



Charles Herbert Allen, Lowell High School Class of 1865, was a true “Renaissance Man,” distinguishing himself in art, business, and politics.

Born in Lowell in 1848, Allen became one of the city’s foremost citizens. He graduated from Lowell High School in 1865. After graduating from Amherst College in 1869, Allen joined his father’s lumber business and helped manufacture cabinets. Later he became a trustee of Amherst College.

Allen became involved in local politics, first serving on the Lowell School Committee. As a School Committee member from 1874 to 1881, Allen was instrumental in starting the Lowell Evening Schools. He served two terms in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1881 and 1882, one term in the Massachusetts Senate in 1883, and two terms in the U.S. Congress in 1885 and 1889. He also served as Massachusetts Prison Commissioner from 1897 to 1898. Allen narrowly lost a bid to become Massachusetts Governor, as the Republican nominee in 1891.

In 1884, he received the title “Colonel” when Governor George Dexter Robinson appointed him to his personal staff. In 1898 President William McKinley named Allen Assistant Secretary of the Navy when Theodore Roosevelt resigned the post to enter the Spanish-American War. Allen held the post from 1898 to 1900.

Upon his return to Lowell, he became involved in several business and banking enterprises. He served as vice president of the Morton Trust Company and the Guaranty Trust Company of New York. Allen also served as president of the American Sugar Refining Company.

As a painter, Allen created twenty-seven landscape and marine paintings, which are in the Allen Collection of the Whistler Museum of Art in Lowell. As a passionate gardener, the grounds around his family home, known as “The Terraces,” flourished with gardens, fountains, a pergola, and a large gazebo. He was a member of a number of clubs, including the University Club, and he served as president of Vesper from 1892 to 1897.

His Rolfe Street home, known as Allen House, still stands today on the South Campus of the University of Massachusetts Lowell. It houses the chancellor’s office. Allen died in 1934 and is buried in Lowell Cemetery.