

Goals of the ALLEN (I) Research Project

One of my principal goals for the ALLEN (I) Research Project is to lay a more comprehensive and therefore solid foundation for researching the earliest known patriarchs of the ALLEN (I) [\(genealogical\) patrilineage](#) all of whom have been traced back to colonial Virginia.^[1]

The extensive body of quality research presented in the [MILLERS](#) book, has taken the specific genealogical evidence about as far as, and in some cases farther than, it can reasonably be made to stretch, yet it leaves many questions unanswered. It also fails to identify the sources it has taken into consideration, except by implication: that is, if it cites a deed for Hanover County, someone has presumably made a thorough search of a book of HanoverCo deeds abstracts, or perhaps of the deeds index at the courthouse, and perhaps they have also covered the probate records, the order books (although these are rarely abstracted or transcribed, or adequately indexed), and any other early material to be found at the courthouse, yet we are never told what has been searched, and how thoroughly, so there is no way to tell whether there might be additional evidence lurking out there somewhere.

It is essential, in any credible work of genealogy, not only to provide specific citations to the exact source consulted, but also to itemize and discuss the records available, and to indicate which have been searched and how thoroughly—whether the primary records have been examined, or just a collection of abstracts, and if the latter we need to know whose abstracts, in order to have some idea of their nature and quality. And most particularly, we need to be told which sources have been searched without result. Otherwise the work is just going to have to be done all over again at some point.

Although lacking in the source citation department, MILLERS gets full marks for its presentation and evaluation of the evidence it has selected as relevant, but in addition to the questions it raises about the comprehensiveness of the research of particular county records, it also makes little attempt to consider other, farther afield, colonial ALLENs of Virginia's initially small propertied class, even though it is possible that some of these may be relatives of the ALLEN (I) patrilineage on which the book's focus is largely centered—for example, there is the Arthur ALLEN line of SurryCo, and the Valentine ALLEN line of Old RappahannockCo, neither in the same neighborhood to be sure, but 17th century colonial Virginia and the whole Chesapeake settlement was quite a small and lightly populated place, all of whose parts were linked by waterways. Thus, even though MILLERS county-level research may have indeed been comprehensive, and generally adequate, it leaves me, at least, wondering whether the background ALLEN picture it presents is sufficiently complete that we can be reasonably sure that none of the other early colonial Virginia patriarchs are related to the ALLEN (I) patrilineage.

Also, now that we have yDNA tools that may allow us to expand the ALLEN (I) extended family beyond the known patriarchs, we are handicapped in that other prominent early ALLEN families haven't been researched as well or as thoroughly as the MILLERS have done, so that even though it's likely that there are already yDNA samples of some of these other early propertied lines in the ALLEN surname project (indeed, I am aware of a couple of these), there is no way to use these yDNA results to rule out relationships to these other ALLENs.

It is to remedy these defects of comprehensiveness that I have begun this project by compiling all the ALLENs in the three comprehensive sources available to genealogical researchers for colonial Virginia. Although these sources are comprehensive for all the Virginia counties, they are far from comprehensive of all the Virginians surnamed, ALLEN; indeed, they are mostly

¹ Another goal of the project is to opportunistically look for ways to link up the many unconnected ALLEN pedigrees to the main ALLEN tree. I will be addressing some of those opportunities in a subsequent report.

concerned with the initially small class of landed property owners, but the earliest known ALLEN (I) patriarchs clearly belonged to that class. Here are the three comprehensive colonial VA sources:

- (1) the colonial Virginia land patents, which name both the patentees (and often land owning neighbors of the patentees), and the names of the Virginia immigrants used as headrights by the patentee to qualify for his land;
- (2) the names of Virginia landowners found in the annual quit rent roll for 1704—the only year for which these appear to be complete. These have been compiled from the transcriptions in Annie Laurie Wright Smith's *The Quit Rents of Virginia*;
- & (3) two indexes to all the pre-1800 ALLEN probate records for Virginia, one in simple chronological order, the other in chronological order within county. These have been culled from Clayton Torrence's *Virginia Wills and Administrations, 1632-1800*. I have also included in this report compilations that show which of the county probate records are extant, and for which years, to provide some idea of the probate records that there ought to be, but which are missing.

My compilations of ALLENS in the colonial patents is somewhat less than complete, yet even so it runs to about 40 pages of abstracts, presenting the same data in two orders: chronological, and chronological within given name. I should point out that my abstracts are based largely on the original documents (online at the Library of Virginia website), and not just culled from *Cavaliers & Pioneers*, though I have used *C&P* as an index. I have compiled abstracts for all patents that mention ALLENS (of any spelling) in any capacity, only through Oct1666 (which covers the first volume of *C&P*), but I have compiled all the ALLENS who were either patentees, or mentioned as land owning neighbors, through the year 1732 (through *C&P* volume 3).

I have published my compilations in the form of two PDF reports: "[Virginia ALLEN Immigrants to 1666, and Land Owners, through 1732](#)" which encompasses sources (1) and (2), and "[Virginia ALLENS in the pre-1800 Probate Records](#)" which covers source (3). Full details and notes on the sources, the records themselves, and on my abstracting conventions will be found in those reports.

Because of the comprehensive approach I have adopted here, I expect that my compilations should be of interest to all ALLEN researchers who have been carried back to old Virginia, and they are invited to participate in parallel with us, as we attempt a further explication of the ALLEN (I) patrilineage. Once the specific relationship evidence begins to peter out, all ALLEN researchers are in this together—all with the need to cast their nets more widely than heretofore, and to take into considerations not just the identified members of their own ancestral extended families, but of all those other ALLENS who might be.

For that reason, and also so that these reports may be tweaked or supplemented in the future without my having to broadcast specific revisions to all the subscribers, I am also posting them to the ALLEN (I) Patrilineage page, where the most recent version may be accessed conveniently from now on via links in the upper left navigation bar of the [main ALLEN \(I\) DNA Patrilineage Project page](#). I have created an additional section at the end of the nav panel titled "The ALLEN (I) Research Project", where the present, initial report resides under the rubric "The Virginia Background", while the compiled data report "ALLEN Virginia Immigrants & Land Owners", and "ALLENS in the Virginia Probate Records, pre-1800", have been slotted under the pre-existing "ALLEN (I) Genealogical Resources & Evidence" section.

The Early ALLENs of Virginia

ALLEN is one of the most common American surnames, and therefore one of the most difficult for genealogists to research. However, even though Virginia was the most populous and deeply rooted of all the British colonies (with Massachusetts a close second), by 1700 there were still fewer than 60,000 Virginians, and it's likely that no more than about 200 of them were ALLENs.^[2]

What's more, the ALLEN patriarchs that most concern the readers of this report—those who are descendants and members of [the ALLEN \(I\) Patrilineage](#)—were all apparently men of landed property, at a time (1720 and before) when the vast majority of Virginians were indentured servants, or the children of indentured servants, and that means that a large proportion of the surviving records are going to pertain only to these and other propertied ALLENs.

The ALLEN (I) line, though, has been very extensively researched and convincingly traced back to a small set of interrelated landowners who began in NewKent County, and began to spread out into the next tier of inland counties in the early 1700s. Outlines of the known ALLEN descendancies of these ALLEN (I) patriarchs will be found on the [ALLEN \(I\) Project Descendancies page](#).

My principal goal in these initial reports is to broaden the research focus to all of the early Virginia ALLENs who are of the landowning class, and who are therefore relatively prominent in the records. Some of these ALLEN landowners are known to belong to this ALLEN patrilineage, and there is a fair chance that other ALLENs of this class who show up in these compilations might also be related—that is, might members of the same patrilineage. A truly comprehensive attempt to research any one of these ALLEN patrilineages requires that they all be researched, at least to the point where the divisions between families can be recognized, and possible relationships between people of the same surname, can be identified, through neighborhood proximity or associations in the records, or positively ruled out..

The ultimate and definitive patrilineage sorting tool, of course, is Y-chromosome DNA testing, and besides just waiting for additional ALLEN descendants from old Virginia lines to show up in the ALLEN (I) project, it may be worthwhile to try to track down male line ALLEN descendants of some of the other early Virginia ALLEN property owners, to see whether they do or do not belong to the ALLEN (I) patrilineage. For such tests to be convincing, of course, the ancestral pedigree back to the early Virginia ALLEN patriarch must be solid, so even with yDNA as a tool, there is no escaping the need for comprehensive, quality genealogical research.

Overview of the (Possible) Relevance of this Evidence to the ALLEN (I) Patrilineage

Comprehensive Source (3), the pre-1800 probate records of the Virginia counties, is disappointing, because even though the early ALLEN (I) patriarchs were men of property, and we know from MILLERs that they mostly took their origin in New Kent County, child of YorkCo, and parent of King&QueenCo (in 1691) and HanoverCo (in 1721), there are no probate records to be found for them in NewKent (or for any of these other, related, counties).

This brings up a vitally important consideration: there are no probate records for ALLENs of NewKentCo because there are no early records period—none, that is, except the parish records for St.Peters Parish, which covered the area of NewKentCo until 1704, when the western part of St.Peters was hived off into St.Paul's Parish. All of the MILLERs evidence for the early ALLENs is taken from these parish records (and from the items (1) and (2) above), and I expect to make a study of these

² My estimate is based on the proportional population estimates for the surname ALLEN in the 1964 Social Security data found in Elsdon C. Smith, *American Surnames* (GPC,1969)

parish records which I will report on later. There is thus nothing more to be found for the county of New Kent, and all the early records of child county, King&Queen, and nearly all of those for HanoverCo are missing as well.

As an adjunct to these reports, I have made and published an additional [compilation of the colonial Virginia county records situation](#), showing for each it's birth date, provenance, and the date range for the various types of records that are extant for that county. This is another vital addition to the research background for the early ALLENs of Virginia: if we don't know what records there are to research, there is no way to evaluate the adequacy of any particular body of evidence published in a genealogical book or article.

Comprehensive Source (2), the 1704 Quit Rent Rolls, provides what I think is a valuable outline for a comprehensive program of ALLEN (I) Research. This short list of 21 ALLEN county land holdings (which includes NewKent, because these records were found preserved in a London archive), includes 5 differently named ALLENs of NewKentCo, and each and every one of these has to be considered a likely candidate for membership in the ALLEN (I) patrilineage, while at least two, Robert and Reynold, almost certainly belong. And because these propertied ALLENs represent say, just 3-5% of all the ALLENs who make an appearance in the colonial headright patents, there is at least a fair chance that ALLENs of other counties are members of this same ALLEN (I) Patrilineage. A truly comprehensive ALLEN research project would research each of these ALLENs in the list (a few of which are the same men with holdings in different counties), in enough depth to at least be able to rule out a relationship on genealogical grounds, leaving open the possibility that they may, after all, be distant yDNA cousins.

Comprehensive Source (1), the Virginia Patents, provides us with an overview of the overall ALLEN research problem (so many early ALLEN immigrants), and with valuable data for sorting out the different propertied families.

One thing that is particularly disappointing with respect to this data, is that there is no record of any patent for Reynold Allen, who owned 205a in NewKentCo in 1704. Presumably he acquired his land by deed, perhaps from another patentee, or possibly as an inheritance from his as yet unknown father, but since all the early records of NewKentCo are lost, we will probably never be able to determine how or when he acquired his land.

However, we do have one other resource to draw on, which it appears has been fully exploited by the MILLERS: the parish and vestry books of St.Peter's Parish in NewKentCo, and the vestry book of St.Paul's Parish that was hived off of St.Peter's in 1704, and which was wholly allocated to HanoverCo in 1721 when that county was created from NewKentCo. These, and the patents, are pretty much the only records that survive for this ALLEN (I) fountainhead of counties, and I hope to be able to go over these three parish books myself (and perhaps others), and cull my own abstracts, partly to make sure that the MILLERS haven't missed anything, and partly because I am not fully satisfied with their style of presentation (no citations, no records context, and nothing about how thoroughly these records were examined). But to return to my discussion of the patents themselves.

The most interesting and immediately relevant of the patents I've abstracted in my Virginia ALLEN Immigrants are the pair of patents, both dated 11Jul1719, to Robert Allin of NewKentCo, and to Richard Allin Jr of NewKentCo, both to land in St.Paul's Parish, NewKentCo, which was to fall into HanoverCo when it was created from NewKent in 1721. A study of the records context for these patents indicates that no particular stress should be placed on the fact that they had a common date. For the most part, the land office clerk evidently kept completed loose patent documents in a

folder or file, and only entered them into the books periodically, in batches, and there appear to be about 50 patents with that same date, with the last item of the previous batch dated 1717. However, the fact that these patents are adjacent to each other in the book, and that both feature the idiosyncratic spelling, "Allin" suggests that they were filed at the same time, and likely by close relatives.

The first question that occurs is how proximate were these land grants? It was usual for father and sons, or brothers, to acquire land that was adjacent or at least in the same neighborhood, which might be defined loosely as the round-trip distance one could comfortably travel in a single day, on foot if necessary. Often neighborhoods were defined topographically by mountains, valleys, rivers, or much later hamlets or roads (unlike New England, Virginia never did develop many towns).

As it happens, most of the early VA patents have been plotted by county, located with relation to each other, and made available in databases to those of us who use certain deed plotting software, and I have downloaded many of these databases and work with them regularly.^[3]

The land of Robert Allin is located on the north bank of the Chickahominy River, Swamp, or Creek, as it is variously called, and on the border between HanoverCo and HenricoCo, as they are now. Robert later patented a second tract just upriver, not adjacent to his first, but just one tract away. Richard Allin Jr's land lay about 5 miles to the ENE of Robert's, on Stony Run, a rather straight-running north-south tributary of the river, which has retained the same name and can be found on topographic maps of the present day. All three of these tracts may be described as lying just beyond the immediate suburbs of the large present day city of Richmond—Virginia's capital. Five miles border to border, or let us say six or seven to allow for the location of the cabins that these Allins were obliged to put up within three years to secure their patents, may be considered of loosely the same neighborhood, given that these men probably owned at least one, and most likely several, horses. I will probably produce a map at some point showing the location of these lands against a topo background at some point. I have some idea also of the location of Reynold ALLEN's land in HanoverCo, even though he evidently acquired his land by deed or inheritance.

The second question is what sort of relationship might this Robert and Richard Jr have had. We can probably rule out a father and son relationship because there was also a Richard Allin Sr alive at the time, who may well have been the father of both of these young men who were just getting established with their own land in an area of new settlement—that, at least, is my working hypothesis.

As the MILLERS evidence indicates, Richard Sr was a resident of NewKentCo, and had, in fact been so since 1689, when he and Reynold ALLEN participated in the processioning of their land, according to the vestry book of St.Peter's parish. In fact, Richard Sr was even a vestryman of the parish, and so figures rather prominently and continuously in the parish records from the early 1700s until his death on 6Sep1725. If we guess that this Richard was born, say, about 1660, one would

³ There is a program called "DeedMapper" that I've been using for over 20 years, that facilitates the plotting of land tracts for which the specific metes and bounds are recorded, and this is the case for many of the colonial patents and subsequent deeds in the county books. Devotees of this program have over the course of many years plotted most of the patents that can be plotted for many of the Virginia counties, including those like NewKent and Hanover, for which all virtually all the other records have been lost, and they have contributed their work to the online to a "deed pool" maintained by the author of the program. I myself have plotted hundreds of tracts, and in particular those for all the original settlers of the Calfpasture Valley, an area about 10 x 25 miles square in western VA beyond the mountains, where my own Scotch-Irish ancestors pioneered in the 1740s, though I haven't yet contributed it to the deed pool since I am still tinkering with it in my spare time. My own plotting is based, not primarily on the patents, but on the deeds culled from the books of the several counties than have had jurisdiction for this area over the years. I use deed plotting all the time in my genealogical work because before the era of modern roads and cheap transportation, most transactions, social, legal, and economic, took place within topographically defined neighborhoods.

expect that his sons would have been born between 1685-1700, with the most likely time of birth being about 1694 (numerous studies have shown that the average age at which the middle son of a father is born is about 34). That would make these patentees, if they are both Richard Sr's sons, aged about 25 when they patented this land (give or take five years or so), just the time period when young men of these early colonial generations were securing their land (either inheriting their father's land or taking up land in new areas of settlement), taking wives, and settling down.

MILLERS rightly points out that the mere fact that two men were referred to as Richard Sr and Richard Jr didn't necessarily mean that they were related by blood in any way, however, in this instance, the fact that both had the wherewithal to be substantial landowners, which already groups them into a class that constituted no more than 15% of the population, and the local prominence of Richard Sr as a vestryman, argue circumstantially for this putative father-son relationship.

I note also that this Robert who settled early on the Chickahominy (who has been identified as [the ALLEN \(I\) patriarch, "Robert of HenricoCo"](#)), had a son name Richard which is also a point in favor of this hypothesis, although this Richard appears to have been Robert's sixth son, and not his first or second, as the usual and customary naming patterns would predict. Robert's first son was named William, his second Robert (presumably for himself), and his third Young (perhaps for his wife's family), so we must keep open the possibility that these two 1719 patentees were first cousins, rather than brothers. However, the fact that there was no William ALLEN in the 1704 quit rent rolls, or any William in the St.Peter's Parish records, would seem to make the alternative hypothesis, that Robert's father was named William, something of a long shot.

It is extremely unfortunate that nothing further seems to have been heard of Robert's putative brother, Richard Jr. Presumably he either died young or moved away, but his story may be a casualty of the widespread records loss that many Virginia counties have been subject to. Thus, the only early records that have survived for HanoverCo (apart from the St.Paul's Parish vestry book) is a book of mixed records for the years 1733-1735, and MILLERS has probably culled whatever is to be found there. Perhaps Richard Jr's trail will be picked up elsewhere, at some point.

I am going to leave off here. Some of the background data assembled in these reports will be coming to the fore as I and others further explore this early ALLENS of Virginia territory, with the MILLERS book in hand as a partial guide.

Additional Resources Itemizing Virginia Counties and their Records

To supplement this research project and others, I've compiled and posted the following three PDFs, which I recommend that you make note of, and/or download:

[Inventory of Virginia Counties Through 1775, and their Records](#)

[A Complete List of Virginia Jurisdictions, to the present day](#)

[A Map Showing Virginia Counties as of 1702](#)

(this is a 17mb PDF, but you may find that it's worth downloading and saving).