

## **This Month in Clay County History: A Glimpse of Business and Government in 1900's Green Cove Springs**

*By Archives Specialist Vishi Garig, a Service of the Clay County Clerk's Office*

In 1907, the Green Cove Springs Board of Trade put together this photograph collage of the leading businessmen of the day. The Board of Trade was the equivalent then of the Chamber of Commerce in both purpose and promotion.

Who are these men in the picture? What brought them to Clay County? What were their contributions to the growth of our county? Why did some of them leave?

**David Daniel Swartley** was a Mennonite from Pennsylvania who arrived in Green Cove Springs in the late 1880's. Married to Lucy Gingerich, he was a county commissioner for District 1 from 1909 to 1910. His home was on Sunset Avenue just off Idlewild Avenue. He served as a Justice of the Peace from 1911 through 1912. He made his money as a merchant. Swartley stayed in town until his death in 1932. He gave his son the grand name of Phares Longfellow Swartley. Swartley is buried in Hickory Grove Cemetery.

**Edwin Nicholas Bradley** served in the Civil War in Company H of the 7<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry Regiment. He was a school teacher for a while in Ohio but then relocated to warm and sunny Green Cove Springs. He supported his wife and children by being the postmaster. His compensation in 1905 reached a \$1,000, which provided the family a comfortable living on Sunset Avenue. His son Horace continued the family tradition, also serving as postmaster at a later date. By 1910, sadly, Bradley is a widower living in a boardinghouse on Walnut Street. One of his fellow boarders was G.W. Geiger, the county judge.

**Frederick Bryant Dyson** and his wife, Eula Porter Dyson, both hailed from North Carolina. Dyson started out as a notions salesman in Columbus, South Carolina (1900) and was in Green Cove Springs by 1910. By 1913 Dyson was a county constable. He ran a livery stable, letting out and selling horses. That line of work eventually became less than profitable. Henry Ford soon cranked out the first Model A in 1908, and travel by horse just could not compete. Dyson left Clay County for Sandford. There he worked all sorts of jobs: lumber yard manager, tank polisher for a railroad and farmer. He lived to the ripe age of 87.

**Dr. Thomas Malvin Edwards** was born in 1875 in a place with an unusual moniker - Dog Fennell, Georgia. Dog fennel is a plant that smells like licorice. In 1910 Green Cove Springs the doctor lived on Center Street. Some of his neighbors were Elam J. Weeks and Emory Prevatt. Business was slow (or maybe there were just better opportunities elsewhere) because, by 1920, the doctor relocated back to Georgia. He wasn't the only doctor to leave town. Dr. Merrill, the father of Charles Merrill (the founder of the investment firm Merrill Lynch), moved to Jacksonville, also. It was hard to support a family when your clients can only pay you with baskets of produce or a chickens.

**Edmond Newell Holt** was “all in” for Clay County. Holt hailed from Todmorden, Yorkshire, England and by 1900 he had been in America for twenty-four years. In 1890 he became the secretary and treasurer of the Independent Line Steamer Company in Orange Park. He was also the proprietor of the Hotel Marion, also in Orange Park. In 1885, he was granted a license to deal in tobacco. Holt served as a road commissioner, a justice of the peace, the county treasurer, and the county tax collector. He married his wife Marion O’Brian Lord in 1882 in Clay County. Perhaps the hotel was named after her? Holt departed this earth in 1919 and left all his worldly goods to his beloved Marion.

**Henry Eugene Bemis** was a jeweler and ran a watch and jewelry store in Green Cove Springs from at least 1880 until his death in 1929. He was born in Illinois but grew up in Kansas. In 1907, he was the mayor of Green Cove Springs. At other times he was also the town clerk and treasurer. In 1884 he was a road commissioner.

**Frederick G. Richard Rosenbush**, also known as Fred, was from Germany, born during the first year of the American Civil War. He immigrated in 1879. He was a baker by trade and owned the Parlor City Bakery. He married his wife Theresa Kitmaire in 1891 Clay County. His son Otto Richard Rosenbush worked alongside his father in the bakery. Eventually, Fred retired and his son morphed the business into a drug store which became a fixture in Green Cove Springs for decades. Another son, Charles, married Mary Lipford, the daughter of Charles Ethelred Lipford.

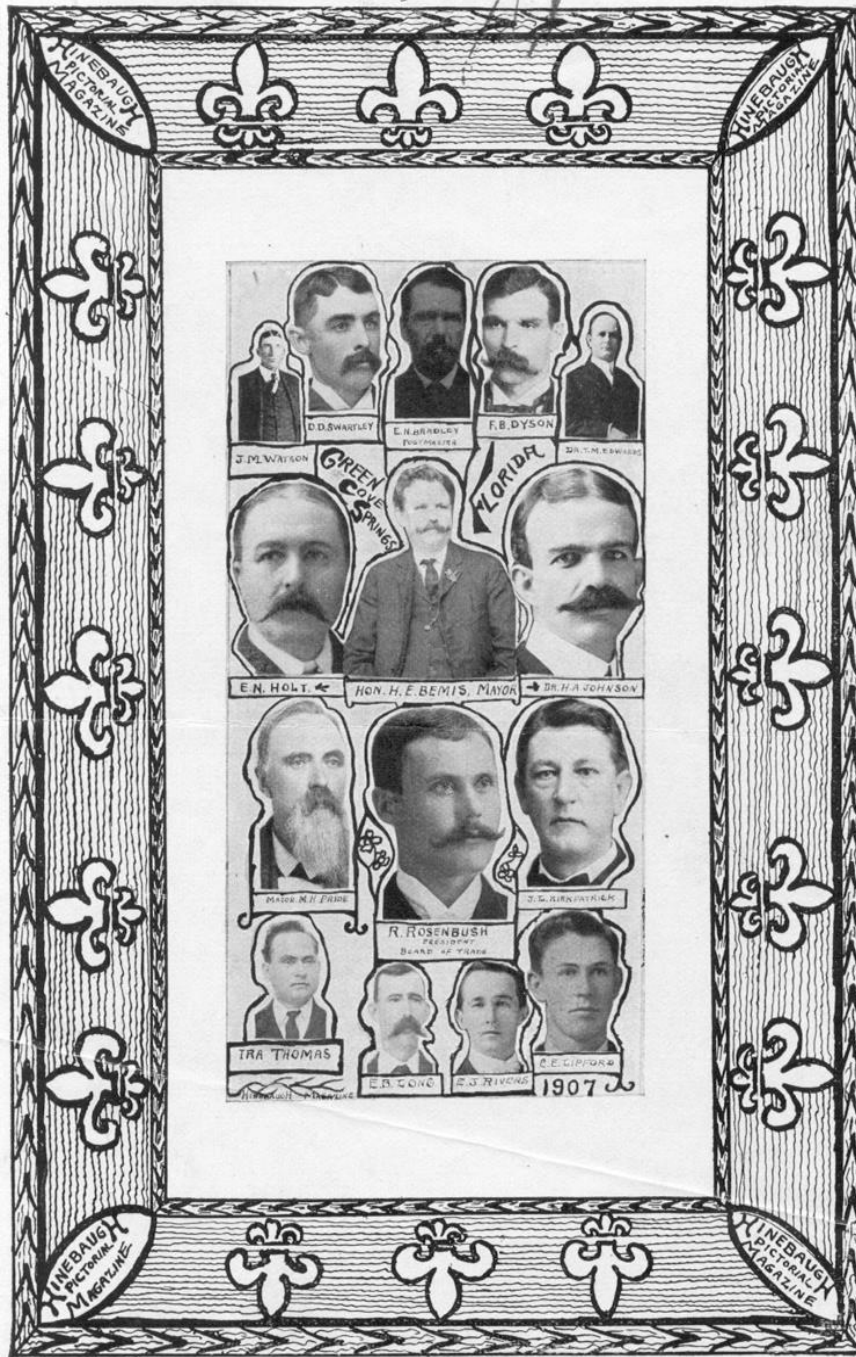
**James Littleton Kirkpatrick** was probably the most popular man in town as he ran the town saloon. He also acted as a justice of the peace and as coroner. Newspapers of the day reported that his house was robbed in 1899. In 1905, business must have been good as a news article announced that he would be adding 25 feet to his saloon.

**Ira Thomas**, who was from Georgia and had thirteen siblings and half siblings, ran a grocery store. In 1903 he was the town treasurer and clerk. By 1907 he was a director of the Bank of Green Cove Springs. By 1920 he had no occupation listed on the census and most of his neighbors found themselves in the same predicament. World War I had just ended and the hotel industry that once supported the Green Cove Springs economy in grand style was gone, having followed Flagler’s railroad south to Palm Beach. By 1930 Thomas was back on his feet working as a telegraph operator for the railroad and he conveniently lived on Railroad Avenue.

**Edward Joseph Rivers** initially lived at the family seat of Rivers Mill but by 1910 owned a grocery store in town. His wife was the former Gertha Woodcock and they lived on Ferris Street. By 1930 they had relocated to Sandford.

**Charles Ethelred Lipford** hailed from South Carolina but by 1900 he was firmly established in Green Cove Springs. He ran a general store and later was a manager at a crate mill. He also served as the city tax collector.

If anyone has information on **J.M. Watson, Dr. H.A. Johnson, Maj. M. H. Pride** and **E.B. Long**, please contact the Clay County Historical Archives at [clayarchives@clayclerk.com](mailto:clayarchives@clayclerk.com) or call 904-371-0027. Thank you.



Group of Business Men of Green Cove Springs, Florida.