

WILLIAM A. ALLEN



William A. Allen was a dentist who lived in this valley before the founding of the city. He was born in 1848 in Ohio, in a family proud of its connection to Revolutionary War hero Ethan Allen. He grew up there and learned the blacksmithing trade, and also worked as a gunsmith.

Allen decided to head west, and joined a large wagon train following the Bridger Trail in 1877. Nearing Deadwood, the train was attacked by a raiding party who killed two of their group. Allen led a group of men who mounted a retaliatory attack, killing eleven of the raiders, and also rescuing some other travelers. The wagon train broke apart, and Allen was elected to lead his group the rest of the way to Bozeman.

He was hired as a messenger on the stage line between Bozeman and Miles City, then became the blacksmith at Fort Custer. He moved to the Canyon Creek area in 1879, then into Coulson. In 1882, when Billings was mostly a town of tents, he built

the first house with a shingle roof. He had picked up some knowledge of dentistry along the way. In 1884 he formalized that by attending the Kansas City Dental College before opening a practice in Billings. He and his brother-in-law John Guiler also had a business in raising stock, and opened a flour mill.

Dr. Allen was deeply interested in the history of Montana's settlement, and wrote a number of articles for national magazines. In 1903, he published his book *Adventures with Indians and Game, or, Twenty Years in the Rocky Mountains*. Dr. Allen died in 1944 at the age of 95, and is buried in Mountview Cemetery.