

# **History of the NW Corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North and 6<sup>th</sup> Street**

## **By Derric Scott**

From newspaper research and information from the Facebook group “U know u lived in CLANTON as a kid,” and other sources.

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About 3:00 A.M. Saturday morning, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1901 the fire alarm bells sounded in Clanton! To the citizens' horror, it was discovered that a fire was already burning in two buildings in downtown – Popwell's store and the building recently vacated by J. E. Evans' store. Citizen volunteers worked valiantly to save the town, but soon seven stores were ablaze. The brand new P. D. Wilson brick building was barely saved, but everything from the alley to the 6<sup>th</sup> Street intersection at the Courthouse was totally lost. Water was thrown on the Courthouse windows to save it and the large wood-frame building (the former courthouse) across 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North occupied by Abe Kanter was barely saved. All seven stores (all wood-frame structures) were destroyed including those of:

- J. W. Davis,
- A. Popwell, general merchandise, and L. D. Popwell (jewelry, clocks and other repairs, etc.),
- a vacant store owned by C. W. Robinson, general merchandise,
- W. T. Callen, merchant,
- Mrs. G. L. Phillips' new millinery store (she had just finished April 1900, on the corner),
- J. E. Evans' new general merchandise store (bought and built in Dec 1900 with T. S. Phillips, beside Mrs. G. L. Phillips'), and
- Moses Mims store which was owned by A. C. Smith, merchant.

The hard work of the volunteers saved most of the contents of all the stores except for the Popwells' which was practically a total loss.

Sadly, another large fire was yet to come in Clanton in 1901. Just after 1:00 A. M. Thursday morning, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1901 another fire alarm was heard. Arson was suspected because the fire was first discovered burning on the outside of the B. E. Jones store. This time nine buildings were destroyed in the block nearest the railroad:

- Mrs. Wright
- J. W. Edwards (B. E. Jones' store and two unoccupied buildings)
- Mrs. Garner
- Albert Headley
- Tipton Mullins
- L & N Depot

Other buildings damaged:

- E. M. Pinckard & Co.
- Mrs. Johnson (Touro's store)
- Newt Kicker (Sartor's store)
- Dr. V. O. Campbelle

Other business in the above buildings:

- Broadhead & Son
- Will Kemp
- Col. R. H. Knox
- John Rheinhardt
- Robert Lake
- Dr. O. M. Wisheart
- Col. William Collier
- W. M. McDaniel

Tragedies such as these fires were taken in stride by the community and they immediately began rebuilding. Practically all of them were rebuilt in brick, many by the end of the year.

Since the fire, J. E. Evans was operating his mercantile business out of other buildings, notably the old Courthouse building that had been used by Abe Kanter. He shared this building with **Judson Strook books and stationery**.

In April 1901 C. J. Stewart purchased the (burned out) lot of J. E. Evans and by October he opened a new store on "corner opposite the court house." Mr. Stewart was from Lomax and had been operating businesses in Clanton since he built his gin and grist mill a few years before, in 1897.



Clanton 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N photo from Courthouse tower, Oct 5th 1901 of the Long Bros. Circus parade taken by Frank Massey and Will Baxley. Left (south) side notice old 2 story Courthouse building housing J. E. Evans store and Joe Foshee. Next building is The Banner office. On the corner where Upchruch Drug Co. would later be is the Johnson building and across 7<sup>th</sup> St is E. M. Pinckard & Co.'s 2 story brick building. Photo lower right corner (north side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N) would be the new C. J. Stewart building, Popwell buildings, and the 2 story P. D. Wilson building across the alley.

1902 March C J Stewart partnered with J H Middleton, enlarged the store, forming an "L" in the back, named **Stewart & Middleton**.

1902 March W D Spigener came to town, opened hardware store in "old Banner office" in May and partnered with C Fenn Jones, named **Spigener & Jones**.

1902 August **Spigener & Jones** moved into Mims & Easterling old store.

1902 November **Stewart & Middleton** split up, C J Stewart sold out to partner Middleton. **W. Kanter & Bro.** (Abe Kanter) bought the stock of goods and had a big sale.

1902 December **Middleton, Chandler & Co.** ran advertisements mentioning "opposite the court house."

1903 December **Middleton, Chandler & Co.** dissolved, Chandler left, became **Middleton & Co.** which, apparently, didn't last long.

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Photo of the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N and 6<sup>th</sup> St by the Courthouse shows Evans family (near baby carriage), Mrs. G. L. Phillips and her millinery store and J. E. Evans' store. Photo labelled as 1904. However, it is hard to logically fit that in with the dates in the old newspapers. 1904 fits the Evans' children's ages well in the photo, however. A bit of a mystery. Starting with little girl – Glennie Evans Parrish Ransom, Mrs. G. L. Phillips, Mrs. J. E. Evans, Clarence Evans, Leon Evans (infant), T. S. Phillips. Windows behind them say Mrs. Phillips Millinery Store. Notice 1896 Courthouse at right.

1904 April **Spigener & Jones Hardware** moved into **Middleton & Co.** "old place," across the street from their old place.

1909 September **Spigener & Jones** sold out, became **Gamble Hardware Co.**

1909 November W D Spigener opened new "**Spigener's Cash Store**" near PO.

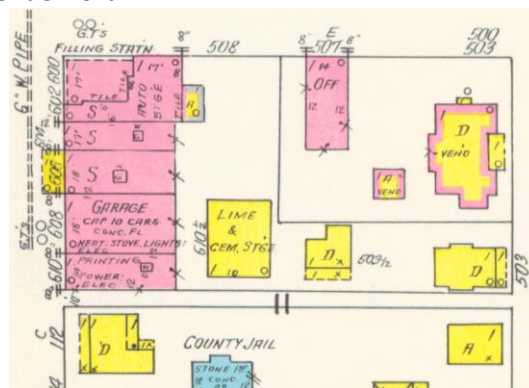
1911 July **Gamble Hardware Co.** added second story to their building.

1910 October C Fenn Jones (of **Spigener & Jones**) bought stake in **Gamble Hardware Co** and ran the Clanton store.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Clanton Hardware Co.** formed by C Fenn Jones and J D Martin, bought out **Gamble** interest.

1918 C Fenn Jones bought out J D Martin, changed name from **Clanton Hardware** to **Jones Hardware Co.**

1921 November, Tom Rockett from Cooper bought a lot from Dr. Gowan in "block 11" (which was south across from the courthouse, probably on 6<sup>th</sup> Street) and built a brick building for his business, which became the **Clanton Building Supply Co.** This was most likely the store in the middle of the ½ block between the alley and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North.



1928 Sanborn Fire Map showing brick stores on 6<sup>th</sup> Street just south of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N.

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1930 January Tom and son Dewey Rockett buy **Jones Hardware**, and remained at the same location (Jones was more than 25 years at the same location). **Clanton Building Supply Co.** ran two stores for a short time.

1930 December **Clanton Building Supply Co.** moved totally into the old **Jones Hardware** building.

1962 June **Clanton Building Supply Co.**, known as **Rockett Hardware**, moved to new location across from the **A & P** store – which was the location across from **First Baptist Church**.

## References

**Union Banner**, many small items in many issues. Too many to list.

**Facebook groups** “*U know u lived in CLANTON as a kid,*” “*WE GREW UP IN CLANTON, ALABAMA*” and others.