

# WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

*A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.*

## Allen H. Donham

**L**awyer, postmaster, political organizer and banker, Vigo County native Allen Harry Donham carved a discernible niche in the community landscape.

However, Donham's legacy is best preserved by a summer home he built on a hill overlooking Honey Creek on land cultivated by his father and grandfather, Darius and William Donham. Initially, the retreat was called "Allen's Dale." Eventually, it became the "Allendale" stop on the Terre Haute, Indianapolis & Eastern Traction Co. interurban rail line to Shelburn and Sullivan.

Allen's father Darius was only 14 years old in 1833 when he settled with his parents in southern Vigo County. With his wife, the former Mary Allen, Darius continued to improve the handsome 158-acre tract severed by Honey Creek on the east side of the Dixie Highway. Allen was born there in 1858, one of six children. None of his siblings survived childhood. After attending Honey Creek district schools, "Harry" (as he was referred to in school records) Donham matriculated to Terre Haute High School, graduating in June 1877. He earned academic honors at the University of Michigan Law School in 1882. Returning to Terre Haute, he resided with his parents, who had retired to 710 Ohio St.

At various times, he studied for the bar with attorneys John Given Davis, James Allen and William Mack, eventually forming a partnership with lawyer Harvey Huston. In 1886, Donham was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for prosecuting attorney, but impressed party colleagues with his work ethic. As Vigo County Democratic chairman during the 1892 presidential campaign, Donham was praised for the party's success. Securing U.S. Senator Daniel W. Voorhees' endorsement, he was appointed Terre Haute postmaster by President Grover Cleveland in May 1893. After one term, he resumed practicing law, becoming active in local banking circles in 1902.

On June 2, 1892, "A.H." (as he was later known) wed Julia Ball, daughter of the chief engineer for the Wabash & Erie Canal, the Terre Haute Drawbridge Co. and the Terre Haute & Indianapolis Railroad, William J. Ball. The couple resided at 1201 S. Sixth St. Shortly after Darius Donham's death March 2, 1902, Allen and Julia built the pleasant summer home on the Honey Creek farm and spent considerable resources improving it. A two-day illness which led to his unexpected death on Dec. 13, 1911, at age 53 was diagnosed as peritonitis and appendicitis. He is buried at Highland Lawn Cemetery.



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