

## Richard Allen in Radnor

*Rev. Richard Allen (1760-1831) was a pioneer African-American preacher, civil rights leader and founder of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Isaac James does not mention Allen, as he may have been too young to remember his visits, but the following excerpt also mentions George Gyger, and adds further glimpses into the period which James' memoir details. Below, Allen recounts his visits to Radnor in the 1780s, as recorded on pages 9-12 in The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, published in 1833.*

In the year 1784, I left East Jersey and labored in Pennsylvania. I walked until my feet became so sore and blistered the first day, that I scarcely could bear them to the ground. I found the people very humane and kind in Pennsylvania. I, having but little money, stopped at Caesar Water's at Radnor Township, twelve miles from Philadelphia.<sup>26</sup> I found him and his wife very kind and affectionate to me. In the evening they asked me if I would come and take tea with them, but after sitting awhile, my feet became so sore and painful, that I could scarcely be able to put them to the floor. I told them that I would accept of their kind invitation, but my feet pained me so that I could not come to the table. They brought the table to me. Never was I more kindly received by strangers that I had never before seen, than by them. She bathed my feet with warm water and bran; the next morning my feet were better and free from pain.

They asked me if I would preach for them. I preached for them the next evening. We had a glorious meeting. They invited me to stay till Sabbath day, and preach for them. I agreed to do so, and preached on Sabbath day to a large congregation of different persuasions, and my dear Lord was with me, and I believe there were many souls cut to the heart, and were added to the ministry. They insisted on me to stay longer

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<sup>26</sup>Caesar (or Cezar) Waters was a slave of Charles Humphreys, who owned properties in Haverford and eastern Radnor Townships. A member of the Continental Congress (who nonetheless did not sign the Declaration of Independence), Humphreys died in late 1785, and bequeathed three acres of his Radnor property to "my servant man Cezar," who legally received his freedom in July 1786. See Cummins, 411-413.



Rev. Richard Allen

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with them. I stayed and labored in Radnor several weeks. Many souls were awakened, and cried aloud to the Lord to have mercy upon them. I was frequently called upon by many inquiring what they should do to be saved. I appointed them to prayer and supplication at the throne of grace, and to make use of all manner of prayer, and pointed them to the invitation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has said, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>27</sup> Glory be to God! And now I know he was a God at hand and left not afar off. I

preached my farewell sermon, and left these dear people. It was a time of visitation from above. Many were the slain of the Lord. Seldom did I ever experience such a time of mourning and lamentation among a people.

There were but few colored people in the neighborhood – the most of my congregation was white. Some said, this man must be a man of God; I never heard such preaching before. We spent a greater part of the night in singing and prayer with the mourners. I expected I should have had to walk, as I had done before; but Mr. Davis had a creature that he made a present to me; but I intended to pay him for his horse if ever I got able. My dear Lord was kind and gracious to me. Some years after I got into business, and thought myself able to pay for the horse. The horse was too light and small for me to travel on far. I traded it away with George Huftman for a blind horse, but larger. I found my friend

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<sup>27</sup>Matthew 11:28.

Huftman<sup>28</sup> very kind and affectionate to me, and his family also. I preached several times at Huftman's meeting house to a large and numerous congregation.

...I traveled several months on Lancaster Circuit with the Rev. Peter Morratte and Irie Ellis.<sup>29</sup> They were very kind and affectionate to me in building me up; for I had many trials to pass through, and I received nothing from the Methodist connexion. My usual method was, when I would get bare of clothes, to stop traveling and go to work, so that no man could say I was chargeable to the connexion. My hands administered to my necessities.

The autumn of 1785 I returned again to Radnor. I stopped at George Giger's, a man of God,<sup>30</sup> and went to work. His family were all kind and affectionate to me. I killed seven beefs, and supplied the neighbors with meat; got myself pretty well clad through my own industry – thank God – and preached occasionally.

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<sup>28</sup>This is undoubtedly George Hoffman, founder of the Methodist Church in Chester County then known as Hoffman's or Valley Meeting House. It is the ancestor of today's Grove United Methodist Church, near West Chester.

<sup>29</sup>Allen remembers the preachers' names and assignments imperfectly. The published minutes show Rev. Ira Ellis (c. 1761-1841) in charge of the Philadelphia Circuit 1785-1786, which would have included Lancaster County, assisted by James Thomas. Rev. Peter Moriarty (1758-1814) is listed as assistant to Rev. Henry Ogburn on the same circuit, 1786-1787. Ira Ellis is highly praised by Bishop Asbury in his journal, which includes a short autobiographical account of Ellis' life and ministry. Ellis located in 1795, and served many years in Virginia as a local preacher, finally settling in Kentucky. See Clark, II:460-462, and L. S. Burkhead, *Centennial of Methodism in North Carolina* (Raleigh: John Nichols, 1876), 65. Moriarty was raised a Roman Catholic, and converted to Methodism in 1774 near his home in Baltimore; he died while serving as a presiding elder. See John Lednum, *Rise of Methodism in America* (Philadelphia, 1859), 357-358.

<sup>30</sup>On George Gyger, see page 63.