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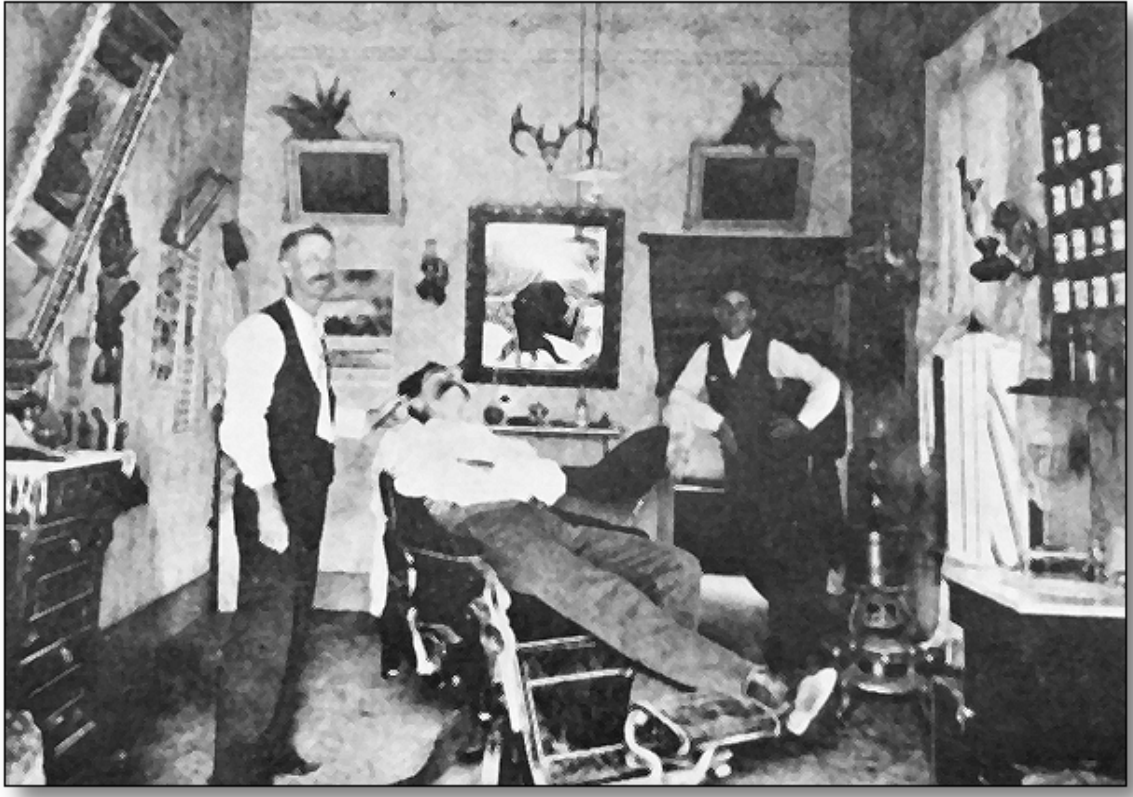
Iris Bell

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Fort Myers' marshal, Sol Sanchez, being groomed in Len Stewart's barber shop during the 1890s.

Photograph from *Yesterday's Fort Myers* by Marian Godown and Alberta Rawchuck.

WALTER D. BELL: LAWYER, JURIST AND LEGISLATOR

by Iris Bell

One sunny morning in late 1905 or early 1906, Blanche Williams Bell, wife of the young mayor of Fort Myers, Florida, left the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sol Sanchez, where she and her husband Walter boarded, and headed toward Henderson's General Store. Located in the corner of the new Bradford Brick Block, the store carried a complete stock of dry goods, fancy dress goods, laces, embroideries, shoes and other items of general use.¹ Shortly after leaving the house, Blanche was suddenly aware of quiet footsteps following her, but she did not look back. With a more rapid heartbeat and faster pace, she made her way quickly to the store, breathing a sigh of relief as she entered. The sense of peace did not last. Whoever was following her came on into the store. It was a tall, well-built Seminole Indian. He probably had eaten breakfast on the back

porch of the Sanchez home that morning and watched her leave the house. Sol Sanchez was the town marshal, and he sometimes fed the Indians upon their release from an overnight stay in jail.

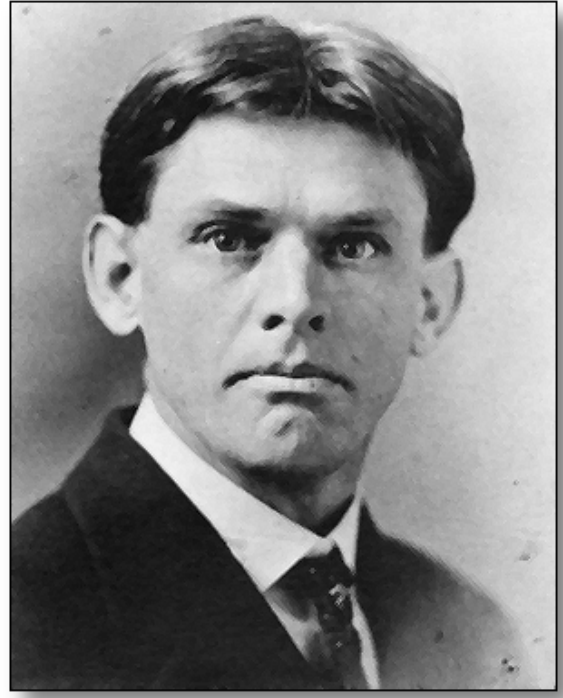
The Seminole continued to follow Blanche from counter to counter until Miss Murray, the clerk, suggested that Blanche stand by her side at the case register, and this she did. The Indian looked around the store, selected two red bandana handkerchiefs, paid for them, and then thrust them toward Blanche, saying, "You be my squaw." Weak-kneed and shaking with fear, Blanche was speechless.

Two bookkeepers had been observing the situation from the loft above the main floor with great amusement. One of them now called down to the Indian, saying, "She is already a squaw." With that announcement, the Seminole turned suddenly, threw the handkerchiefs to the floor in disgust and left, uttering words which sounded like, "Holy waugus." When Blanche regained her composure, she asked Miss Murray what that meant. "In Indian, it means, 'No good,'" Miss Murray replied.²

For several years thereafter, Walter Bell teased Blanche about her Seminole romance and referred to her as his "Indian bride." Walter did not know then, and neither did Blanche, that there was some Cherokee in her ancestry. But that Indian had probably sensed this fact. Surely, Blanche's long dark hair worn in braids, her deep, sensitive brown eyes, high cheek bones and fair complexion must have caught his attention.

Blanche and Walter had met in 1901 when she was thirteen and he was twenty-one. At that time he was the teacher in the one-room school at Brownville, Florida, a small community five or six miles north of Arcadia, and she was one of his students. She liked him from the start. He must have liked her, too, for after he left Brownville to study law, he often wrote to her.

They met again four years later while Walter was in Tampa to argue a case in federal court and Blanche was a student at Hatton Business College. He spoke to her as she came down the college stairs to head home. He said he was in town attending court and thought he would look her up. He accompanied her to the boarding house where the landlady asked him to stay for dinner. After dinner, Walter and Blanche attended a revival meeting at a church across the street. When Walter left, the landlady remarked, "I kinda like that young man." Blanche responded, "I kinda like him, too."³



Walter Doubllass Bell, circa 1901.

Photograph courtesy of author.



View of the center of Fort Myers in the early 1900s looking south down Hendry Street. Note the telephone poles and electric lines.

Photograph from *Yesterday's Fort Myers* by Marian Godown and Alberta Rawchuck.

At the time of that Tampa visit, Walter had asked Blanche to come to Fort Myers to work for him after she completed her course at the business college. She had agreed, and it was said that she was the first woman “typewriter,” as secretaries were sometimes called, in the town of Fort Myers. Her career as a secretary, however, was of short duration. Within a year she had married the boss and changed her occupation to housewife and mother.

In 1966, following Walter D. Bell’s death at the age of eighty-six, Blanche wrote her children telling them how he had proposed to her in 1905. She said that since there were few automobiles in Fort Myers in those days, walking was an acceptable evening activity. One night on such a walk, Blanche and Walter stopped under a large magnolia tree to listen to the sound of piano music coming from a nearby house. The then popular tune they heard was “Listen To The Mockingbird.” As they stood under the tree enjoying the sweet smell of magnolia blossoms, the music and the big full moon, Walter had said, “All I need to make me happy is for you to say you will marry me.” It did not take Blanche long to make up her mind. Two weeks later, on October 21, 1905, they were married at the home of Georgia Carson, mother of one of Walter’s best friends. This ideal marriage was to continue for almost sixty-one years.

Walter had often told Blanche about his parents’ home on top of “Paradise Hill” facing a lake in Clermont, Florida. That is where he and Blanche spent their honeymoon, and Blanche thought it was beautiful. She later recalled that a young doctor staying there told her he had travelled through the Alps and other places in the world and had never seen any place he considered more beautiful than “Clermont Lake Country” in Florida.⁴

Notwithstanding its remoteness, Fort Myers was a growing, thriving community when Walter and Blanche Bell lived there in the early 1900s. Among other things, the town had churches, hotels, stores, a newspaper, telephone service, electric lights, an ice plant and at least two brick buildings. The railroad was completed, and trains had begun arriving and departing in 1904.⁵

Blanche's older brother, Eugene L. Williams, Sr., had learned telegraphy at Hatton Business College in Tampa, and he had worked in Fort Myers for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1904 and 1905, prior to Blanche's arrival there. Among Eugene Williams' most pleasant memories were the delicious evening meals he often enjoyed in the dining room of one of the river steamers, such as the *Thomas A. Edison*, *Gray Eagle*, *Suwannee* or *Anah C.* Plying the Caloosahatchee, Orange and Kissimmee rivers, these steamers carried loads of oranges, grapefruit and other produce, as well as the mail and passengers. Once the passengers had disembarked and the produce had been reloaded onto trains for shipment north, usually at about seven in the evening, one of the captains would occasionally ask Eugene to eat. It was a much better meal than he could get at any of the local restaurants, and something to which he always looked forward.⁶

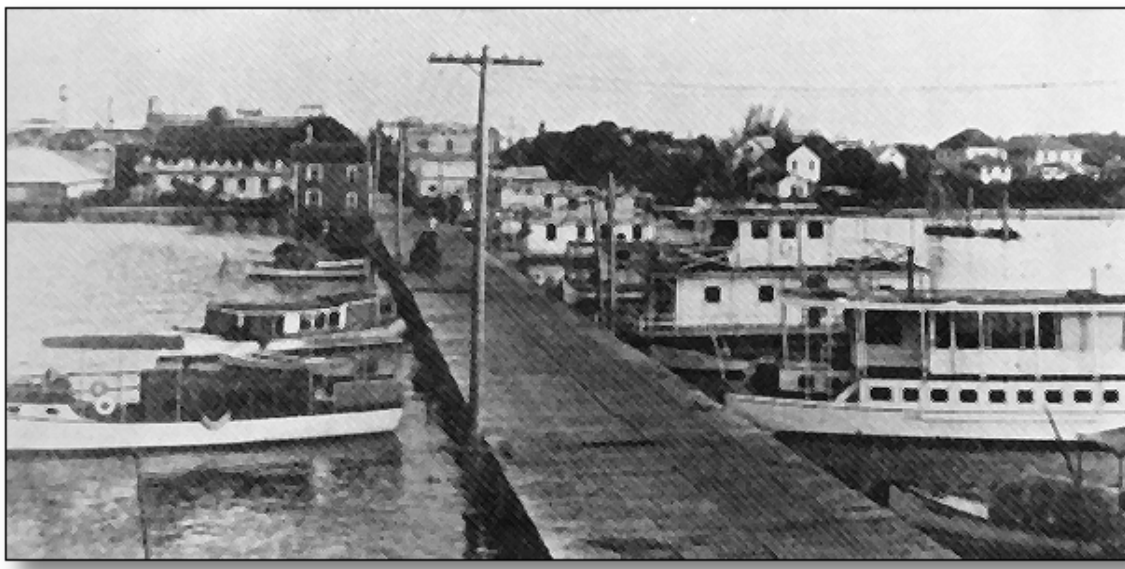


Eugene Williams, Sr., circa 1900.

Photograph courtesy of author.

Eugene L. Williams, Sr., later became a prominent businessman and realtor in St. Petersburg, Florida. He was a co-founder of Pinellas Lumber Company along with his brother-in-law, Wesley A. Hendry. For a number of years, he owned and operated a company known as Fifth Avenue Lumber Company which changed its name to Acme Lumber Company when the late E.C. Reed of St. Petersburg became a partner. Still later, he owned and operated the Williams Realty Company. Eugene died in St. Petersburg at the age of ninety-four on April 20, 1981.⁷

Blanche and Eugene were the children and grandchildren of Florida pioneers. Their paternal grandfather, Thomas Williams, was one of the first residents of what is now Arcadia, Florida, and their father, David Sampson Williams, served as Arcadia's first postmaster in 1883. When Blanche was born on March 11, 1888, her father was serving as DeSoto County's first elected tax collector. Her maternal grandfather, Levi Pearce, was an early Methodist circuit rider, credited with having established several churches in the Tampa Bay area.⁸ He was also a farmer who fought in Florida's Third Seminole War during the 1850s.⁹



As a young lawyer, Walter Bell often departed from this Fort Myers wharf at the foot of Hendry Street. This 1908 scene is from *The Story of Fort Myers* by Karl Grismer.

Walter Douglass Bell's parents came to Florida by covered wagon from Winnsboro, South Carolina, in 1877 with their two oldest children, Ethel and William Edward. A third child, Arthur Hampton, was born in Nassau County, Florida, at a camp-site on the south bank of the St. Mary's River on the morning after the family had forded the stream. They settled first at a sawmill community in Alachua County, known as Fairfax, where Walter was born on March 16, 1880. His mother, Martha Crosby Bell, had papered the cracks in the cabin walls to keep the cold air out. His father, Dr. Alexander Douglas Bell, had graduated in 1870 from Emory University Medical College in Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁰ Seeking better health, he had come south to Florida, where he practiced medicine, served as a justice of the peace and sold cross ties to the railroad. Dr. Bell followed the construction as far south as Clermont.

In a taped conversation shortly before her death in 1971 at the age of ninety-eight, Ethel Bell Stevens, a retired school teacher, discussed her vivid recollections of the family's early covered wagon trip to Florida.

I was a little thing when we came to Florida but I remember it. We carried everything we owned—our beds, our stove (of course, we had a wood stove), the mules and horses. And we had no roads. We'd come to a creek, the shallows, as we called it—a ford. Some of the men would swim by the side of the wagon, take the horses through, hold to the wagon and pull it across. It scared me so bad, I thought I would never get over it. Mama had a wooden dough tray and she had to get out and make her biscuits. She would cook them in a big old dutch oven. She put some coals on the top and, of course, coals underneath. They were the best biscuits you ever tasted. The tragedy was that she went off and left the dough tray, and it was ruined. Couldn't make any more biscuits. Left the dough tray sitting on a stump.¹¹

Walter Bell's arrival in Fort Myers, in 1903, had not been planned. As a member of an Arcadia law firm, he had gone to Punta Gorda to open a branch office. One day, while in Punta Gorda, he boarded a boat to cross the Peace River for a visit to Charlotte Harbor. The boat, probably the *St. Lucie*, was headed to Fort Myers. While it made stops at Captiva Pass, Wulfert, St. James City, Sanibel and Punta Rassa, it did not dock at Charlotte Harbor. Surely, Walter must have enjoyed that unexpected eight-hour cruise. He would have eaten lunch in the dining room on the upper deck, met and chatted with interesting persons, watched the disembarkation of passengers and the unloading of freight at the various stops and probably laughed at the antics of playful porpoises along the way.¹²

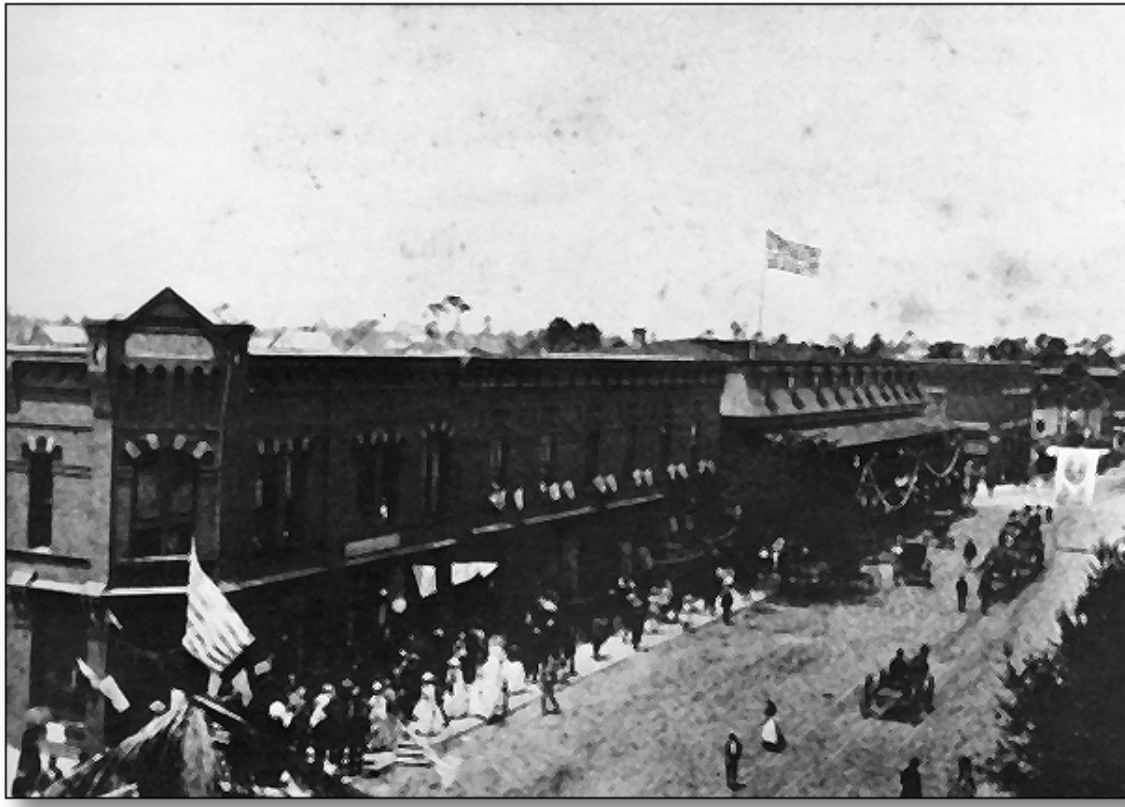
While standing on the dock in Fort Myers awaiting a boat to take him back to Punta Gorda, Walter met an influential citizen who urged him to remain in Fort Myers. The citizen indicated a need for another lawyer there, saying, "Stay and we'll elect you mayor." Walter stayed, at first practicing law with Louis A. Hendry in his office on Jackson Street.¹³ He later opened an office of his own in the Brick Block, where his office was located when Blanche became his secretary.

Walter Bell's first venture into politics came in 1904 when he ran for the office of county judge. He lost to his opponent, Phillip Isaacs, editor of *The Fort Myers Press*. It appears that Walter might have won that election if Isaacs had not received the block support of the members of the Koreshan Unity. In 1905, however, Walter was elected mayor of Fort Myers and served one term.¹⁴

The year 1906 was a disturbing one for Walter and Blanche Bell. In March, Walter was appointed by the court as counsel for a defendant by the name of Walter Brown who had been indicted for the murder of Kib Murphy at Denaud, a former Indian fort and small community east of Fort Myers. The murder was said to have been committed "in cold blood."¹⁵ Brown was convicted of murder in the first degree and sentenced to life imprisonment. In all probability, this was Walter's first murder case.

In July, 1906, Walter's good friend, Bob Carson, was shot and killed one night while taking a short cut home through a neighbor's yard after a visit with the Bells who were then living in a rented house. Action by the coroner's jury was swift, and Jasper N. Edwards was charged with the murder. Newspaper accounts suggested that after counsel had been obtained for the defendant, a preliminary hearing would be held and that Edwards would probably be bound over until the fall term of the court. But Circuit Judge Joseph B. Wall called a special term of court to try the case, commencing July 31, 1906. On that day, a grand jury was secured, set to work and came in with an indictment of murder in the first degree.¹⁶

As Walter Bell was the only lawyer in town who was neither a witness nor related to any of the possible witnesses or the deceased, he suddenly realized that he would probably be the one whom the court would appoint to defend Edwards. Not wishing to represent the person who had killed his best friend, Walter quickly packed a bag and caught the first train out town, presumably headed to the home of his parents in Clermont. At Wauchula, a sheriff boarded the train and notified Walter that the court had ordered him to return to Fort Myers to receive appointment as counsel for Jasper Edwards or be held in contempt of court. Reluctantly, Walter took the first train back to Fort Myers. It was a traumatic experience.



Street scene in Sanford, Florida, circa 1885, where Walter Bell would later edit the *Sanford Chronicle*.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Walter's first action as counsel for the defendant was to petition the courts to appoint a committee of physicians to examine Edwards with regard to his mental condition. The committee reported that they found Edwards to be of low intellect, but of sufficient intelligence to know and distinguish between right and wrong so that he could be held responsible for the crime he was charged with committing.

On August 1, 1906, the defendant was arraigned and pleaded not guilty. A jury heard the case on August 2, and after two hours deliberation, it brought in a verdict of guilty. Judge Wall pronounced the death sentence, which was said to be the first such sentence ever issued in Lee County, Florida.¹⁷ Sheriff Frank B. Tippins, who supervised the hanging of Edwards on February 28, 1907, was quoted in a biographical sketch contained in Karl H. Grismer's book, *The Story of Fort Myers*, as having said that the trial was a "tragic farce."¹⁸ Perhaps that was because of the haste in which the trial was conducted. Following the conviction of his client and the sentence by the court to death by hanging, Walter vowed that no future client of his would ever go to the gallows. Insofar as can be ascertained, none ever did. However, one came very close to hanging.



Downtown Arcadia after the disastrous 1905 Thanksgiving fire.

Photograph from *Peace River Pioneers* by Louise Frisbie.

Shortly after the Edwards case was concluded, Walter Bell was overwhelmingly defeated in his bid for reelection as mayor of Fort Myers. Disillusioned and considering his reputation completely ruined, Walter closed his office in the Brick Block, and he and Blanche moved to Tampa, where the first of their six children, Douglass, was born on November 25, 1906.

Walter Bell practiced law briefly in Ybor City where he used the services of an interpreter because he did not speak Spanish. His business, however, did not prosper, and the Bells again moved, settling in Sanford, Florida, where Walter purchased and edited *The Sanford Chronicle*, for several years. But he was not destined to spend his life as a newspaper editor. Within a few years, he returned to Arcadia where he had originally been admitted to the bar and resumed the practice of law.

Upon his return to Arcadia, Walter Bell rented space in a suite of rooms over the Boston Store at the corner of Oak Street and DeSoto Avenue. This suite was occupied by several colorful pioneer attorneys, among whom were John L. Burton, Arthur F. Odlin, and CW Forester, who was murdered in 1908 while having dinner at the Arcadia House. The building in which these offices were located had been constructed after the fire of 1905 which had destroyed most of downtown Arcadia. It replaced the old frame building which had contained the Oak Street Sa-

loon. The burned-out building across the street had been replaced by a modern brick one housing the DeSoto National Bank.

Walter's law office was well equipped. There was an oak roll-top desk and black L.C. Smith typewriter for the secretary, as well as a Burroughs adding machine. On the wall of the secretary's office was the old oblong telephone box with its metal crank to generate electricity and transmit the call to central. It was on this telephone in the early 1920s that Walter tried to reach a circuit judge in Sebring to present a petition for a temporary injunction against the State Livestock and Sanitary Board restraining the dipping of cattle to eradicate the fever tick. Informed that the judge had just left for Tampa, Walter drove to an intersection east of Wauchula where he flagged the judge down and presented the petition. The court signed the temporary restraining order on the fender of a Model "A" Ford.

From the windows in his office facing DeSoto Avenue, Walter Bell had a view of two of Arcadia's leading sights. Across the railroad tracks and over the next block he could see the lovely new courthouse facing North Brevard Avenue, or he could look down on the Tree of Knowledge in the middle of DeSoto Avenue. This live oak commemorating the birthdays of two pioneer citizens became an Arcadia landmark.¹⁹ Under its branches the townspeople gathered to debate the issues of the day. Much recorded folklore found its genesis there among those who sat on the benches, leisurely chewing tobacco, whittling cedar and recounting stories that reached the community.

From the attorneys in the Boston Store building, Walter Bell acquired a legal library covering the walls of seven rooms which included almost everything of that day from *Blackstone's Commentaries* to the *Trinity Series*. He could often be seen walking to the courthouse carrying an armload of books containing the cases he intended to cite to the court. He also walked to and from his home and the office every day, and he almost always went home for lunch with his family. They lived at 227 North Brevard Avenue. His legal practice was general—real property law, probate, civil actions, domestic relations, criminal law—and he enjoyed it.

About two years after his return to Arcadia, Walter Ball ran for and was elected county judge of DeSoto County for a four-year term. During that period, his office was at the courthouse. When his daughter, Evelyn, was five years of age, she thought her daddy owned the courthouse. She recalls saying to a young friend, "Let's go up to my Daddy's courthouse and get money for



Blanche Williams Bell with her children, Douglass and Evelyn, in 1910.

Photograph courtesy of author.



DeSoto County courthouse, where Judge Bell heard cases.

Photograph from *Peace River Pioneers* by Louise Frisbie.

some candy.” And they did just that. As county judge of DeSoto County, which at that time included 3750 square miles (the area now encompassing Hardee, Glades, Charlotte and Highlands counties, as well as present day DeSoto), Walter’s duties included the granting of licenses, acting as committing magistrate, probate and juvenile judge, with jurisdiction over all cases at law in which the demand or value of property involved did not exceed five hundred dollars, proceedings relating to forcible entry or unlawful detention of lands and such criminal cases as the legislature might prescribe.²⁰ The counties formerly included in DeSoto were cut out by a constitutional amendment passed in 1921 and ratified in 1922. Today, anyone who reads real property abstracts in those counties is likely to come across Walter Bell’s signature on judicial documents in the chains of title.

During the time Walter Bell served as county judge, which extended into the Prohibition era, there was a custom in DeSoto County under which the county leased out prisoners to work in the community. The Bells had a cook who came to work in their home each day, returning to the jail at night. One day the cook disappeared. Sheriff J.L. Hampton, who lived just two or three doors down the street, had recently raided a liquor still and brought two barrels of mash or “buck” to his back yard, presumably for use as evidence. There the cook was found face down in a barrel of buck. Walter, who shortly after his return to Arcadia had purchased *The Enterprise*, a small newspaper, feared that *The DeSoto County News* would “scoop” the story, so he hurriedly



A view of DeSoto Avenue in Arcadia during the 1930s.

Photograph from *Peace River Pioneers* by Louise Frisbie.

published the next edition of *The Enterprise* with a bold headline reading, “JUDGE’S COOK DROWNS IN BARREL OF BUCK.”

In 1922, Walter Bell was first elected to the state legislature from DeSoto County. Commencing in 1923, he served three consecutive terms in the State House of Representatives. Following that, he served four years as a state senator. During his term as senator, he authored a resolution for Amendment 2, Section 6 of Article 9, of the 1895 State Constitution. This related to the authority of cities and counties to issue bonds, and some of the language of that amendment is retained in Florida’s current state constitution.²¹ From time to time while in the legislature, Walter introduced bills to make the University of Florida and the Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University) coeducational, but he did not succeed in having the bills passed. While was in the Senate, he worked long and hard one year during the depression for an increase in the salary of the justices on the State Supreme Court and succeeded in getting the bill passed by both houses of the legislature. Thereafter, a vacancy occurred on the Supreme Court and Governor John W. Martin asked him to fill the vacancy. This he could not do because of a state constitutional prohibition against acceptance by a legislator of a civil office, the emoluments of which had been increased during his term.²² What a great disappointment this

was to Blanche who had looked forward to the possibility that her husband might some day serve on the Supreme Court.

The 1930s were among Walter Bell's most successful and interesting years, and yet, financially, they were difficult. The entire state of Florida was engulfed in the economic depression which had spread across the country. When the runs on the banks occurred, Walter, along with so many others, lost all the cash he had. He was even forced to dispense with the services of his very efficient secretary. Fortunately, three of his older children had learned shorthand and typing in school, and he trained them to do the work.

To support his family during the depression was a struggle. While work was plentiful, clients often could not pay legal fees, but Walter managed. A rancher client brought in a dressed beef and placed it on cold storage at the ice plant in lieu of a fee. Another client turned over title to a sports roadster with a rumble seat. Still another gave him title to land which he lost because of failure to pay taxes. One furnished some venison. Blanche's relatives living on nearby farms often gave the family fresh fruits and vegetables, and Peggy, the Bell family cow, gave much more rich milk than the family could use. They could even share it with others. Several years earlier, Peggy had provided one of the more comical incidents in Walter's life. She escaped from the back yard and trotted toward the downtown area of Arcadia with Walter running close behind. When she crossed DeSoto Avenue and headed into the open doors of the DeSoto National Bank on the southwest corner of Oak Street, the "town philosophers" sitting on the bench under the Three of Knowledge, stopped their whittling and "discourses" to yell: "Let'er go, Judge, she just wants to make a deposit."

Over the years, Walter Bell's law practice in Arcadia was extensive. His clients came from all over middle and southern Florida, and he spent many hours in court in Tampa, Sebring, Fort Myers, LaBelle, Moore Haven, Sarasota, Wauchula, Bartow and other places. He argued numerous cases before the Supreme Court of Florida, the Federal District Courts and Appeal Courts and the Supreme Court of the United States. He was considered to be an outstanding criminal lawyer. Many of his cases made newspaper headlines and at least one, the Carver case, was the subject of a story in a national detective magazine.²³

Among his most publicized cases were the Whitten case in the 1920s, the Carver murder case in the early 1930s and that referred to by the press as "The Mystery Slayings of Gator Slough." In the first, Bernard Whitten had been convicted of shooting his estranged wife as she sat at the organ in her parents' home in Wauchula. Walter obtained a stay of execution just as the sheriff was leading Whitten to the scaffold before a large crowd assembled on the courthouse square in Arcadia.²⁴

In the second case, William Raymond Carver, a Florida real estate man living in Sebring, had been tried and convicted in the brutal hatchet murders of his wife, Ruth, and their young son, Lee Townsend Carver, and the shooting of Ben Whitehead, employed as a yard boy by the Carvers. The conviction was based upon purely circumstantial evidence. After an appeal to the Florida Supreme Court which first upheld the jury's verdict and then reversed its judgment after a rehearing, Walter Bell obtained a new trial and a change of venue to Arcadia. At the second trial, Carver was acquitted of the crimes. It is believed that there are now seven justices on the Florida

Supreme Court bench, rather than six, as an indirect result of the Carver case. When the first hearing before the Supreme Court occurred, there were five justices and one substitute justice who heard the arguments. The decision to affirm was four to two, with the chief justice writing a lengthy dissenting opinion. At the rehearing, one of the justices who had voted to affirm was absent because of illness. Nevertheless, the arguments were presented before the five justices without objection by the lawyers on either side. The substitute justice, who had originally voted to affirm, changed his mind on the rehearing and voted to reverse. The decision to reverse was then three to two. Had the justice who was ill participated, the decision might possibly have been three to three. The State's motion for another rehearing was denied.²⁵ Following these appellate decisions and for several years thereafter, there were numerous editorial comments in the newspapers around the state debating the validity of the Supreme Court reversal and suggesting the need for an additional justice. In 1939, Article V, Section 4 of the 1895 Constitution was amended to add a seventh justice to the Supreme Court bench.²⁶

In the case of "The Mystery Slayings of Gator Slough," Walter Bell was counsel for two of the accused who had been indicted for the 1933 murders of three men found in a pickup truck on a lonely sand road in the Everglades, eighteen miles north of the town of Moore Haven. The first of two trials which took place in Sarasota resulted in a mistrial in 1936 when the jury could not reach a decision. In the second trial, the men were acquitted, and "The Mystery Slayings of Gator Slough" were never solved.²⁷

One of the witnesses in the "Gator Slough" trials changed her testimony at the second trial and was later charged, tried and convicted of perjury. Walter Bell represented that witness in the perjury trial. In his appeal of the judgment to the State Supreme Court, he asserted the then almost unheard of argument that the defendant had been denied due process of law and equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States because there were no women on the jury. Under the Florida Constitution in effect at that time, only men were qualified to serve as jurors. While the Florida Supreme Court denied this argument, it reversed the conviction on other grounds.²⁸

Throughout her husband's long legal career of more than fifty years, Blanche Bell was keenly interested in his cases. While trials were in progress, there were many evenings that she sat listening intently as he read aloud to her from that day's testimony in his advance copy of the court transcript.

Walter Bell's interests were not confined to his law practice. He was always a devoted family man and an avid reader of history, poetry, philosophy and religion. He was a member of civic organizations and continued to pursue politics, running unsuccessfully for Congress in 1932 and 1936. The presence of so many books about various religions of the world in the Bell home library prompted the tenants of the house during World War II to ask the neighbors what religion the owners professed. They were Baptists. A letter written by Walter in 1907 to his brother stated that he was giving serious consideration to studying for the ministry. While he did not do that, he did teach a men's Bible class at the First Baptist Church in Arcadia for a period of more than twenty-five years. Walter passed away June 15, 1966, in Miami, and Blanche died, October 14, 1973. Both are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Arcadia.

During his later years, Walter Bell was looked upon by other attorneys as a “lawyer’s lawyer.” They came to him for assistance and advice. They respected his ability, his experience, his ingenuity, his diligence on behalf of clients and his integrity. The arguments he presented over the years, without doubt, have had an impact on the laws and rules of court as they exist in Florida today.

¹ R. A. Henderson advertisement in *Fort Myers Press*, January 25, 1906.

² Letters of Blanche Bell, April 15 and 22, 1967; tapes of conversations with Blanche Bell (various), 1967-73, in possession of the author.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Karl H. Grismer, *The Story of Fort Myers* (St. Petersburg, FL: St. Petersburg Printing Company, 1949), 258; *Fort Myers Press*, 1903-06; Florence Fritz, *Unknown Florida* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1963), 107.

⁶ *Fort Myers Press*, October 26, 1905; tapes of conversations with Eugene L. Williams, Sr., 1972, 1978 and 1980, in possession of the author.

⁷ *St. Petersburg Times* and *St. Petersburg Independent*, April 22, 1981.

⁸ *Arcadian Historical Edition*, July 17, 1976; *The Arcadian*, October 6, 1926; Charles Tinsley Thrift, Jr., *The Trail of the Florida Circuit Rider* (Lakeland, FL: Florida Southern College Press, 1944), 113.

⁹ United States Volunteer Service, Certificate of Discharge for Levi Pearce, August 17, 1857, in possession of Louise Pearce Jones, Arcadia, Florida.

¹⁰ Emory University Medical College Alumni Records, “Class of 1870” (Atlanta, 1925), 311.

¹¹ Tapes of conversation with Ethel Bell Stevens, sister of Walter D. Bell, circa 1979, in possession of the author.

¹² Punta Gorda Steamship Lines Schedule in *Fort Myers Press*, February 27, 1902; Grismer, *Story of Fort Myers*, 155.

¹³ Hendry & Bell advertisement in *Fort Myers Press*, January 21, 1904; Walter D. Bell advertisement, *ibid.*, October 26, 1904.

¹⁴ Elliott Mackle, “Cyrus Teed and the Lee County elections of 1906,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 57 (July 1978): 6; List of Mayors, City of Fort Myers Records.

¹⁵ *Fort Myers Press*, March 8, 1906.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, July 19, 1906.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, August 2, 1906.

¹⁸ Grismer, *Story of Fort Myers*, 280.

¹⁹ Louise K. Frisbee, *Peace River Pioneers* (Miami: E.A. Seamann Publishing Company, 1974), 53.

²⁰ Constitution of Florida (1885, as amended), Art. 5, secs. 16 and 18.

²¹ W.T. Cash, *The Story of Florida* (New York: American Historical Society, 1938),32; Fla. Const. Amendment, S.J.R. 26, 1929; Constitution of Florida (1968 Revision), Art. 7, sec. 12 (b).

²² Constitution of Florida (1895), Art. 3, sec. 5.

²³ Gene Plowden, "The Inside Story of the Celebrated Florida Carver Case," *The Master Detective* (September 1932), 12-17, 54-56.

²⁴ *Whitten v. State*, 82 Fla. 181, 89 So. 421, 86 Fla. 111, 97 So. 496, 267 U.S. 608.

²⁵ *Carver v. State*, 101 Fla. 1421, 134 So. 62, 136 So. 605, 136 So. 893.

²⁶ Constitution of Florida (1895 amended by H.J. Res. 54, Acts of 1939, adopted general election 1940), Art 5, sec. 4.

²⁷ *Sarasota Herald*, October, 1936, January 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 1937.

²⁸ *Hall v. State*, 187 So. 392.