

# Johnnie Allen

Hagerstown 1917, 1920

Pitcher

Class D, Blue Ridge League

*By Mark C. Zeigler*

**T**hough his Blue Ridge League career was not as proficient as many of his counterparts, John Marshall Allen showed enough promise as an aspiring pitcher that he did have the distinction to pitch in a Major League game.

Born on Oct 27, 1890 on the family farm near Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, young Johnny Allen worked as a hunting and fishing guide for sportsmen from the Baltimore and Washington area during his youth. His baseball career began around 1911 when he pitched for the local Berkeley Springs team and for a semi-pro team from Martinsburg, WV before formation of the Blue Ridge League.

Noted as tall and strong (6' 1", 180 lb), he was a right-hander with a natural delivery. During the spring of 1911, he was offered a tryout by a Detroit Tigers scout, Hughie Jennings in Washington, D.C. While Jennings never really gave him a trial, it was at that time that young Allen met Ty Cobb and other pros, receiving encouragement from them to try for a career in baseball.

Allen was also spotted by manager Clark Griffith of the Washington Nationals (Senators) during that spring. Unlike Jennings, Griffith followed through and invited Allen to the team's 1912 spring training camp in Charlottesville, VA, signing him to a contract on March 4 for \$600.00. The Washington papers lauded his potential and gave him the nickname "Private Allen." Allen's smooth delivery and power impressed the team, but his fielding showed lack of experience and he was sent to Lynchburg in the Virginia State League on April 13, for the 1912 season. His record there was respectable in six games pitched with two wins and three losses for a .400 win pct.; good, but not good enough to earn a place in the big leagues, and he was released in mid-season. On August 6, Allen signed with the Fairmont- WV Fairies of the Ohio & Pennsylvania League and went 3-3 to finish the season. In 1913 he signed with the Steubenville, OH Stubs of the Class D, Interstate League, and pitched under Manager Roy Montgomery. .

In 1914 Allen was pitching semi-pro baseball when he got his big chance. Otto Knabe of the Baltimore club in the Federal League was in need of pitching, and gave the promising youngster a tryout with the Terrapins. His first, and only, outing was on June 2 in a game in which the Brooklyn team shelled six Baltimore twirlers in an 11 to 5 rout. Shortly thereafter, Allen was released by the team. After his release from the Terrapins, he went back home to West Virginia and signed to pitch for the Martinsburg, WV club in the semi-pro Tri-City League. He



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Pitched one game for the Baltimore Terrapins in Federal League in 1914. His last professional victory with the Hagerstown Champs, came against future Hall of Fame pitcher, Robert "Lefty" Groves, playing for the Martinsburg Mountaineers in the Blue Ridge League.

*(From Allen Family archives—courtesy of Richard H. Smith, Jr., grandson)*

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started the 1916 season with the Hopewell-VA Powder Puffs of the Virginia League, but the club was disbanded on July 22. He went to Frostburg in the Potomac League, but that club and the league soon disbanded after his arrival. Sometime in this period Allen was with two teams at the same time, hurling for a semi-pro team, Republic, in the Pittsburgh area under the name of "Jones."

His best documented year in the Blue Ridge League was in 1917, when he "twirled" for the Hagerstown Terriers. He pitched in 14 games and managed a record of 4 wins, 5 losses in a year that saw Hagerstown take the league championship from his old Martinsburg team. He was released on July 13, after battling a mid-season slump.

In 1918, Allen's career was cut short; he was drafted and served in the Army Ordnance Corps in France during 1918. According to his family, Allen was suffered respiratory injuries when he was gassed during a battle near the Argonne Forest in France. After several months of recuperation, he returned to his unit until the end of the war, however these injuries would have a severe effect on his athletic endeavors in the future.

When the war ended, he returned home, remarried and had a young daughter. In 1920, Allen briefly tried to resume his pitching career with the Hagerstown "Champs." On May 21, 1920 in a game against Martinsburg, he came up against a young left-hander by the name of Robert Moses "Lefty" Groves, and beat him 4 – 1. While twenty-year old Groves was just beginning a brilliant career, thirty-year old, Allen was at the end of his. Years of pitching on few days rest, sometimes for both games of a doubleheader, plus an extra year's layoff recuperating from the "Big War" had taken their toll. He never pitched another professional baseball game.

Married twice, he and his second wife, whom he had married in 1918, had one daughter, June Lushbaugh Allen. In later years Allen worked at the booming Fairchild Aircraft plant in Hagerstown and retired in 1959. Though he never quite made it in the big leagues, he never lost his love of the game.

He died from a heart attack in Hagerstown, Maryland on Sept. 24, 1967. Johnny Allen is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery, Hagerstown, MD.

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*Listed below is a breakdown of Allen's known professional pitching record:*

**Johnnie Allen's Major and Minor League Pitching Statistics**

Date	Opponent	League	W-L	GP	GS	CG	ShO	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	ERA	
1912	LYNCHBURG-VA	VA-C	2-3	6	6	-	-	44	41	21	-	18	29	-	
1912	FAIRMONT-WV	OPL-D	3-3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1913	STEUBENVILLE-OH	INT-B	<i>No Stats Available</i>												
<b>1914</b>	<b>BALTIMORE</b>	<b>FED-MAJ</b>	<b>0-0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18.00</b>	
1914	MARTINSBURG-WV	TCL-IND	<i>No Stats Available</i>												
1915	<i>Played Independent Semi-Pro Baseball - Stats unavailable</i>														
1916	HOPEWELL-VA	VA-C	<i>No Stats Available</i>												
1916	FROSTBURG-MD	POT-D	<i>No Stats Available</i>												
1917	HAGERSTOWN-MD	BRL-D	4-5	14	11	8	2	93 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	94	43	31	31	46	2.99	
1918	<i>Did Not Play – In Military Service Overseas</i>														
1919	<i>Did Not Play – In Military Service</i>														
1920	HAGERSTOWN-MD	BRL-D	1-3	4	4	3	0	26 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	34	27	18	8	15	6.15	
<b>BLUE RIDGE LEAGUE TOTALS</b>			<b>2 years</b>	<b>5-8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>119</b> <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	<b>128</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>3.69</b>

Sources: Richard H. Smith, Jr., McDaniel College, Westminster, MD (grandson of John Allen). The Baseball Hall of Fame, Research Archives, Cooperstown, NY. Blue Ridge League research and statistics – Mark Zeigler; Additional statistical support – Steve Boren and Andrew North of SABR-L. Reach American League Baseball Guides, 1913, 1916, 1918, 1921.