

The above photo came from the East Lake County Historical Society. To them this photo is a rare image of a man they call the mystery man as he has no name to go along with his photo and he is considered by the historical society to be one of the men responsible for the creation of the Mount Plymouth Development. Today myself and Maggie of the East Lake Historical Society all agree that we now believe (without proof) that this photo is of none other than Edward Carney who you are about to learn a little bit about...

## Edward Carney & The Al Capone Connection... PART ONE

During the time I went to school at Florida Central Academy I had heard rumors of Al Capone's association to the old hotel but no real information that could make the connection, so I decided one day to do some digging and see what I could come up with.

The very first thing you have to learn about in connecting the Capone dots to central Florida is to take a look up in Chicago at how the finances of the Capone organization operated.

So the very first thing you have to learn is that what is known or called the Chicago mob or Chicago "outfit" is a huge conglomeration of both legitimate businesses as well as illegal businesses all earning money. Look at it like an ongoing empire where leaders come and go, but the operation continues.

Before Capone took over in 1925, Johnny Torrio was the boss. And when Capone declined in power through being put in prison and his health failed, others took over. From wikipedia:

"After Capone was jailed for tax evasion, his hand-picked successor, Frank Nitti, a former barber and small-time jewelry thief, only nominally assumed power. In truth, power was seized by Nitti's underboss, Paul Ricca, who was acknowledged as "boss" by the leaders of the growing National Crime Syndicate. Ricca would rule the Outfit, either in name or in fact, for the next 40 years."

Given the fact that the Chicago Outfit is operated like an ongoing business where leaders come and go, the investments and ownership of said investments stay with the outfit even when those leaders come and go. And this is precisely how the Mount Plymouth Hotel's ownership played out from the day she was built to the day she was burned to the ground- and I will expand more on this later on...

For now, the ongoing business of the Chicago Outfit had huge finances to deal with. Just during one year for Al Capone he is reported to have earned an estimated \$125,000,000.00! And that is just an estimate! In today's money this would be equivalent to more than one billion dollars plus! Huge amounts of money that had to go somewhere. So where did it go?

Well, a lot of that money was what is called "dirty money" earned from illegal business operations whether gambling, prostitution, drugs, racketeering, illegal booze sales during prohibition, or however earned illegally, there was a huge desire on the part of the mobsters in possession of such money to clean it up- or launder it as the term is known. So money laundering was big business for the mob.

One of the very popular and successful ways mobsters laundered money was through legitimate businesses and businessmen who wanted to make themselves fabulously rich making easy money turning dirty money into clean money laundered through their legitimate business ventures making it nearly impossible for government to track.

So the first place to look was in the banks of Chicago and surrounding area where the Chicago Outfit operated back in 1920's. Men like Big Jim Colosimo who ran it before Johnny Torrio took it over and then handed it over to Al Capone would waltz into a legitimate bank and go directly to have a private meeting with the owner of the bank. He would then be offered a deal of a lifetime- an offer he could not refuse- if he liked breathing rather than pushing up daisies.

The mobster would inform the bank owner that he had millions of dollars of illegal dirty money that he wanted to deposit into the bank only all of this dirty money would never actually make it onto any official bank deposit accounting. The mobsters were opening up

side accounts held in private known only to the bank owners and no one else or it could mean their very lives on the line for any kind of betrayal.

So men like Johnny Torrio and Al Capone all had secret off the record bank accounts all across Chicago and Illinois and beyond.

So bankers became fabulously wealthy men for simply holding and storing tens of millions of dollars, even hundreds of millions of dollars for the Chicago Outfit.

Next, how would mobsters clean up this dirty money and launder it into clean legitimate money? They could not just let it sit in bank vaults going nowhere. They needed people to move that money and clean it up and make it work for them and earn even more money when they can. They needed frontmen and front families.

This is where mobsters bought off legitimate legal operating businessmen to invest their dirty money quietly into legal legitimate businesses and most popular was in real estate investments.

So instead of Al Capone owning the business or real estate in his name where it could be tracked to him and confiscated by the government, his holdings of investments were actually owned on paper by people who were paid to be the legal owners on paper, but not in reality.

And this is precisely how Capone's legacy came to Florida.

During my research I found out about a man by the name of Edward Carney. He was the former President of the Chicago Real Estate Board. He was a man who knew about buying and selling real estate and so he would be the perfect man to buy off and make fabulously wealthy by doing one thing and one thing only- travel around the country looking at properties for sale and hotels for sale and businesses for sale that he knew would be

profitable, and he would then advise his financial backers to invest in them and buy them or buy into them as a way of laundering Chicago Outfit's dirty money.

This man Edward Carney came to central Florida around about the time Al Capone took over the Outfit from Johnny Torrio who was shot up but survived the attack and took the message to heart that his days of running the Chicago Outfit were over and that he had better retire. And so he did retire to Florida, but he handed over control of his Outfit to a man he had imported to Chicago from NYC, one Al Capone.

You have to understand that Florida was a popular destination for northern mobsters long before Al Capone took over in 1925. Hundreds of them vacationed in Florida and moved to Florida and even brought their illegal money and illegal operations to Florida with them, and many of them simply retired to Florida. Just look for the old guys- the typical northeastern yankee thug type- driving around like they own the place in the big black cadillacs with golf clubs and country club stickers on the back window. You still see them to this day.

Al Capone came to Florida because he liked it here. He liked the weather. He liked the lifestyle in Florida much better than he did Chicago, and so Al Capone was like any other typical snowbird who would travel to Florida when it got colder up north and he would come down to spend the winters in Florida and he soon learned he could use his trips to Florida to hide from other mobsters who hunted him down to kill him, and he used his trips here as alibi to remove himself from any association to criminal activity back up north with one infamous example being the Valentine's day massacre where Capone's rival and gang was slaughtered. Capone was in a meeting with the government down in Miami when that killing happened giving him a perfect alibi.

So Capone was moving into Florida for a large part of his life even while still controlling his Chicago Outfit by long distance.

And so he needed to buy his way into Florida and a man like Edward Carney was just one of his ways into Florida.

Edward Carney came down to Florida and hooked up with a local Orlando real estate dealer by the name of Carl Dann who was well know to the Chicago mobsters because they had been doing business in Florida long before Al Capone took over.

The story goes that Carl Dann of Orlando had been playing poker and gambling with Chicago mobsters going back to before the 1920's, and that by 1922 Carl Dann and his northern mobster buddies were golfing and playing poker and drinking and gambling at the Orlando Country Club, but in 1922 the uppity do-gooders of the Orlando Country Club had grown tired of the criminals enjoying their hospitality and it is said the Orlando Country Club asked Carl Dann and his mobster buddies to hit the road and don't come back and that they were no longer welcome at the Orlando Country Club.

Well this did not sit well with Carl Dann. It pissed him off and he was not about to let something like this stop him or even slow him down. So now he needed his own golf course and Country Club where he could continue doing business with his Chicago friends with lots of money.

So the story goes that Carl Dann walked out the front door of his real estate business in downtown Orlando and began walking around soliciting \$100.00 minimum investments towards his new golf course and country club. And by sundown ole Carl Dann had collected up some \$10,000.00 which he used to help jump start his new development known as Dubsdread Country Club and Golf Course just west of Winter Park.

Now he could continue business as usual with his northern business associates at his very own golf course and country club that no one could kick him or them out of.

Dubsdread became ground zero for business operations emanating throughout central Florida from its inception about 1923 up until the development of Mount Plymouth in 1926. Dubsdread was a stepping stone for Carl Dann and a starting point for what was to come- a much larger but very similar development to become known as Mount Plymouth Hotel, Golf Course, and Country Club.

Some of you might recall the road in front of the old hotel was called Dubsdread.

END OF PART ONE

The above 1927 newspaper article I found from a St. Petersburg, Florida newspaper is quite revealing about what all was going on in Florida during the great land boom and land speculation investing of the 1920's which is at the heart and soul and creation of the Mount Plymouth Hotel, golf course, and country club.

Edward Carney & The Al Capone Connection... PART TWO

St. Petersburg times, Florida

1927, Wednesday, November 9

Section One Page 3:

300 Hear Talks By Developers

Florida Has Great Future, Chicago Man Tells Audience

Newspapers and Journals of all classes in the United States are giving more and more space to Florida because it is the one unit of the country with distinctive advantages, unusual development and a great future, said Ed Carney, former president of the Chicago Realty Board, addressing a crowd of about 300 in Tourist Hall, second ave north, Tuesday evening.

The meeting was called by Howard R. Canning, vice-president of the St. Petersburg Apartment House Owners Association, and was attended by most of the members of the association and others who are operating apartment houses in the city.

Carl Dann who is assisting the building of a chain of golf courses at Mount Plymouth, not far from Orlando, for the purpose of attracting national winter championship tournaments to Florida, was the second speaker of the evening.

Mr. Canning opened the meeting and Mr. Carney was introduced by Capt. George M. Lynch, city superintendent of schools. "Mr. Carney was asked to appear before this audience tonight," said Capt. Lynch, "because, after wide experience in finance and the values of land and its population, he has declared that Florida is the best state in the Union."

"You will have a large crowd of winter visitors this season," said Mr. Carney. "You will have a bigger crowd next season, and you will have a bigger crowd still the year after that. The north is prosperous. People in Chicago who want to work can find work. The financial survey of Chicago shows that the banks have \$49,000,000.00 more than they had twelve months ago, and you folks in St. Petersburg will get some of that."

C.A. Eastman, president of the St. Petersburg Real Estate Board, introduced Mr. Dann. He announced him as the man who has "put on" 61 subdivisions in Florida and made a success of every one of them."

Members of the association, after the meeting, said their plans had been made public months ago and that they will adhere to the program which was adopted, reasonable rates on a season's basis only, the season to run from Jan. 1 to May 1 with optional privilege of signing lease for the season, paying the proper deposit Nov. 1, and occupying the premises on that lease through November.

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=CCtPAAAAIBAJ&sjid=z00DAAAAIBAJ&pg=7306%2C785399&dq=chicago+realty+board+carney&hl=en>

What the above shows is very telling indeed.

We already know that Carl Dann an Orlando real estate salesman and developer is the go-to man for any northern people with money, especially those of the Chicago underworld who had been dealing with Carl Dann for years prior to Al Capone taking over from Johnny Torrio.

And what this 1927 newspaper from St. Petersburg, Florida shows us is that Edward Carney a former president of the Chicago Realty Board is in Florida to invest money and lots of it. And Carl Dann is right there with him where ever in Florida Edward Carney travels to invest that Chicago money. From New Smyrna Beach Florida to Orlando area, and all the way down to Tampa-St. Petersburg they have money to invest.

Hmmmm... and where is this money coming from?

Edward Carney spills the money quote right here:

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1)Florida is declared the best state in the union at the time for investment in real estate during the great Florida land boom of the 1920's! A perfect place for laundering dirty money sitting in Chicago banks!

2)Edward Carney says the banks of Chicago now have near 50 million dollars just sitting in them going nowhere but that he is here in Florida to invest some of those dollars into Florida!

Let's see, he's investing those dollars in New Smyrna Beach, he is investing those dollars in the Orlando area into the Mount Plymouth Hotel and Golf Course and Country Club, and now he is in Tampa-St. Pete investing more money.

But for whom? Do you think he is working for the bankers on behalf of those bank's depositors? People like you and me with our small weekly paychecks going into those banks? Do you think bank owners would be risking the deposits of their average depositors into risky real estate investments?

Hardly the case here. Nope. What it is looking like is that this man Edward Carney is a mob frontman. He is being paid by the Capone organization to move some of that illegal dirty money out of Chicago banks and directly into legitimate businesses and real estate throughout the country but especially in places like the Florida land boom where they could turn one million dirty dollars into ten million clean dollars or more in a very short time.

And this is the notorious beginnings of the Mount Plymouth Hotel, golf course, and country club.

It was jump started with some six million dollars of capital investment. Carl Dann himself says in his own book he published in 1929 that he liquidated one million dollars worth of his own assets to invest into the Mount Plymouth Corporation towards the development of this new hotel, golf course, and country club, but this is where it starts to get interesting!

First is the property itself and its history, and next to take a look inside the Mount Plymouth Corporation to see how things start to stack up and add up.

END OF PART TWO

Above is an article from Apopka Chief newspaper August 1925.

Edward Carney & The Al Capone Connection... PART THREE

Let's start with the property.

John Thomas Pirie is the man who started it all. John was a Scottish immigrant who made a fortune with his dept. store chain of Chicago called Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co. At some point in his life in the late 1800's he came to central Florida and purchased at least two large tracts of land, one was a 4,000 plus acre ranch called the "Over The Top" cattle ranch and his other property was called Errol cattle ranch just to the west near Apopka-Zellwood area.

Sometime after John died in 1913, his wife who inherited his properties had their lawyer William Edwards, who was imported to Florida from Chicago area to manage John's ranching operations, close down the Over The Top ranch and relocate all the cattle over to Errol ranch closer to Zellwood/Apopka area. Once this was done, it left the 4,000 thousand plus acres of the Over The Top ranch empty and this is when William Edwards and others formed a company called Mount Plymouth Corporation in 1925 organized with the specific intent of developing the former ranch lands of John Thomas Pirie.

There is a very interesting website about John Thomas Pirie and his family and background which you can check out through this link. Also please look at the map and notice the dots noted there- NYC, Chicago, and central Florida. The future development of Mount Plymouth also followed exactly in this same geographic footprint right behind John Thomas Pirie:

<http://www.ac-family.org/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=I4048&tree=AC-Family>

Do you think it is just a coincidence? Hardly.

Keep in mind that the connections to Chicago run deep all throughout the Mount Plymouth story.

When John Pirie was alive and operating his ranches in central Florida, he sent down to Florida a man by the name of William Edwards to oversee all aspects of management and control of those business ventures for him.

Think about this for a moment. William Edwards is a lawyer by education. He was employed up in Chicago area by John Thomas Pirie to work for him and his interests up there in business and private legal matters. Why would a lawyer just stop being a lawyer and move himself and his entire family to a mosquito infested hot place like central Florida over 100 years ago and take up being a manager of ranches and cattle?

How is this to make any sense? A northern lawyer working for John Pirie just up and moves to central Florida to become a rancher. OK.

But when JTP dies in 1913, his wife closes down the Over The Top ranch and moves all cattle ranching over to Erroll Cattle Ranch leaving 4,000 plus acres of prime ranch lands wide open. And this is where the story of William Edwards begins to change dramatically. He is now free'd up to expand his operations throughout central Florida.

William Edwards keeps his residence near Zellwood and Erroll cattle ranch, but soon gets himself involved in Orange County government positions, he gets involved in an Orlando bank with county criminal judge Thomas Picton Warlow, gets involved in a hardware store in downtown Apopka he let's his sons run, he gets involved in citrus industry and helps to start the first citrus growers association that begins to establish fixed prices for citrus driving up the price of citrus, he gets involved in real estate and opens his own realty business with his sons and the list goes ever on all the things William Edwards is involved in.

But the one most notable business venture he does get deeply involved in is the Mount Plymouth Corporation begun in the summer of 1925 which has been established for the exclusive development of the 4,000 acres of land he once managed for John Pirie called the Over The Top ranch. The Mount Plymouth Corporation existed for one purpose and one purpose only- to develop that former cattle ranch into a world class golfing and fishing resort and William Edwards was made the President and CEO of this new corporation.

And the bank that this corporation operated from was located in downtown Orlando- the same one that he was involved in with criminal judge Thomas Picton Warlow. So all of the money and all of the investments were to be channeled into that bank and spent out from there on the development of the Mount Plymouth Hotel, golf course, and country club.

What is not generally well known is that this Mount Plymouth development was to be built in four phases! Phase one involved about 1,200 acres or one-fourth of the property to be developed. It was to include a hotel, golf course, country club and residential neighborhoods as well as a train station and business district. Once completed and sold to near capacity the corporation would then move onto phase two development which would have included another hotel, more golf courses, more residential neighborhoods, etc. and then onto phase 3 and phase 4 would have been the ultimate completion of the Mount Plymouth Corporation and development, but in 1929 the stock market crashed and the Florida land boom was done and over with and the whole project came crashing down and only phase one was developed- one hotel, one country club, and three golf courses and residential neighborhoods and some business development and that was it. It was back to listening to the crickets chirp out in the middle of nowhere Florida.

But when you take a look inside the Mount Plymouth Corporation it is interesting to note that for a man who claims to have liquidated one million dollars worth of his own assets to invest in this project to wind up as just one of the board members while others took the positions with titles of power like President, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, etc. that for a one million dollar investment all he could land himself was a board position? One can only wonder why especially since he was the man who was behind the actual building and construction of the development. Carl Dann is the man who rode around on horseback

laying out all the roads and golf courses. It was his project and yet he was just a board member. Here are the titled position of the founders of the Mount Plymouth Corporation:

William Edwards President

Walter Rogers Vice President

Idus Wellborn Treasurer

Thompson Casey Secretary

Judge Thomas Picton Warlow Director

Arthur Schultz Director

Carl Dann Director

Raymer Maguire Director

Latta Autrey Director

Oddly enough, for this investment scheme Carl Dann was not needed to help locate investment properties for Edward Carney. It was Chicago lawyer William Edwards who held the cards on that property. Carl Dann was simply the man who did the laying out of the development, the building and construction of it.

When I interviewed Robert Soukup about Florida Central Academy, he told me that the school operated under three different leases. One lease was for the hotel and hotel property. Another lease was for the golf course land and use, and another was for additional properties and use.

In other words, LeRoy Allen never owned the land nor the hotel that he put his school inside of. He had to rent everything from day one until the day the school closed down in 1983.

So what I found out was this... William Edwards, the Chicago lawyer is he who set up the dividing up of who got what on paper. And it appears that the hotel and some 30 acres were

held in escrow for the Chicago investors. In other words, the Chicago money that Edward Carney brought down to Florida and invested in this development secured for his financial backers exclusive ownership over the hotel and surrounding 30 acres of land. If Carl Dann really did invest one million of his own dollars into this project then he did not get a piece of the hotel. His money more than likely went into the residential development phase of this project since that was his specialty after having developed some 61 Orlando residential neighborhoods, he had full rein over this aspect of the development. And he would be the man to see if you wanted to buy a lot or more and build you a house at this development site. Go see Carl Dann. He had Sam Stoltz build him the cabin on Troon from where Carl Dann lived and operated at the development site and where he kept a horse to ride around on while laying out the roads, golf courses and general design of the development.

When the Mount Plymouth Corporation went public, they did more than solicit investments into the development project. They also were selling stocks and bonds too! And there was a considerable amount of land speculation going on as well. These people were in it for the money to be made, and as a way of laundering possibly millions of dollars of Chicago mob money and speculating with it. Take a look at what I found in another book about this project:

BOOK "Small Town South" by Sam Byrd 1942:

St. Andrews was the completed unit of a six-million-dollar boom project, dedicated Mount Plymouth, which proposed to make a five-thousand-acre cattle ranch the golf center of America. There were to be two other courses. Gleneagle was laid out by golf-course architects hide-and-seek style through deep valleys and a chain of small lakes, and one hundred and fifty goats were imported to furnish 'scientific manure\*' for the greens to prevent the growth of weeds and tough grass. Gleneagle reached the stage of surveyor's stakes, but

the third course was only a set of fine white lines on the blue plot of the golfer's paradise.

A three-hundred-thousand dollar hotel-clubhouse with a hundred and fifty rooms, ballroom, rambling verandas, swimming pool and bowling lawns was erected \*upon the summit of the loftiest hill' the term \* lofty' meaning about thirty feet high.

In this sports community of the world, the home-owner, for the price of a lot ranging in cost from five hundred and fifty to two thousand dollars, could enjoy the finest golfing, polo, trap-shooting, sky-motoring, water sports, quail shooting and bass fishing in the South. Taxi your own plane to the hotel. Free dues for twenty-one years, saving three thousand dollars or twice and three times the cost of the lot, made possible by the creation of an endowment fund which provided that a certain amount be set aside out of the sale of each lot, the income from the fund to maintain the courses.

Boulevards and avenues and driveways wound in and out of the scrub pines of the St. Andrews sections. Bridle paths followed the fairways where play might be observed from horseback. Light and water and tele-

phone systems were installed. Sidewalks shot straight out through the Florida sand. Sections, lots, farm sites. Five-dollar bills were tossed by the fistfuls off gaily colored bandwagons to attract the busloads of prospective home-owners who had been met at the special trains in Onora Valley, Orlando, Mount Dora and Apopka.

'I consider the Mount Plymouth development the finest in the state. It is without a peer. I feel tremendously honored by being associated with such a wonderful and magnificent enterprise/ said Honus Bradford, crack Florida East Coast salesman, who had been brought from Miami especially to handle the home-site sales.

Land that had been bought for ten dollars an acre was suddenly the 'Switzerland of Florida/

\* Thirty minutes from thirty towns/

' Dedication October 1, 1926 The Shot Heard

'Round The World/

Former clerks who had never made more than fifty dollars a week were shooting golf at fifty dollars a hole.

A ten-acre section which had cost fifty cents an acre, and was assessed at \$5 on the tax books, sold for \$500 at eight in the morning. At nine o'clock the original owner bought it back for \$700 and sold it immediately for \$900. At noon it changed hands for \$1200. In the early afternoon the original owner paid \$1300 to get it back and sold it again at four for \$1500. All transactions on paper. Paper everywhere, and Mount Plymouth and all of Florida was drunk with the taste of money, the feel of money. Everything jumped a hundred times its value."

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He was first interested in Mount Plymouth from purely an investment standpoint. He has disposed of some of his property at considerable profit.

Gus tossed the newspaper over onto his zither and took a long pull at his beer.

'Yes, sir/ he said, 'it was a time. The whole thing 1 fell apart when everybody tried to cash in their paper for money. When I sold out and came here it was something. There was so much traffic over there on Number One that a red light in Onora caused a jam dang near to here. Every empty field that didn't have a

fancy archway and an auction stand was a tourist camp. I was knocking off forty dollars a week and tips with one chair in the hotel, and when it closed for the season after the first three months, I paid me seventeen thousand dollars for a store in the business block. Then I bought me this house with the fancy roof over m'head. " I was the envy of all my friends. Old Gus was in on the ground floor. I bought me two more stores and rented them to the grocer and the furniture dealer. I bought me a filling station out there on the old Orlando Road. But Mr. Dann, he let me down. He underestimated the cost, he started too late in the boom to gain momentum, and when she began to wobble and he found himself short on dough, the stockholders in the hotel wouldn't ante up any more. So the great big old thing you see sitting there through the trees sold on the block for eighteen thousand dollars.

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One can only wonder how much truth there is to this embellished story, but it does go to show by example of how the money men were wheeling and dealing to make money with this Mount Plymouth development project. And Sam Byrd here claims that the financial backers who we now know as the Chicago Outfit supposedly pulled back from further investments into a sinking ship after the stock market crashed and the land boom disappeared.

Exact dollar figures will never be known, but let's just divide it up this way to get an idea... if the phase one of this project cost an estimated six million dollars, and Carl Dann invested one million himself, and let's just say that they were able to raise another one million or even two million dollars, this would mean that possibly the Chicago Outfit invested the other 3 million more or less into this project.

\*\*\*Side note to clear up. The Over the Top Ranch was just over 4,000 acres. The Mount Plymouth Corporation bought all of it plus additional surrounding land which all added up to a total of about 5,000 acres which is why the discrepancy in acreage numbers.

So why wouldn't Al Capone visit what his money paid for? Today there are only rumors of his visits and not one piece of evidence or is there? I found only one piece of physical evidence that exists today that claims to have come from Al Capone and the old hotel. Does anyone know what that is or where it is today?