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Brief Origin Notes of Selected Clanton Buildings, Part 2

By Derric Scott

The origins of Clanton and some of its early buildings were discussed in the last issue. It was noted that the two city-wide fires in 1901 reshaped the face of the town from wood to brick. There were some notable holdouts – the two story W. I. Mullins store on the northeast corner of 2nd Avenue North and 7th Street and the two story Tom Kemp store on the north side of 2nd Avenue North mid-block near the railroad.

The year of 1914 began with more disastrous fires. January 8th started with a huge blaze in the town of Thorsby that consumed its entire two blocks of businesses. Like Clanton, the 19th Century buildings were all made of wood; also like Clanton, they were rebuilt of brick or stone.



This ca. 1900 view is from the north of Thorsby businesses west of the railroad. Practically all these were destroyed in the 1914 fire. For reference, the A. M Johnson building is now the location of the old stone bank building.

LOCALLY MADE BRICKS

The bricks used in these town buildings were usually made locally. Felix R. Woodyard ran a kiln and made brick in the county. He was noted as the supplier for many of the buildings. There are references to bad weather slowing the brick production and causing construction delays.

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The fiery destruction continued a few weeks later when Clanton's wooden Palmer Hotel on the hill, at the 2nd Avenue North and 8th Street intersection, burned on Saturday night January 31, 1914. Also consumed in that fire were the Davis Boarding House across the street and the old Episcopal Church that stood on what is presently the corner of 2nd Avenue North and Enterprise Road. The Wilsons rebuilt the hotel by mid-summer into the three story hotel that most people remember as the Willingham Hotel.

The churches of the town were busy modernizing too. The Clanton Baptist Church (today the First Baptist Church) built its present brick structure in 1921 to replace their wood frame building which sat where Clanton City Hall is presently located.



Pre-1920s Clanton Baptist (left) and Methodist (right) churches.

The old wood frame Baptist church structure was used by Mr. C. W. Wade as a theater before he moved his Wadesonian west of the railroad. In 1924, the Methodist Church (now Clanton First United Methodist) replaced their wooden building with the current stone/brick structure.

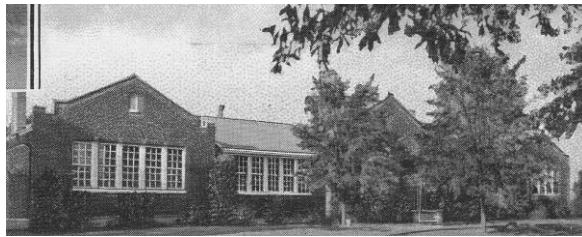
Over the next couple of decades the old frame buildings continued to be replaced with brick and the last holdouts in Clanton finally started to fall. The old W. I. Mullins two story wooden building was torn down in the spring of 1935 and in June of that year it was announced that a new two story brick building would be built on the "W. I. Mullins corner." My generation knows that corner as the location of the Peoples Savings Bank.

The two-story Tom Kemp store (immediately east of City Barber Shop), dismantled in December of 1943, was the last of the old frame business buildings to come down. The Union-Banner said "its removal takes away the last remnant of Clanton as it was during the sawmill days of Rudolph Ehrman, Major Tate, and the Gullahorns."

In 1914 Clanton was chosen as the site of the new Chilton County High School. The existing Clanton High School included elementary through 12th grades; it was separated into the Clanton Grammar School in the old building and the Chilton County High School on the new site east of town. The wood-frame Grammar School was replaced in 1928 with the brick Elementary School that many of us remember. When the 1914 CCHS burned in 1938 it was replaced at the same location. It was the CCHS until replaced in 1962 when it became Adair JHS.



Original Clanton Grammar and High School, replaced by the 1928 Elementary School (same spot).



1914-1938 CCHS (Adair site)

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