financially. Four of the seven children were to die of heart failure at around 50 years of age, and one of cancer at only 29.<sup>13</sup>

In 1924, Pastor Allen spent some weeks in the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital receiving treatment for pneumonia. Eventually, weary of the experience, he checked himself out one evening and caught the train home only to find the train service he was on did not stop at his home station of Dora Creek. So he got off the train at Morisset, the previous station, and in the middle of the night walked north along the railway tracks toward Dora Creek. Crossing a railway bridge in the dark, he fell from the track and, severely injured, lay on the road below until daylight, when he was found by the Dora Creek postmaster, rescued, and carried home. With no treatment possible, Pastor Allen realized his end was near, and two weeks later, he died, on August 8, 1924.<sup>14</sup> The last Morning Watch text he read was 2 Timothy 1:12: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Pastor Allen was 77 years old when he died.<sup>15</sup>

Emily Allen continued on as a single parent, raising her seven children, who ranged from 21 years of age down to just 4 when she was widowed. On May 6, 1937, she had a heart attack and died at the age of 60. She was buried in the Rookwood cemetery, Sydney, New South Wales on May 8, 1937.<sup>16</sup>

## Legacy

John Allen did not live long enough to see his influence filter down through the generations of his family. Each of the four generations following has provided workers for the Seventh-day Adventist Church: preachers, teachers, health workers, as well as committed lay people who have, with considerable energy, supported the mission of the Church with their time and resources.

## SOURCES

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———. "Missionary Work in Queensland." *Australasian Record*, September 18, 1911.

———. "Roma Queensland." *Australasian Record*, January 19, 1914, 6.

———. "The Missionary Campaign and the Loud Cry, No. 1." *Australasian Record*, August 24, 1914.

———. "Week of Prayer in Toowoomba." *Australasian Record*, July 3, 1911.

"Brother J. Allen and family . . ." *Australasian Record*, December 19, 1910.

Butz, Edwin S. "John Allen obituary." *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1924.

Cheesewall, Lieutenant, to the Reverend John Allen, November 12, 1915. Private letter. Personal collection of the author.

Colony of Victoria Birth Register. Schedule A for deceased Allen male child, Thomas Henry Allen, January 3, 1886.

"It is with regret . . ." *Australasian Record*, September 18, 1916.

John Allen Personal Service Record. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Allen, John." Document: "Allen, J."

"Monthly Summary of Australasian and Natal Canvassing Work." *Australasian Record*, May 15, 1903.

"Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work." *Australasian Record*, July 1, 1901.

Musk, Eulalia (Allen), to Pastor Campbell, September 1964. Private letter. Personal collection of the author.

New South Wales, Australia. Item 15458, August 8, 1924. John Allen. Death Register for New South Wales, Australia.

Piper, H. E. "Emily Allen obituary." *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1937.

"Queensland Conference." *Australasian Record*, September 18, 1911.

Starr, G. B. "The Tasmanian Camp Meeting." *Australasian Record*, May 15, 1903.

Teasdale, George. "The Queensland Camp-Meeting." *Australasian Record*, September 18, 1911.

## NOTES

1. New South Wales, Australia, Item 15458, August 8, 1924, John Allen, Death Register for New South Wales, Australia.?
2. Shirley Tarburton, email message to author, February 6, 2017; Web search results for immigration information regarding John and Mary Allen, who arrived in Melbourne on the *Liguria* in January 1885.?
3. See Roll of Honour: Frederick Charles Allen, Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/people/rolls/R1670142/> and the Roll of Honour circular associated with that record.?
4. Colony of Victoria Birth Register, Schedule A, for deceased Allen male child, Thomas Henry Allen, January 3, 1886. See also Carol's Headstone Photographs, which lists "ALLEN Mary, Thomas Henry, [http://www.ozgenonline.com/~Carols\\_Headstones/Mooroopna.htm?](http://www.ozgenonline.com/~Carols_Headstones/Mooroopna.htm?)
5. Eulalia Musk (Allen) to Pastor Campbell, September 1964, private letter, personal collection of the author.?
6. *Ibid.*?
7. G. B. Starr, "The Tasmanian Camp Meeting," *Australasian Record*, May 15, 1903, 17. A comparison of canvassing reports in two editions of the *Australasian Record* demonstrate that John Allen was engaged in literature evangelism in Tasmania for approximately two years (see "Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Australasian Record*, July 1, 1901, 10 [report for April, 1901], and "Monthly Summary of Australasian and Natal Canvassing Work," *Australasian Record*, May 15, 1903, 18 [report for March 2003]). At least in April 1901, Emily Allen was also reported as being engaged in canvassing work (see "Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Australasian Record*, July 1, 1901, 10.).?
8. "Brother J. Allen and family . . .," *Australasian Record*, December 19, 1910, 8.?
9. George Teasdale, "The Queensland Camp-Meeting," *Australasian Record*, September 18, 1911, 4–5; "Queensland Conference," *Australasian Record*, September 18, 1911, 5–6.?
10. The Gallipoli letters written by Frederick Allen are held in the personal collection of the author.?
11. Lieutenant Cheeswall to the Reverend John Allen, November 12, 1915, private letter, personal collection of the author.?
12. See for example, "It is with regret . . .," *Australasian Record*, September 18, 1916, 8.?
13. Personal knowledge of the author, married to the granddaughter of John Allen.?
14. Edwin S. Butz, "John Allen obituary," *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1924, 7.?
15. Malcolm J. Allen, interview by author, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, February 7, 2017.?
16. H. E. Piper, "Emily Allen obituary," *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1937, 7.?