

James Bird Allen

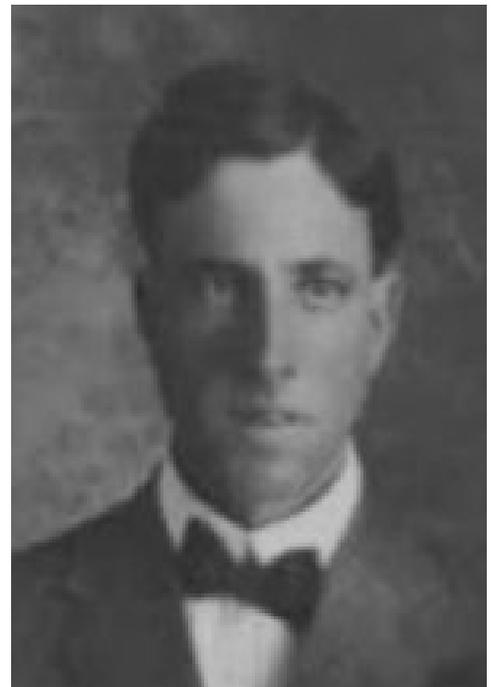
17 November 1884 – 4 December 1963



James Bird Allen as a baby

James Bird Allen was born on 17 November 1884 in Smithfield, Cache County, Utah to James Valentine Allen and Mary Ann Fitzgerald. He was preceded by a sister, Ella and a brother, Lafayette; both of who died as infants. He also had three half sisters, Frances (who died as an infant), Amelia, and Minnie who were from his father's first wife, Perina McCaslin Langley. Amelia, and Minnie were about fifteen years older than James. He did have two younger brothers, Brent and Cliff who were just younger than him and two more sisters, Georgia and Mary who both died as infants as well.

As a young man, James was a prankster and was always getting into mischief. On one occasion, he and his accomplices managed to put a buggy on top of a barn. In an effort to reform him, his parents encouraged him to serve a mission. He received his endowments in the Logan Temple on 11 April 1906 just prior to leaving for his mission in England. While in England, he and his companion boarded in the home of William and Ann Caroline Cushion who resided in Beccels, Suffolk County. Their daughter, Alice Isabel, was baptized in December 1907 but James was not involved in her conversion. Her mother, Caroline, and brother younger brother, Alick who was ten years old, were baptized in April 1908.



James Bird Allen as a young man



Alice Isabel Cushion as a young Woman in England

After being released from his mission on April 16, 1908, he was sent by his father to attend to some property that he had filed a homestead claim on which was located about three miles east of Burley, Idaho, in Cassia County. Burley was founded in 1905 when an irrigation protect was established. The new project opened up thousands of acres of rich, fertile farm ground.

Seven years after returning from his mission, he received a letter from Alice informing him that she was immigrating to the United States; Utah in particular. Shortly after her arrival in Salt Lake City in January 1915, he arranged to meet her and took her to his parents home in Smithfield. Even though he was not the same person that she had known as a missionary in England, they were married in Salt Lake City on 15 June 1915. Although James was not able to marry her in the temple, she received her endowments in the Logan Temple on 26 May 1915.

After they were married he took Alice back to the farm in Burley. Their first daughter, Mabel was actually born in Smithfield on 7 April 1916. Their family grew rapidly with the the births of Lloyd Valentine on 17 August 1917, Wanda on 24 November 1918, and Alice on 1 June 1921. A daughter, Pert, was born 20 September 1922. Pert died on 11 May 1924, only three days after the birth of another daughter, Mona on 8 May 1924. Three more children were came into their family; James Bird, Jr on 28 December 1925, Charles Cushion on 14 June 1929 and Willard Dale on 29 May 1932. Charlie died on 18 July 1930.



James and Alice with Mabel (standing), Lloyd (seated), and Wanda (in arms)

The times in which James and Alice raised their family were difficult. Their home was small for seven children and had no electricity or running water. When the Eighteenth Amendment to the constitution of the United States which prohibited the sale, manufacture, and transportation of alcohol for consumption, was ratified, like many others during that time, James turned to making bootleg whiskey as a way to supplement his income from the farm. He had a still set up in the potato cellar where he made whiskey from fermented wheat, colored with Carmel.

Being a bootlegger put him in company with individuals of ill-repute. One such shady character was Cassia County's own Diamondfield Jack who came to their home on one occasion. That visit made quite a stir at the Allen home. James' bootlegging career came to an end when he was turned in by their neighbors, the Tilley's. No charges were brought against him and he didn't go to jail or have to pay a fine.

Even though he was involved in making whiskey, he never drank, but he was a heavy smoker. When he could afford them, he smoked Chesterfields, but mostly rolled his own from a bag of bull durham. He also liked to eat in nice restaurants. These were luxuries that he could not afford.

As the Great Depression of the 1930s gripped the nation, conditions remained poor for James and his family. As with many others, James lost his farm in the spring of 1936. If the economic times were not difficult enough, James was not very good at managing his business. He never managed to get his crops (potatoes and grain) planted in a timely manner as he was preoccupied by his hobby of raising horses. His family had come from Kentucky where they were very successful in raising horses. James' love for horses distracted him from taking care of his farm. Another factor was his indecisiveness when it came time to sell his crops. He either sold too soon or waited too long and missed the peak market prices.

Despite his faults, James was a good father. Every morning before the children left for school, we was always at the wood stove (fueled by sagebrush) stirring a pot of oatmeal. He was kindly towards them and never did them any harm. He was good natured and had a scene of humor. He loved to sing and played the harmonica.

After loosing the farm, they moved into Burley and lived on the corner of 21st and Overland where Willard's service station later stood. He went to work as a night watchmen at the old sugar factory in Burley.



The Allen Family Front: Wanda, James, Alice, and Alice; Back: Willard, Jim Jr. Lloyd, Mabel, and Mona

About this time, the older girls began to marry. First was Alice who married Fred McCord on 29 November 1936, then Wanda married Emanuel Kerbs on 14 February 1937, followed by Mabel who married Ed Klauser on 7 April 1937. Lloyd served a mission in California and after returning, he married Leola Penilton on 30 April 1944. (They all later divorced, and some remarried)

In 1947, Jim Jr. and Willard built a new home for James and Alice on the other corner of the same block. Soon after moving into it, James divided the property into three pieces without Alice's knowledge. She felt betrayed and double crossed by this action and filed for divorce which was final on 3 April 1949. By this



The house built by Jim Jr. and Willard

time, James had come down with emphysema and was in poor health and had no place to go. Rather than separating, James moved into another bedroom and they continued to live under the same roof and Alice cared for him.

He was always quite thin and never in good health. He had to quit his job at the sugar factory because of his health. The disease had constricted his breathing to the point that he went to the Mayo Clinic and had surgery on his throat to allow him to breath better.



James and Alice in 1944

James Jr. served in the United States Navy and a mission to Palestine but completed his mission in England after the Palestine Mission was closed. After returning home, he married Dorine Dugmore on 15 June 1963. Willard served in the United States Air Force and married Joyce Nason on 30 August 1957.



James at far right with his brothers and sister; Brent, Minnie, and Cliff

At some point during his life, James was disfellowshipped from the church. However, he was always respectful toward the church and never spoke against it. Shortly before his death, he was reinstated to full fellowship by Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who came to their home, on 19 October 1963. He passed away on 4 December 1963 and is buried in the Pleasant View Cemetery in Burley. Alice lived seven more years and died on 30 November 1970. They were sealed by proxy in the Idaho Falls Temple on 24 August 1973. Their posterity includes twenty two grandchildren and 25 great grandchildren.

Compiled from information provided by Wanda Allen Kerbs and family genealogy records.



The Allen Family in 1958. Emanuel Kerbs is in the upper left corner. Below him is Joanne. Next to her is Wanda with Bonnie in her arms. Ellen is the second from the left on the floor. Next to her is Yutanna. Grandpa and Grandma Allen are in the center.