

221 East Third Street, photograph below taken for the 1985 survey



221, today showing the ravages of time, multi rentals and neglect.

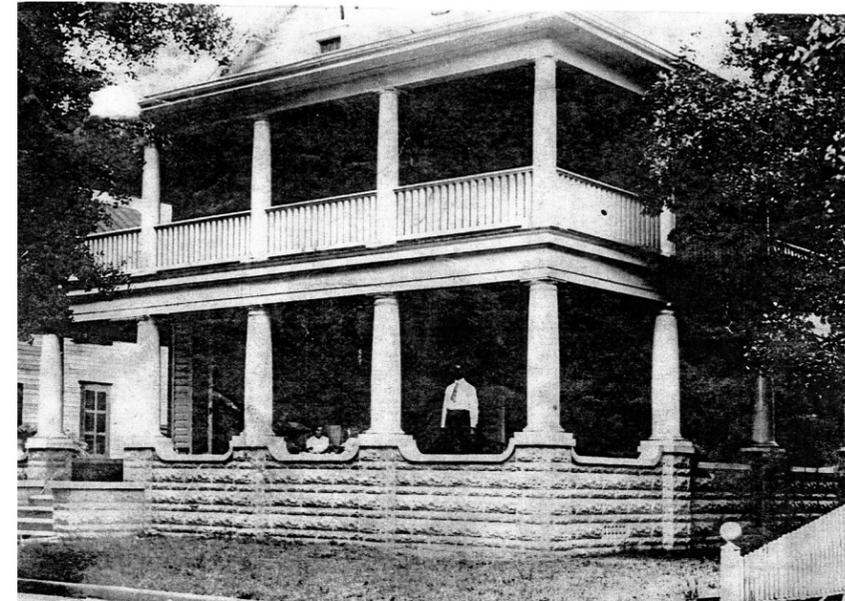


It is hoped that at sometime this building will be restored, closely to its former glory. It is doubtful that the columns and parts of the porch walls survived. Note in the photo on page one and the top one, hereon, the graceful curve of the knee wall. In the bottom photo the top has been straightened. Judging by the set back of the filled in porch walls, it would confirm that the columns etc. are no longer there. This house is important to Springfield. Its birth and decline tell the story of our neighborhood, lets hope it also gets a rebirth.

# The Sampler - January 2014

Springfield Improvement Association & Archives  
EST. 1904

Van. C. Swearingen, Mayor of Jacksonville 1913-1915



221 East Third Street ca. 1901

The records show that Mayor Swearingen lived there in 1913/14 and owned the building until 1925. When he moved to Miami.

Florida Times Union, March 1943

Van Swearingen Taken  
By Death At Miami Home.

Miami, March 3rd 1943. Van. C. Swearingen Sr. 70, former attorney general of Florida, died at his home here today. He served as mayor of Jacksonville, and had also served there as municipale judge. He once was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic, nomination for governor. Swearingen was attorney general of Florida from September 1, 1917 to January 4, 1921, when he was succeeded by Rivers H. Buford, who later became a Supreme Court justice.

Millenium Moment June 24, 1913  
First clean-cut mayor wanted clean-cut city  
By Bill Foley, Times-Union senior writer,

Van C. Swearingen, first of the clean-cut mayors, threw a net over sin. Two days into his only term, the erstwhile blacksmith and former city judge decreed all mischief would be restricted to the aptly named "restricted district." This would be Jacksonville's tenderloin, red-light district, what-you-would; the rough-and-rowdy west end centered on Bridge and Ward streets (now Broad and Houston).

Swearingen had a list and was checking it twice. Already he had found 40 houses of ill or shady repute. Either they would move from otherwise wholesome residential or business locations or they would be raided and closed down, the new mayor said. "It is said that a number of questionable places conducted in the city have been known to the police for some time. However, no firm steps were taken to secure sufficient evidence and, consequently, the evil has continued," To this end, Swearingen had appropriated for his personal staff one of the most prominent personalities of the Jacksonville police department, Clarence E. Hooks, henceforth known as "the mayor's detective." More, he had notified acting police chief Fred Roach that he, Swearingen, would henceforth be the personal boss of the department, regardless of what authority the Board of Bond Trustees imagined it might have.

"The mayor says he believes that evil will always exist in every city, but thinks that it is far better to have questionable characters in one district instead of having them scattered throughout the municipality," the Times-Union said. Swearingen was the first Jacksonville mayor in many years to eschew facial hair. His inauguration was the most elaborate in memory and he hit the ground running, crashing into all sorts of stuff, and preparing himself to become attorney general of Florida.



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## Pre-Christmas outing in 1919 turned tragic at railroad crossing

Leni Bessette and Louise Stanton Warren  
"From our Past", Florida Times Union, March 13, 2004

After picking Christmas greenery in the woods, prominent Springfield residents, miles from home, crossed the railroad tracks south of Fishweir Creek on the old Orange Park Road, now Roosevelt Boulevard, a scene laden with undetected danger.

At 4.40 p.m., Dec. 21 1919, Atlantic Coast Line passenger train No. 85 hurled through their automobile as the car traveled toward a small, iron bridge over the creek. It was not the first or last accident between train and car on Orange Park Road.

The merry group had driven to their outing, southwest of Jacksonville, from homes north of town on Boulevard, West Seventh Street, Silver Street and other nearby addresses, to gather holly and seasonal foliage. On the shell road in the St. Johns Park area, inclement weather dictated the passengers close the car's storm curtains, and as determined from the words of the last to die, they neither saw nor heard the train.

Six people rode in the large Mitchell touring car, a popular make of the time despite the company's recent bankruptcy. The train's engineer, by all accounts a reliable and seasoned performer, stated the Mitchell simply drove onto the railroad tracks 50 feet in front of the engine. Although he blew his siren, had the car passengers heard the horn, time was well past his ability to stop the train.

In customary journalism of the time, The Times-Union story described the dreadful injuries suffered by those in the machine (car). The front two front seat passengers were scooped up onto the pilot (cow catcher) of the steam engine together with parts of the wrecked vehicle. Both individuals were dead when removed from the pilot, while two other riders, with broken necks and additional wounds, were pinned beneath the chassis of the burnt automobile. Two, still living, were transported by other drivers, coincidentally on the road, to Riverside Hospital the nearest in the vicinity.

One of the injured, close in death or in a "dying condition" as so described in that era, expired upon arrival at the hospital. The other died several days later.

When the train was finally able to stop, the last train car was only 200 feet from the crash. Passengers, jostled and stirred by the collision, emptied their seats to view the wreck. They did what they could for the dead and nearly dead scattered about the tracks. Then the southbound train continued its journey to Tampa, stopping at Yukon station south of Ortega to phone the news to railroad officials at Sanford, who relayed it to Jacksonville.

Due to problems recognizing and identifying victims, it was difficult to send the dreadful tidings to relatives. At last, the car license, unearthed in the burned wreckage, identified the Mitchell as belonging to A.B. Simmons, proprietor of a meat and produce store on Main Street.

Meanwhile back in the city, A.B. Simmons was waiting for his son, Herbert, 14, to whom he had lent his car for the afternoon, to meet him downtown at 5 p.m., as they had previously arranged. That, of course, was not to be, for Herbert Simmons, the driver of the luckless car, seated in the front, had died a horrible death, his body landing on the pilot of the engine. His friends, James Selby, 13, and Ralph McMillan, 14 also died at the scene, trapped with their necks broken beneath the burning car. Roberta Cravy, 12, stepdaughter of H.W. Purvis, who was, ironically, superintendent of the Seaboard Air Line Railway, died at Riverside Hospital upon arrival, and Sarah Talley, 13, daughter of Wilbur B. Talley, prominent Florida architect and designer, lingered for several days, regaining consciousness enough to say she had no knowledge of the train or the accident.

The only adult in the car, presumably as chaperone to the children, was Nellie Talley, mother of Sarah, who, seated beside Herbert, the driver, also died beside him on the front of the train.

All the children were buried before Christmas, Simmons and Cravy's bodies being transported to their hometowns. Selby's service was conducted at the funeral parlor of Marcos Conant by the Rev. Hobson of the First Baptist Church. His pallbearers were his school friends, as were McMillan's whose service was at Main Street Baptist Church, under the direction of the Rev. Lacy Mahon.

When the child's long deathwatch ended, the Talleys, daughter and mother, were buried Christmas Eve, three days after the accident. Wilbut Talley, who had designed many fine buildings and homes in Jacksonville, later left the city for Lakeland, where he continued to create memorable designs.

The Mitchell Touring car ca. 1915. Most likely the same model vehicle driven by Herbert Simmons, on that ill fated evening. He was only 14 but, the rules of the day allowed him to drive.



WILBUR TALLEY, his wife and daughter Sarah were living at 215 West Seventh Street, pictured at the left, at the time of the terrible tragedy. He was a wonderful architect, and had previously been employed by Marsh and Saxelbye, as a draftsman. The family had lived in various houses in Springfield, including on Pearl Street and Laura Street. It seems, until this dreadful accident, his heart was in Springfield.

The directories do not usually include children in the listings but, it appears that Herbert Simmons lived at 1521 Perry Street and Roberta Cravy lived at 127 West Seventh Street. Ralph McMillan lived on the Boulevard. Their houses still stand.

The 1919 Jacksonville Directory carries the following entry; SIMMONS, Albert B. (Lillie). Fresh meats, Poultry, Eggs, Butter, Fruit and Vegetables. 502 Main, cor. Church. Tel. Bell 2666. h 1721\* Perry, Tel. Bell 6955. (\*1721 today is 1521)

Marco Conant Funeral Parlor was at 1426 (now 1226) Main.



Springfield and Jacksonville lost Wilbur Talley after the terrible death of his family. He continued to design wonderful buildings and churches in other parts of Florida. He left us a great legacy - his creation of the Armory Building on Market Street. This structure has been in the news of late (and the hearts of Springfielders), as its future use and protection are debated. It deserves the best, not only for its age and beauty but, probably also in memory of the Talley family.