

## John Hall Allison 1827-1893



Allison Street is named for John Hall Allison. He was born in Virginia on December 22, 1827 to a Scottish father and Irish mother. At a young age, the family moved to Missouri.

In 1851 he visited California and liked it. He returned to Bowling Green, Missouri and married Susan Kincaid Kerr in 1852. They had three children: Louisa (1856), James (1858) and John Hiram (1860)

The family came across the plains by wagon train in 1865 with the McPike party, John being in charge. The family moved to the Napa Valley in 1873. They were charter members of the Presbyterian Church when it was founded in 1874 by Rev. Mitchell. John was very active in church affairs and served as session president.

In the first municipal election of 1876 he ran for election as marshal and won. He was re-elected many times. He was also named superintendent of streets or roadmaster and drove the water wagon to sprinkle Main Street to keep the dust down. The water came from Kettlewell's well. He supervised the building of the town's first jail (located near the Catholic Parish Hall) at a cost of \$158.

After being re-elected marshal in 1880, John visited his former home in Missouri, where he had left 15 years ago. His home property was on the south side of Pope Street and he had 20 acres east of Bridge Street, later renamed Allison Street. He donated the land to create the street. In 1881 he had 10 acres of producing grapevines plus 7 acres newly planted. The *Star* noted with approval that kept the thistles cut on Pope.

John was elected president of the AOUW- the Ancient Order of United Workmen. This organization was the beginning of the American fraternal benefit network and was founded in Meadville, Pennsylvania. He was also elected Dictator of the Knights of Honor, a [fraternal organization](#) founded in 1873. Its principles differ little from those of other beneficent societies, the objects being to care for the sick and pay certain sums to the heirs of deceased members. He built a strong two story barn in 1883 on his Pope Street land.

In 1884 the *Star* reported "J. H. Allison has added another improvement to his beautiful home on Pope Street. This time it is a cement walk from his front gate to the house and around either side of the length of the porches. It is about 140 feet long and is the work of Mr. A. Haskin, who makes a specialty of laying these patent walks." He was elected commander of the American Legion.

The *Star* reported on 9-18-1885 "J.H. Allison had his buggy cover stolen and in his search for the property found it being used as a tent by some Chinese hop pickers camped on Dowdell's ranch. This morning he and his sons Johnny and James A. (the latter being constable of this township) proceeded to the Chinese camp to arrest the thieves and recover the stolen property. Each one captured his man, but Johnny in struggling with two Mongolians, was attacked by two others, one of whom was in the act of braining him with a heavy pole. His father came to his assistance to save him and shot the attacking Chinaman, seriously if not fatally wounding him. John immediately gave himself up to the law, but was released on bail. The case is clearly justifiable, as if the Chinaman had not been shot he would have killed Johnny."

John was elected as a director of the St. Helena Water Company in 1886. In 1888 he became president of St. Helena Cemetery Association, an office he held until his death. John was summoned from this life on May 29, 1893 and his funeral held at the Presbyterian Church with Rev James Mitchell officiating. My Masonic brethren paid me full honors at my burial in St. Helena Cemetery.

