

Sartor and Kicker – Clanton Merchants
By Derric Scott
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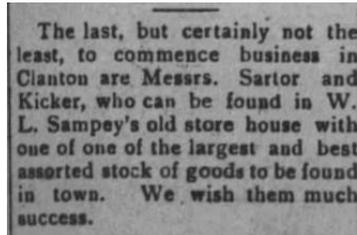
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Sartor and Kicker – Clanton Merchants

By Derric Scott

Sartor & Kicker began their first advertising campaign in September 1897 with the slogan “Last to Open But First in Quality and Price.” And, indeed, at the time they were the most recent merchant to open up in Clanton. However, both men were no strangers to the mercantile business. W. H. Sartor and N. A. “Newt” Kicker were central Alabama natives that had worked for decades in Clanton at several local establishments.



The Union Banner introduced them with the small article above in the September 23, 1897 issue.

The reference to W. L. Sampey’s old store is to a wooden store that was on the west side of 7th Street, just behind W. L. Sampey’s new brick store, which was the two story brick building on the southwest corner of the 2nd Avenue North and 7th Street intersection. A month or so later it is noted that the Post Office is also located in the building as well and Mr. L. B. Pounds is a new postmaster. Dr. Wisehart, the dentist, opened his office in the upstairs rooms.

The Clanton Post Office is located in their store from before 1897 until it is moved in 1898.

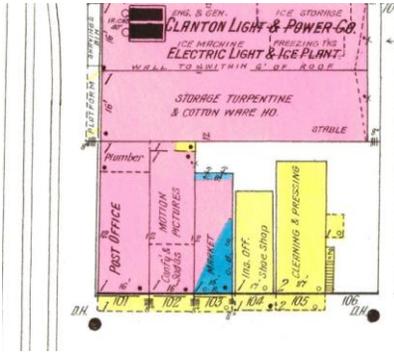
For Christmas, 1898, Sartor & Kicker proudly advertised that they had a “long distance telephone” installed! They bragged that you could *“talk over the phone cheaper than you can telegraph, and more to your satisfaction, as you are your own operator. Bring your families to our store that they may see it.”*

They continue business for the next several years and Mrs. S. J. Watts advertises her line of ladies and children’s clothes. It was very common in those days for merchants to have an in-house lady as “milliner” for women’s and children’s merchandise.

The turn of the Twentieth Century was ushered in with quite a few changes in the commercial sector in Clanton. E. M. Pinckard & Co. bought out W. L. Sampey and now occupies the large brick store on the SE corner of 2nd and 7th. A. J. Wilson bought out W. T. Callen. Mr. W. H. Wright sold out and moved to Birmingham. Sartor & Kicker moved into W. H. Wright’s store. H. Touro moved into the Sartor & Kicker building (formerly W. L. Sampey’s old store). Mrs. G. L. Phillips had a new store next to J. E. Evans. Abe Kantor was temporarily out of business and going through a bankruptcy sale and there was talk of plans to build and open Clanton’s first bank.

In May 1900 a court ordered sale of W. H. Merritt’s properties (who was the landlord for Sartor & Kicker at the time) which provided a good description of their location. It said the “storehouse and lot, situated in lot No. 14, in Block No. 8, east of the South and North Alabama Railroad.” This location would have been on the north side of 2nd Ave N about 4 or 5 stores up from the railroad.

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1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the corner of the block near the RR. The “Cleaning & Pressing” building was likely where Sartor & Kicker was in the Wright building.

In August of 1900 it was announced that **Sartor and Kicker** were considering building a brick “storehouse.” They used the motto “Live and let live” at this time. However, in January of 1901 the partnership dissolved and N. A. Kicker retired from the mercantile business and W. H. Sartor continued shop in the same location. As 1901 continued to march on W. H. Sartor continued the plans for a new two story brick building and planned to locate it on the NW corner of 2nd Ave N and 7th St, opposite **W. I. Mullins’** store, who was also contemplating a new brick building. Other progress included Mrs. Johnson’s consideration of a brick store for the **Clanton Drug Co.** and Alfred Popwell’s thoughts of building two brick buildings, E. M. Pinckard was enlarging his store, there were new brick stores for C. J. Stewart, Mrs. Phillips, W. T. Callen, and John M. Robinson. The four brick stores mentioned above were probably located “opposite the court house” as another article mentioned. Dr. E. A. Matthews had bought the “Albert Headley lot” next to the depot and plans to tear down the wooden building and rebuild in brick.

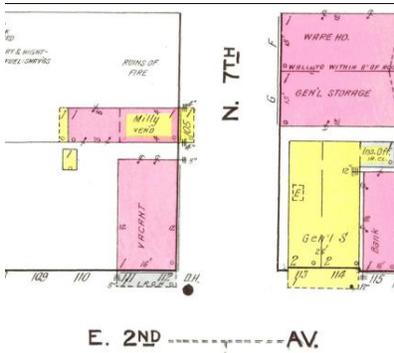
In June of 1901 W. H. Sartor was no longer advertising with the name **Sartor & Kicker**, but just using **W. H. Sartor** alone. By September 1901 he had moved into his new store, a one story brick building on the corner of 2nd Ave N and 7th St. Mr. R. L. Marcus opened up his store in the building vacated by Sartor, the former Sampey old store.

On through 1904 W. H. Sartor continued business with his slogan “Live and let live” at the store on the corner. At the end of the year, he partnered again with N. A. Kicker and others, this time to start a second bank in town, **the Clanton Bank**. By 1906 N. A. Kicker had been elected Mayor of Clanton. In 1908 many of the sidewalks down Main Street from the rail road were being paved. In October of that year the Sartor’s house caught fire.

In 1916 the **Clanton Bank** failed and caused W. H. Sartor to lose most of his assets. In 1919 a new player came to town and W. H. Sartor partnered with him. His name was V. J. Elmore and they renamed the **W. H. Sartor store** to “**Elmore’s**.” This was mostly a clothing store and not the “**Elmore’s Five and Dime**” that many of us remember – that would come later. Under Sartor’s management, **Elmore’s** clothing store becomes one of the leading stores in Clanton. Eventually, in February 1929, W. H. Sartor buys out V. J. Elmore’s part of the operation. Sartor continued the business at the same location but renamed it “**The Fair Store**.”

The 1917 Sanborn Fire maps show **Sartor’s** store as vacant – this is just after the **Clanton Bank** failure so he must have been temporarily closed.

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1917 Sanborn Fire map showing Sartor's store vacant just after Clanton Bank failure, on left corner.

Tragically, in 1921 W. H. Sartor's son Lee died in the hospital in Montgomery after an illness of several days. He was a young man of 19 "just reaching the age of maturity and usefulness."

Several "Who's Who" biographies of Mr. Sartor were published in the Union Banner. Salient points: He was born in 1861 near Autaugaville to W. D. and Mary Elenor Sartor and had a brother Eugene who worked for **Schloss Sheffield Co.** of Birmingham. He moved to Clanton on March 18, 1872. At first he worked for **Alex G. Dake's brick yard** in town making \$0.25 a day (located near where the High School (later Adair) stood). He drove a yoke of steers to turn the mud mill. This brick was used to build the jail in Clanton. He helped build the jail and got \$0.50 per day. Later he made \$0.75 a day at **Randolph's sawmill** on the freight depot's location. Next he worked in the fall for a merchant **Capt. John Harmon** for \$10 a month. His first real position was for another merchant and sawmill operator, **Rudolph Ehrman**. Mr. Ehrman came from Montevallo and ran a store "where **Mullins and Moore**" now stands (in 1928). Sartor sold the first merchandise (a bolt of cloth) from that building location. He was making \$30.00 a month at that time. He worked for Ehrman for 15 years, eventually reaching a salary of \$60.00 a month (approximately 1882-1897). He partnered with co-worker N. A. Kicker in 1897 and started that business. He and N. A. Kicker had worked together over the same timeframe at Mr. Ehrman's store. W. H. Sartor married Mary Bell Watts on September 12, 1896. He helped found the **Clanton Bank**, but it failed in 1916 and he lost almost everything. He partnered with V. J. Elmore in 1919 and renamed the store "**Elmore's**." In 1929 he bought out V. J. Elmore and renamed the store "**The Fair Store**." He was active in the Baptist church and a member of the Masonic Lodge and the Zamora Temple Shrine. He had sons Lee, Adolph and John and daughters Mrs. Barney Roberts and Mrs. Crutcher Ross.

W. H. Sartor also worked an early job as a boy for the **Chilton County Courier**, run by W. A. Collier. Robert A. Wright was the editor and Sartor was "the devil" – an apprentice. The large press bar was called "the Devil's tail." **The Courier** was printed "in the northeast corner room of the old courthouse which stood in the spot where 2nd Avenue North now crosses 6th Street." Baseball was played in the lot next door to the east, where the present courthouse stands and the printers often played ball when the shop closed.

Sadly, in February 1935 **The Fair Store** declared bankruptcy and on the 25th the contents were bought by Mr. Irvine from Greenville for \$1,075.00.

The "Sartor Building" continued to be used by businesses in Clanton, however. In June of 1935 a photography studio advertised "Studio Now Open in the W. H. Sartor Building." In October 1935, **The Klinner Furniture Co.** moves into the building next door.



Clanton photo on 2nd Ave N looking west showing Watson's and the corner store, now The Klinner Furniture Co.

The building gets new life in 1938 when, in June, the Sartor Building is renovated for a new dry goods store. At this time the building is owned by Dr. J. P. Hayes. By July 21, 1938 "**Eagle's Store – Bargain House**" is opened in the store, advertising it is "Located in the Corner Building Formerly Occupied by **Watts Hat Shoppe**." It is operated by Ike Nathews from Montevallo who has operated stores in Centreville and Blockton. (Note that Sartor's wife was a Watts and the **Hat Shoppe** was likely her mother's.)

Within days of when Mr. Nathews opened **Eagle's Store**, William Henry Sartor died at his home from a heart ailment on July 24th, 1938. He was 77.

But things keep moving ... the **Eagle's Store** puts up a "novel electric sign" which will "flash on and off, first the wings of the eagle, then its body, then the name."



Pre-July 1940 photo showing the Eagle's Store sign on far left. Then Mullins' brick store, Peoples Savings Bank, First National Bank, Chicago Sales first location, 2 story Wilson building, other buildings then courthouse.

The **Eagle's Store** is short-lived. By the end of April 1939 they are advertising for a going out of business sale. However, they advertise more after that, including a mention on September 21st 1939 that they and four other Clanton stores will be closed on Saturday the 23rd for a religious holiday. These stores, the **Eagle's Store**, **Parisian**, the **Leader**, the **Dollar Store**, and **Levine's Dry Goods Co.** are all run by Jewish citizens. But once more, on November 23, 1939, Mr. Nathews is having another going out of business sale.

It is unknown at this time exactly when the **Eagle's Store** stopped doing business, but in January of 1942 the **Parisian Store** announces that it will be moving into the renovated old Sartor building before the

end of February. When the **Parisian Store** closed, next for that corner store was **David Lee's** whose grand opening was on May 19th, 1950.

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.

Thomas Blalock’s tireless research in old newspapers and Internet archives.