

# CHILTONIAN

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## 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 also known for many years as the home of W. A. Reynolds, and it was originally built by Dr. Emmett A. Matthews.

Dr. 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. By 1894 Dr. Matthews is already a physician in Clanton. Unfortunately, he is in the news 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 apparently acquitted because he is soon attending to his physician duties.

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

Dr. Matthews was 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.

### QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its fall meeting on **Sunday, October 13<sup>th</sup>**, at **2:00 PM** at the **Senior Connection**.

Our speaker is yet to be determined at the time of this writing.

The meeting is free and open to the public.

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**P. O. Box 644**

**Clanton, Alabama 35046-0644**

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But since no other officers were ever convicted and no other charges were ever brought against them, the Clanton citizens petitioned and succeeded in getting the Governor to pardon Dr. Matthews.



Photo in 1917 and 1918 CCHS Cantrolla yearbooks.

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

While Dr. Matthews was apparently in prison, in 1917, W. A. Reynolds purchased the house and the next chapter began. *(continued on back)*

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 moved to Jemison in 1895 and became a clerk for the Alliance Corporation. A couple years later he went into the mercantile business and named his store "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."

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

After the Reynolds, it was owned by several other people and eventually 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.

Douglas Holcombe purchased the home in the late 1970s, saving it from destruction. He completely restored the home and Mr. Holcombe lived in the house for several years.

After living there for a time, Mr. Holcombe put it on the market. In 1991. Jerry and Sharon Pledger purchased the home.

The house has been called "Pledger Manor" since soon after the Pledgers purchased it and has been used as a venue for weddings and other functions. It is still in use by them as a home.

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