

JOSEPH BENJAMIN ALLISON
1839 - 1936

written by Merton Davis

Joseph Benjamin Allison, or J.B. as he was known, was born on the Allison homestead on Bayshore Road in Adolphustown in 1839. His grandfather, an original United Empire Loyalist, was still alive and living in the same house.

In about 1921, Nelson Davis bought a new 1921 Ford car. His son Clarence did the driving because Nelse couldn't get the hang of those foot pedal gears. Clarence at 20 years old loved to drive.

That same year Clarence drove J.B., who was his grandfather, up to Carrying Place to attend a United Empire Loyalist meeting. He also took his mother Annie, and Mary Allison, daughter of D.W. Allison and J.B.'s niece.

My father, Clarence Davis, loved to tell this story: J.B. got up and made a memorable speech to the large gathering. He proudly stated that he had seen an original UEL and told all about it. Most likely no one else could ever make a claim.

J.B. farmed for many years and in later life was Justice of the Peace. He was highly respected. He married Martha Membery and they had three children. Martha was a sister of Amelia Membery who married David Wright Allison, J.B.'s older brother. David W. Allison built the large brick house which is now "Allison House" in the UEL Heritage Park at Adolphustown. Martha died of pneumonia after Amelia ("Aunt Mill") took her sister for a buggy ride when the baby was newly born. She had J.B. and his family come to live on the Membery farm in Adolphustown village.

Years later J.B. came to spend his last days at the Davis farm with his daughter Annie. Jean, only four years old in the photograph below, remembers her great-grandfather J.B. sitting on a stool by the water reservoir at the end of the cookstove, keeping warm, and fending off Bobby and other children from bumping into him.

Jean remembers J.B.'s funeral in 1936, up at the brick church which she could see from our west kitchen window. She sat beside her Gramma Merritt and watched the cars and buggies parading up the road to the church. She was impressed enough that she still recalls the day 80 years later. (Jean lives in London, Ontario.)



The photograph shows Joseph Benjamin Allison out in the Davis front yard with Merton on his lap, Jean to his right and Bobby to his left. The year is 1934, just two years before J.B. died at 97 years of age. He had been a widower for over 50 years.

Now Jean can say that she saw and remembered a person who in turn remembered an original United Empire Loyalist. Probably no one else can make that claim.

For another telling of the story about J.B. Allison, see Lois Love's contribution.