

The Saltbox house built by Priscilla and William Allen about 1672 in Spring Hill, demolished after the death of Alden Allen in 1858.

-George Allen 1568-1648 (Dec. 1647)

George Allen was not among the ten men from Saugus, now Lynn, who traveled on foot to settle Sandwich in 1637; however, his impact on Sandwich was perhaps greater since he arrived in 1637 with several sons and a daughter, Rose, who married one of the other early settlers, namely Joseph Holway, and thus eventually, with some of her brothers, eventually become the strongest Quaker family of the area. ¹

George was also most likely the oldest early Sandwich settler, leaving Weymouth, England at age 67. Some research suggests that he followed one or two of his sons to the new world. George and his flock settled quickly and he was named Constable of Sandwich by 1639. ² He also became a Juryman. A group of 6 leading towns people, including George Allen, arranged with the widow Joane Swift, widow of immigrant William Swift (Swyft), a loan of 4 Pounds to be paid to Edmund Freeman for founding the Town of Sandwich.

George Allen was born in Weymouth, Dorset, England in 1568. His parentage is still under debate, so I will not address that issue here. Most genealogists agree that he married Katherine Davis, daughter of Rice Davis, in 1600 at age 32. She may have been the widow of a man named Watts as she is sometimes referred to as Katherine Watts. He may have had an earlier wife. Katherine Davis died in 1619 after giving birth to at least six children, five of whom were male. In 1624 George reportedly married Katherine Starkes at age 56 and fathered at least six more children. ³

Per usual, it was not first born sons who dared the trip over the ocean, but younger sons with intrepid wives who had the courage to follow a dream of a better life than they would have been locked in the rigid primo genitor and class structure of England.

George and his wife Katherine left Weymouth, England in March of 1635 and arrived on the shores of Salem in the Massachusetts Bay Colony on the 6th of May 1635. Unfortunately, we do not have the name of the ship on which they sailed. They traveled with their servant, Edward Poole, who was then 26.

George Allen was an Anabaptist, a more liberal form of belief originating in Zurich, Switzerland.

¹ Joseph Holway was acquainted with George Allen, who also was in Lynn in 1636. Both men were still in Lynn and Weymouth respectively, when on the 3rd of April 1637 Gov. William Bradford granted permission for a settlement at Sandwich with sufficient land for 60 families to a group of men of Lynn. We do know that in 1637 George Allen joined with Edmund Freeman in the purchase of the Town of Sandwich.

² It does appear that many of George's daughters were discounted in the number of children to whom he was father.

³ Although most sources do cite George Allen's wives as described above, Jack MacDonald has put together evidence doubting these sources. I refer you to his detailed overview at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jacmac/allen.htm>

He and his family arrived with a party of 106 followers of the Reverend Joseph Hull of the Somerset Congregation and who had leave to settle Wessguscus Plantation, which was renamed Weymouth, on July 8th 1635 by the General Court at Boston. We can only imagine why George left the new town of Weymouth to move to Sandwich since he had been granted 30 acres of land there, which he then left to his sons.

George Allen's more liberal, considered by some to be radical form of religious thought, provided a good foundation of an alternative perception of worship for his children in anticipation of the eventual arrival of Quaker Christopher Holder from England to Sandwich in 1656. The Allen's were among the founding families of the Sandwich Society of Friends Meeting, which continues today as the longest continuous Meeting in the United States. George's son, William with his wife Priscilla's home at Spring Hill became the earliest Meeting place for Quakers.⁴ They were the strongest and most determined members of the Society of Friends in spite of suffering fines and imprisonment for their faith.

Although George, who died in 1648 at age eighty, did not live to see the transformation of East Sandwich into a strong Quaker community, his progeny certainly suffered for their beliefs under the enforced laws of Boston and Plymouth until the reign of Charles II, who put an end to the hanging of Quakers. Mary Dyer, who had at one time sought refuge in Sandwich, was one of the victims of the Boston laws.

Unfortunately, a Petition of 1646 to the Plymouth Court to insure religious tolerance was sidetracked by conservatives and the loss of religious freedom ensued. Previous to this time Church attendance was not required. One did not have to be a Church member to be a Freeman. Miles Standish, a Roman Catholic, had never been a Church member for example.⁵

George Allen's home, built in 1646 on Spring Hill Road in East Sandwich, also provided his final resting place. The house stood until 1882. His will, taken on the 22nd of September 1648 by Edward Dillingham and Richard Bourne in which he named his wife Katherine to be his Executrix, was signed in the presence of William Leveridge, John Vincent and Richard Bourne and proved before the court at New Plymouth on the 7th of June 1649. Ralph Allen and Richard Bourne were designated overseers of his will.

By,
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⁴ "The Saltbox house built by Priscilla and William Allen about 1672 in Spring Hill, became a center of the Sandwich Quaker group. The House was eventually demolished after the death of Alden Allen in 1858. (Lovell, p. 116) Following the deaths of William and Priscilla, who had no children, the house went to their nephew, Daniel Allen, and remained in the family for 200 hundred years. (Lovell, p. 118-119).

⁵ It was ordered that a work house adjacent to the jail be erected in Plymouth for those Quakers and others who wandered about with no calling, and the idle persons such as rebellious servants and youths..." Sandwich, A Cape Cod Town, Russell A Lovell Jr. Sandwich, MA 1985. P. 86.