

**History of Clanton's Matthews / Reynolds / Pledger Home  
By Derric Scott**

From newspaper research and other sources.

COPYRIGHT © 2022  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
*Revision 2.0, July 20, 2022*

# History of Clanton's Matthews / Reynolds / Pledger Home

By Derric Scott

One of the most asked about houses in Clanton is what is now called "Pledger Manor." It was known for many years as the home of W. A. Reynolds but it was originally build by Dr. E. A. Matthews.

## Before the House

The city block #4 that now contains the house was drawn out and owned by Alfred and Rebecca Baker when Clanton was first created. In January 1872, Elisha T. "E. T." Gullahorn bought the entire city block #4 from the Bakers. It is not presently known if Gullahorn lived there or if the block remained vacant until Dr. E. A. Mathews bought it.



1897 Clanton map showing Block #4, location of the future Matthews house in green circle.

Elisha Thomas Gullahorn was born in Georgia in 1842. By 1870 he and his brothers and sisters had moved to the Baker/Chilton County area and lived in two households – he and his family in one and his younger brothers and sisters in another. The Clanton area was just being developed and the Gullahorns ran a sawmill on the site of the town. It is known that the train stop was briefly called "Gullahorn's switch" and that the sawmill had a commissary where "downtown" would later be. The Gullahorn family was very influential in the early development of Clanton.

## Early Days, Dr. Matthews

Dr. Emmett A. Matthews was born September 4, 1859 in Perry County, Alabama. In the 1880 Census he was listed as being at home, but was a student. He married Belle Johnston in Dallas County on February 28, 1883. By 1887 they are living in Lily, between Isabella and Maplesville.

Dr. Matthews and Belle moved to Clanton in May 1888 and started his practice. In 1894 he was in the newspapers because he had 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 was back in the paper shortly afterwards attending to his physician duties.

In the 1900 Census he was living in Clanton on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and listed as a Physician. His son Samuel was living separately in 1900. Dr. Matthews bought the southeast corner of the block #4 from E. T. Gullahorn in January 1901. In February 1906 he bought more of the block from Gullahorn.

## History of Clanton's Matthews/Reynolds/Pledger Home

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. Overall, he served several terms as Mayor.

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

By the 1910 Census he was listed with his family (wife Belle and daughter Emmette) as living on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, in their new house.



Earliest known photo of the house, it appears in both the 1917 and 1918 CCHS Cantrolla yearbooks.

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

On the night of February 24<sup>th</sup> and morning of February 25, 1916, the cellar of his house caught fire. In the excitement, his son Samuel, 29 years old, also a physician, and living nearby, collapsed while cranking 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 to have the Governor pardon Dr. Matthews. The Governor declined.

## History of Clanton's Matthews/Reynolds/Pledger Home

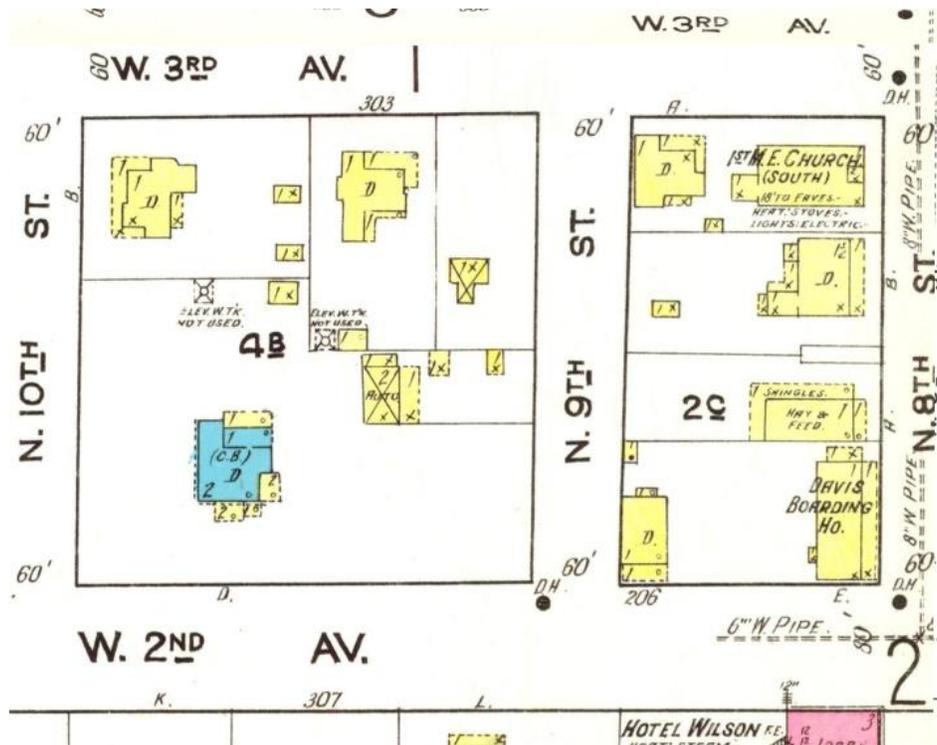
Dr. Matthews died suddenly on June 16, 1918 at the home of his daughter in Reform, AL, while out on parole from prison.

NAME <i>Emmett A. Matthews</i> COUNTY <i>Cluitwood</i> JIMAX 121	
<b>DESCRIPTIVE LIST</b> Alias: _____ Nativity: <i>Am.</i> Race: <i>White</i> Weight: _____ Sex: _____ Complexion: <i>Hair</i> Eyes: _____ Teeth: _____ Occupation: _____ Former Residence: _____ Married or Single: _____ Residence of Wife: _____ No. Children and Residence of: _____ Other Relatives: _____ Throat: _____ Scars: _____ Habits: _____ Disabilities: _____ Education: _____ Marks and Scars: _____ <i>Dr. Matthews 46 - page 126</i>	<b>COURT HISTORY</b> Court: <i>County</i> Crime: <i>Violating act on parole</i> Date of Sentence: <i>July 11, 1916</i> Term of Sentence: <i>2 1/2 yrs</i> Expiration of Sentence: Long Time: <i>July 11, 1918</i> Short Time: <i>Sept 11, 1917</i> Other Indictments for: _____ Where Pending: _____
<b>PRISON HISTORY</b> Jail Number: _____ Incarcerated: _____ Date of Death: _____ Place of Death: _____ Cause of Death: <i>Died while on temporary parole</i> Date of Parole: _____ Date of Discharge: _____ To Whom Assigned: _____ To Whom Transferred: _____ Remarks: <i>Paroled for 60 days 12-4-1916</i> <i>" 10 " 2-16-1917</i> <i>" 10 " 4-16-1917</i> <i>" 10 " 6-5-1917</i> <i>" 10 " 12-2-1917</i> <i>" 10 days 1-2-1918</i> <i>" 30 " 6-10-1918</i>	

1916 Alabama Convict record for Emmett A. Matthews, noting he died while on parole.

## The Next Phase, W. A. Reynolds

Apparently while Dr. Matthews was in prison in 1917, the next chapter of the house began. William Archie "W. A." Reynolds, from Jemison, purchased the house and moved into it in February 1917.



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 and called his establishment "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 into 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:

*...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 by Marvin Cleckler from Douglas Holcombe. Jerry and Sharon Pledger bought it from Cleckler in 1991. The Pledgers named the house "Pledger Manor" and used it as a wedding/reception venue for a period of time.