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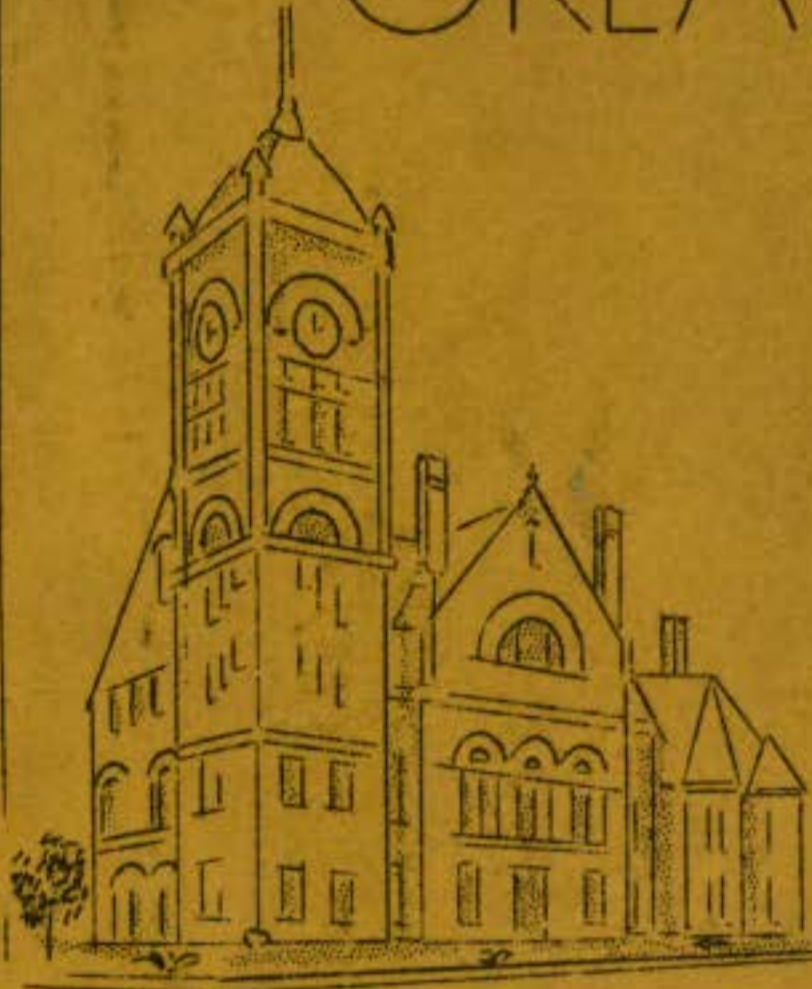


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STORIES ABOUT ORLANDO



OLD COURT HOUSE



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Own a living man, nothing is so wonderful as a book. — Charles Kingsley

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SOME ORLANDO STORIES

(In preparing an article for the local papers regarding some facts and figures concerning the old Lawrence Drug Store, which occupied such a vital place in the life of Orlando from 1895 to 1905, I have interviewed and corresponded with many boys and girls who remember incidents in connection with that store. For a short newspaper article of interest to those who now read our daily papers, only brief facts could be mentioned. But believing that many of my friends would read with interest further details about those happy and care-free days, the story which follows has been prepared as an elaboration on the facts which were accepted by the newspaper for the opening of the new Liggett Pharmacy. It will be located on the O.B.& T. corner, the exact space- although now in a modern ten story office building- as that which housed Lawrence's Empire Pharmacy.)

Swish-h-h- --- cras-s-h-h ! The lovely quiet of Orange Avenue on a February day of 1904 was shattered and poor nervous Dr. Lawrence was calling "Bob, Bob, - where is that trifling negro; I'll fire him tonight sure, even if I find him now". Bob eventually appeared from the alley back of Metcalf's and Kuhl's Kandy Kitchen, where he had been indulging in an innocent game of African Golf. The cause of the excitement was a glass of chocolate ice cream soda which had just been purchased by Helen Patnam, (Mrs. S. J. Sligh) and which had unaccountably slid to the spotless wooden floor and smashed into a dozen pieces. "White folks gettin' mighty ca'less", grumbled Bob Dallas, as he mopped and dried the floor again, while Helen, (and was her face red!) scurried to the door and walked home as fast as she could to the house which was on the corner now occupied by part of Orange Court Hotel.

The gossip was that Helen was a little flustered because Charlie Guernsey, the handsome and popular chief soda clerk, had told her how sweet she looked in that new pink dress. He was only trying to be polite and agreeable, but he made plenty of girl's hearts go pitty-pat when he talked to them that way, and only the week before he had sweet words with Florida Howard as she was leaving the store, and she dropped a bottle of shoe blacking on that same clean floor, for Bob to mop up. No wonder he grumbled a little, and besides that, when Bob was dressed for the day, he was dressed. Both Drs. Lawrence and Donnelly were fastidious men and natty dressers, but Dallas ran them a close second, and after his morning cleaning of floors, windows and fountain was done, he was as proud of his pink shirt and red hose, which were always fresh and newly laundered, as any white man could be of his choice articles of apparel.

You will remember that Dallas was quite deaf, and could always conveniently not hear when told to do unpleasant jobs, but if his name was mentioned about something he was not supposed to hear, his auditory nerves suddenly grew very keen. Bob would sip the flowing bowls at regular periods, and when, after imbibing a little too freely, he would wend his way homeward to colored town, his wife would scold him properly and following an invariably heated argument, she would hit him with the teakettle. She had good aim and always landed the heavy kettle in the same spot- on the right side of his forehead, so that Bob always had a lump on one side of his head. Always also on such occasions, Dr. Lawrence would lose his temper and fire Bob. In fact that was what generally sent Bob home, and when his wife heard the news of no job and no wages, the fight began. Also again, in a week or so Bob would edge into the back door and ask Dr. Lawrence for his job back, and in spite of threats and scoldings, he would be re-hired. He would work hard and faithfully for a month, and then repeat the same experience; but he was such a good porter, that Lawrence was always glad to have him back, and let his substitute go.

At the same time this story begins, Dr. Albert J. Donnelly, was chief clerk at the Empire store, and there never was a finer man to work with. He was strictly business, efficient and able to keep all hands at work, yet was agreeable and kind. All knew that if he requested a task to be done, that it was one needed for the good of both the store and employees. Naturally, the more trade they had, the better Dr. Lawrence would feel, and the more apt he would be to raise wages, which were from \$3.00 to \$5.00 a week for soda clerks and porter, and \$75.00 to \$100.00 per month for trained prescription clerks.

Dr. Donnelly was a social leader as well as good at business, and in his day escorted all the town belles to the Charity Ball, or other events. He was often Cotillion leader, and was graceful, capable and untiring at such events. Susie Taylor, Margaret Hart, Mary Howard, Lily Wilmott, Lilla Shine, were some of his partners at those balls, and to be escorted by Dr. Donnelly always meant that the girl or young lady would be the center of attraction and have all the dances she wished. Many of the dances were held at Kuhl-Delaney Hall- the third floor of the present Mather-Wiley building- but the most fashionable ones, then as now, were at the old Rosalind Club building, located on the present site of the Angebilt Hotel.

The Charity Balls and Military Balls were always held on the third floor of the Armory, which was only torn down in 1933. They would generally begin at 8:15 or 8:30 PM. and continue until two, three or even four o'clock, if the orchestra could be persuaded to stay that long. Newell's orchestra played all dances for many years, and it's personnel changed with the years. Among the players were Mrs. Newell, piano; Prof. Newell, Chas. Guernsey and Nevin Sloan, violins; Frank Guernsey, Max Smith and Payson Branch, Clarinets; F.N. Boardman, flute; Will Branch, Alex Newell and Ed Palmer, cornets; Owen

Robinson, oboe; Joe Guernsey, bass; and Ed Westover, drums. They played mostly two steps and waltzes, with an occasional quadrille or "square dance", for the older folks, and varied tempos for Cotillions. For the Quadrilles at Military Balls, they often played a musical setting founded on Bugle Calls, in the various rythms. The playing of this setting always brought heavy encores from the members of the Military Company and their ladies, and it would sometimes be played twice by special request.

Dr. Donnelly superintended the operation of the soda fountain, with it's cooling plain and fancy sodas, ice cream and sun'aeas. Although the fountain at the Lawrence Drug Store was the oldest in the city, the patronage there was by far the largest. There were good reasons for this. Bob Dallas kept at all times a plenty of ice on the tanks, and the soda clerks were at work constantly, washing and cleaning dishes as well as the working parts of the fountain.

Dr. Lawrence was a man of most attractive personality, a natural salesman, always dressed to the pink of perfection, politeness itself, and a perfect gentleman. He had a large following of lady customers, and was at ease with any number of them. He could talk to a dozen of them at once, and each would think that she was the object of his especial interest. Yet while he attracted the ladies, and used their friendship for making good sales of perfumes, candies and other articles, he was ever that same perfect gentleman, either in or out of the store, and they respected him for his many talents and his devotion to Mrs. Lawrence.

He was a Canadian by birth, but in early life went to New York, the Empire State, coming to Orlando about 1890, establishing a small drug store in the McElroy Building, in what is the present room of the Johnson Brothers Haberdashery. At that time there was only one other drug store in Orlando—the BLUE Drug Store belonging to Dr. J. N. McElroy, in the same location as it is at present, and now managed by J. Merle McElroy. After Lawrence moved his stock to the southwest corner of Orange and Pine, Ben Abernathy opened up the "Orange Pharmacy" in the tiny store vacated by Dr. Lawrence.

McElroy and Abernathy both had newer and more up-to-date fountains than Lawrence, but the Empire Store, or Pharmacy, (so named because of Dr. Lawrence's long residence in the Empire State), always had the better part of the fountain trade. As one old resident expressed it, (Joe Guernsey), "The sodas there just tasted better, were colder and more refreshing, and we knew that everything was as clean and sanitary as they knew how to make it".

Another former resident, Ethel Chapman Bingham of Jacksonville, writes, "The Lawrence Drug Store has always remained in my memory as having employed the most obliging and courteous clerks, making it's customers feel at home at all times within it's doors". Those are simple words, but they mean

what even today, any merchant would like said about his place, be it a small shop, or the towering department store. Mrs. Bingham tells further of being in the Lawrence store one morning, with Ora Hammond and Mary Smith (Moorman). They had been served with cool sodas at her invitation, and when she looked in her purse for the money, she found she had left it at home. Quoting her letter, "Seeing my embarrassment, an obliging clerk rushed to my rescue and quickly supplied enough silver coins to pay the bill". That clerk happened to be the compiler of this article, and although he has no recollection of whether or not Mrs. Bingham ever repaid the 30¢, he is most happy to have been kindly remembered for so many years, and to have had a part in making the store where he worked, one well thought of by it's many delightful customers.

That same clerk was standing by the big front window of that same store one afternoon in February 1904, when down Orange Avenue came walking swifiting a lovely girl all dressed in black. As she passed the window, Charlie Guernsey called to her "In quite a hurry this afternoon, are you not?" Back came the reply without hesitation, "Oh yes, I'm goin' yonder!" Which was an expression in those days that one was in a hurry to reach a certain place. The same clerk asked of Charlie, "Tell me, who is that stunning looking girl?" Charlie replied, "Why, that is Ethel Chapman- She and her mother and brother live on West Central Avenue, out near the Hammonds and Bunches." "Gee, isn't she a peach", said the young soda clerk admiringly, and Charlie laughingly agreed with him.

The episode of the forgotten purse was a few days later, and shortly afterward the local paper printed the announcement of the engagement of Ethel Chapman to Mr. Locke Bingham of Jacksonville. Her brother, Ray Chapman, married Jewel Dinkle, of Longwood, a graduate of the Cathedral School, and also moved to Jacksonville, where for many years he has been a prominent auto dealer. The Bingham's have two sons, both living in Jacksonville, one of them being an official of the Shell Oil Company, the other manager of the Laney-Delcher Shipping Company.

Dr. Lawrence was unmarried when he reached Orlando, but soon after met a charming visitor from Nashville Tenn., who spent the winters with a relative here. Her name was Lulu Hayes, a niece of Jefferson Davis, and she became Mrs. Lawrence in the spring of 1902. They lived in a cottage on Jefferson Street, just back of what is now the Sherwin-Williams store in the CADY Building. Mrs. Lawrence was a social leader, active in Rosalind, Sorosis, and church work, as well as the Auxiliary of the old Church Home and Hospital, and in U.D.C. affairs. She was one of the most faithful workers at the Charity Balls, and invariably spent many busy days and nights planning and preparing the refreshments served on those auspicious occasions. Following Dr. Lawrence's death in 1906, she returned to Orlando, where she has since resided.

Just before the World War, she and Mrs. Seth Woodruff had a most interesting trip to Europe, and following that she was society editor for the Reporter-Star for many years. Delicate health has prevented her participating in city affairs during recent years, but she still keeps up with local and world affairs by reading, and recalls vividly many interesting stories of Orlando, which she has known intimately for more than 40 years.

A recent letter from Dr. Donnelly recalls many events of the period of his residence here. When he began work for Dr. Lawrence, a Dr. Granville was in charge of the store, as Dr. Lawrence was laid up from an injury to his knee. T. Graham Hall was the young clerk, the same man who is now one of the prominent attorneys of Tennessee, and who is known in Europe as well for his official work as District Governor and International Committeeman of Rotary. Business was flourishing when Donnelly arrived. They bought cigars in lots of many thousands, and would telegraph several times a month for express shipments of Huyler's Candies, which they bought in lots of \$100.00 or more at a time.

The drug store opened at 6:00 AM, and closed at about 9:00 PM. As Central Time was in use then, the hours were what would now correspond with 7AM to 10:00 PM. Ice Cream was made fresh daily in old fashioned freezers, the handle turned generally by Bob Dallas, or if he was otherwise occupied, the clerks would take a hand. Louis Bas prepared all the ice cream for many years, and, when kodak work began to be popular, he fixed up a dark room in the old bank vault, and developed films. From 1½ to 2 gallons of ice cream were made daily, and when that supply was gone, there was no more to be had- the customers had to substitute sodas or wait until the next day. Now it is a frequent event for McElroy, one of some 50 places selling ice cream, to dispose of 20 gallons in a day.

Dr. Donnelly writes of how the young ladies and girls would bring gentlemen into the store, (at whose suggestion he does not say), and they would pause at the Huyler case for selections of candy to be made. Dr. Donnelly had to learn by watching the expression on the face or in the eyes of the young lady, as to how much the young man or boy would spend, whether 50¢ or \$4.00.

After leaving Orlando, Dr. Donnelly went to Jacksonville for a few years, and then moved to California, where he was in Oakland, then in Berkeley, the home of the University of California- he now owns his own store in Concord, just outside of Berkeley. He has done well in business, and hopes to visit Florida the coming winter. A sister of his lives in Palm Beach, and by a strange co-incidence, recently cared for Jim Delaney in his last illness.

Before Graham Hall was in the Lawrence Store, Jim McRae was chief clerk. Many will recall a trial in criminal court where McRae's brother was the defendant of a serious charge of which it was proved, upon testimony of Mrs. Mary K. Duke, that he was entirely innocent. During the trial, Bishop Whipple, who had a winter home at Maitland, drove over the heavy sand roads each day, and sat by the McRae boy, believing him to be innocent, as afterward proven. Other clerks for Dr. Lawrence were Will Holshouser and Will Greatham, who served during the period of about 1891 to 1898.

After moving to the new brick building on the corner, Dr. Lawrence greatly enlarged his stock of merchandise, his perfume and cigar counters being among the largest and best patronized in the state. He carried in stock not less than 40 brands of cigars and the variety of imported and domestic perfumes was valued at many hundred dollars. At the time of the introduction of the Gillette Safety Razor, he did what all his employees thought was an unwise act, in purchasing 100 of the \$5.00 gold plated razors as his first order. It was whispered around the store that there had really been an error somewhere, but Dr. Lawrence would never admit it- so when the razors arrived, he made a prominent display of them, then posted himself by the front door and made everyone who came in look at the new instruments and hear the story of their desirability. His first customer was the late Hon. L. C. Massey, who finally bought one under protest, but who was so pleased after a few trials, that he recommended them to his friends. By persistence and enthusiasm, the hundred razors were soon disposed of, and all hands had a greater admiration for the sales ability of the proprietor.

About 1897, the Guernsey and Warfield Bank was located about where Evans-Rex is now, with young Joe Guernsey as cashier. The sand clay streets did not show much traffic in those days, and with a population of less than 2000, there was little activity, especially right after the noon hour- so Joe would call out the window to the clerks in Lawrence's and order his chocolate sodas and rootbeer, which would be delivered to him promptly. One day a customer brought to the little bank a \$1000.00 bill. Mr. Warfield thought they would have some fun with Dr. Lawrence and told Joe to take the bill over and after ordering a 5¢ soda, to offer the large bill in payment, and see what happened- Joe did so, but when he presented the note, Dr. Lawrence was not impressed at all, he said- "Certainly I can change that", and went to the old bank vault, opened a small safe, and carefully counted out \$99.95 change, and offered it to Joe- the laugh was still on him, as he had not looked carefully, and thought the bill was a \$100.00 value, so Joe secured his soda without any cost and Dr.

Lawrence had to admit that he could not supply change for a thousand dollars.

We have been unable to accurately find just the year the two story brick and stone building afterward occupied by the O.B. & T. Company was constructed, but it was about 1892-93. Into it moved the old First National Bank, from the opposite corner, and was prosperous for about two years. Then the "Big Freeze" of 1895 sent all business into despair. The bank could not meet it's creditors, and closed it's doors, moving the books and securities upstairs, where W.B. Jackson, it's president, liquidated the affairs as best he could, afterward retiring to his magnificent country home at Maitland.

He had one of the first "Horseless Carriages" brought to the state, and many will remember the "boom, boom, boom", that cannon-like exhaust of the big red Pope Hartford car as it rolled down Orange Avenue from Maitland at the wild speed of nearly 15 miles per hour. It was a touring model, holding two in the front seat, and two in the back, which was entered by a small door at the rear of the chassis. Happy and fortunate were the ladies of that year who were invited to ride in the Jackson auto- it was a real event and discussed in all social circles for weeks afterward.

Nearly every afternoon between four and six, the Lawrence store was well filled with customers for the soda fountain, and that was the best time for little Kennie Guernsey to sell his papers. He was local agent for the Times-Union, and would come by the store on his bicycle with what undelivered papers he had for the day. Dressed in long black stockings, tight, short trousers, and high button shoes, he would approach those gathered in the store with that famous smile which is still working for him, and offer the latest news of the day for only 5¢. He sold many papers, took many subscriptions, and learned the principles of good business which have made him the successful man that he is today. Those principles were expanded at college and in actual practice, but even in 1904 the men who watched him said, "That boy is not afraid to work, he will succeed".

Perhaps some names will call back pleasant memories of days gone by. Remember Norma Gettier, with that famous red velvet dress? Grace Preston, the genial friend of everyone? Mary Scruggs, the entertainer, and at whose home we spent happy and careless hours playing Skip-to-my-Lou, Drop the Hankerchief, or just sat around, the girls giggling on one side, the boys looking miserable on the other, Ruby Platt, (did you know she had recently moved back to Orlando?), Ora Hammond, Anna Estelle Giles and her fast trotting horse? Frankie Brown, Rosina Jacocks, Patsy, Sara and Kathryn Slemmons, Eula and Ethel

Smith, Mabel Myers, Nora Hoskins, Sara Yancey, Florence Howard, (who was one of the first graduates from Cathedral School;) Eloise Robinson, Irma Lewter, Elva Crump, the Clayton sisters, Claude, Ethel and Alma Delaney, Maëge Mathews, Helen O'Neal; Fannie Robinson, Ada Bumby, and many others? I will not try to give their married names.

Then there were Nixon and Cecil Butt, Frank Bumby, Fred Hand, Jack Beardall, (Now a Captain in the Navy, and will some day be an Admiral), Bennie and Cestia Lawton, Charlie Spellman, Bill Campbell, Russell Patch, Harry Van Horn, Herb Gattier, Earl Anderson, Harry Dickson and his grocery wagon; Toby Ives and his millinery; Harry Leu, who started out painting iron beds for the Foundry, and is now probably our most successful and substantial business man; and we must not forget Jim Slemons, whose 20 year old son, named William for his grandfather, has proven to be the best athlete to ever call Orlando his birthplace. He was selected last fall as one of the outstanding high school football players of the southeast, and has recently joined the Crimson Tide team in Alabama, hoping to go to the Rose Bowl about 1938. It is just a list that comes to mind quickly. Many others have gone elsewhere and are almost forgotten.

And so to a close of this rambling tale, with just one more incident. It was the night of a Charity Ball, and the personnel of the Lawrence Drug Store was restlessly watching the clock, the hands pointing to after seven. The dance was to begin at 8:30. All had reason to want to go but thought best to say nothing, just hoping that Doc would "let us off a little early". He was fussing around in the back but not asking for any assistance. Just at that time Miss Lucy rushed in the front door calling for Dr. Lawrence to hurry or they would be late for the dance. She asked if the rest were going and all gave their reasons for wanting to hurry away also. And no wonder, Mrs. Lawrence was to make and serve the chicken salad at intermission, Dr. Lawrence was to prepare and slightly spike the punch, Charlie Guernsey and Bill Branch had to play with the orchestra, and Dr. Donnelly was to lead the Cotillion with Maggie Hart! How could a store be kept open under those conditions? Well, in some cities or towns it would be kept open and the employees would all be late for the grand social event of the winter, but not Dr. Lawrence's Empire Pharmacy. "How in ----- can we run a store if all you boys have to be at the Armory in an hour?", he said, "Close up and run along, and we will stay open an extra hour tomorrow". But they never did work that extra hour and the dance was a huge, happy, hilarious success.

Isn't that just like real Orlando folks, the kind you have always known here, the kind you hope will always be here?

W.S.B.

July 1936

