

History of Clanton's Matthews / Reynolds / Pledger Home
By Derric Scott
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One of the most asked about houses in Clanton is what is now called "Pledger Manor." It was also known for many years as the home of W. A. Reynolds, and it was originally build by Dr. E. A. Matthews.

Early Days, Dr. Matthews

Dr. Emmett A. Matthews was born September 4, 1859 in Perry County, Alabama. In the 1880 Census he is listed as being at home, but is a student. He married about 1884 to Belle J.

By 1894 Dr. Matthews is already a physician in Clanton and is, unfortunately, in the newspaper because he shot and killed Newton Culp as a "result of ill feeling which had existed for some time past" and after reported earlier threats from Culp. He was indicted for murder, but was found not guilty on May 19, 1895. He is back in the paper shortly afterwards attending to his physician duties.

In the 1900 Census he is living in Clanton on 7th Avenue and listed as a Physician. By 1910 he is listed with his family, wife Belle and daughter Emmette and living on 2nd Avenue. He also had a son named Samuel who was living separately in 1900.

Dr. Matthews won the Clanton election for Mayor in 1907, along with councilmen W. D. Spigener, J. R. Mullins, B. E. Jones, and P. I. Hopkins. He ran other times for the office and both won and lost in later elections. He served several terms as Mayor.

In later 1908 or early 1909, his new home was nearly complete but caught fire and was destroyed. It was rebuilt and they moved into it in July, 1909.



Photo that appears in both 1917 and 1918 CCHS Cantrolla yearbooks.

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Dr. Matthews had other interesting and tragic events in his life.

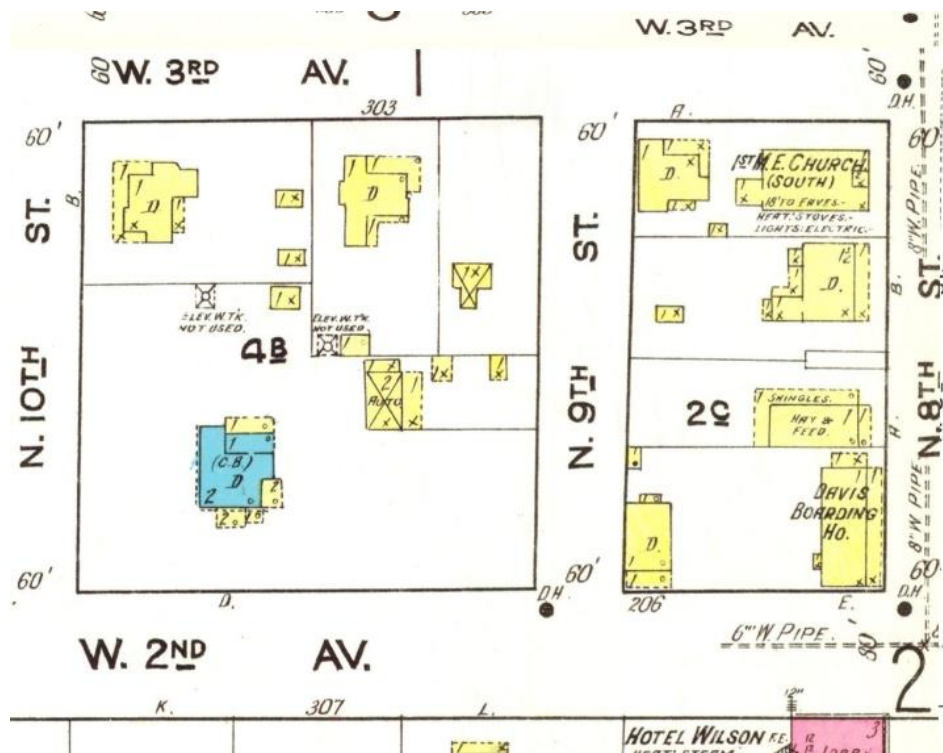
On the night of February 24th and morning of February 25, 1916, the cellar of his house caught fire. In the excitement, his son Samuel collapsed while going to his car and died immediately.

Dr. Matthews was also a part of the first bank to open in Clanton – “The Peoples Savings Bank,” opening December 7, 1901. He resigned that position in 1902 and was later part of opening “The Clanton Bank.” Unfortunately, this bank became insolvent and Dr. Matthews was convicted of malfeasance in June 1916 and served some time in prison in Wetumpka. However, no other officers were ever convicted and no other charges were ever brought against them so the Clanton citizens petitioned, and succeeded in getting the Governor to pardon Dr. Matthews.

Unfortunately, Dr. Matthews died suddenly, soon after he was released from prison, on June 16, 1918.

The Next Phase, W. A. Reynolds

Apparently while Dr. Matthews was in prison in 1917, the next chapter of the house began when W. A. Reynolds purchased the house.



Matthews/Reynolds/Pledger House (Blue) from 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

History of Clanton's Matthews/Reynolds/Pledger Home

Mr. William Archie Reynolds was born June 11, 1870 in the Tuskegee area and moved to Dry Valley, near Montevallo, in the same year. He grew up on the farm, and was a farmer, but soon became a teacher as well. He married Sudie Ware, of Perry County, in 1891. He moved to Jemison in 1895 and became a clerk for the Alliance Corporation. A couple years later he went into the mercantile business named "W. A. Reynolds."

In 1913 Mr. Reynolds became interested in timber and also bought and sold bankrupt stocks. In 1917 he and his family moved to Clanton and bought the former home of Dr. Matthews. He continued to operate timber businesses all around central Alabama. In 1919 he was elected to the legislature and "supported a Woman's suffrage bill, National prohibition and other bills for the uplift of his state and nation."

A detailed profile of Mr. Reynolds was included in one of the 1928 Clanton newspapers, dated February 23, 1928.

It is thought his family owned the house into the late 1960s.

Disrepair - Condemnation

It was owned by several other people and came in to disrepair in the later 1970s. Neighbors complained and the city condemned it. An article in the Birmingham News – February 2, 1976 addressed the house. It mentioned that State Historical Commission members urged it be saved.

Saved from Ruin

Facebook post, August 2019 by Donna Sanders: "To set the record straight...This home was condemned in the mid 70's. My eldest brother (Douglas Holcombe) 3-10-1949 / 4-15-2015 purchased the home. He flipped homes for many years. When he purchased the Reynolds Mansion I was in High School. Douglas was living in a home He had restored in the Collins Chapel area.

The difficult task of getting a permit so the home could be restored for historical purposes began. He met difficulty getting this done. I recall my father, Rev. Fred Holcombe Jr. (deceased 12/28/2007), started restoring the home. I actually helped with restoration of the home. Douglas finally got approval and a work permit. After completion of the project, Douglas lived in the home several years.

After living in the home for some time Douglas put it on the market. Mr. Jerry Pledger and wife Sharon Pledger purchased the home. Jerry was a lifetime friend of our family and practically grew up with us! The Reynolds Mansion holds lots of memories and stories."

Douglas Holcombe and his family deserve recognition for saving this Clanton landmark.

Recent Years

The house was bought from Douglas Holcombe by Jerry and Sharon Pledger in 1991.