

[Alexander Mitchell, Financier]

26053

March 7, [1939?].

Alexander Mitchell III

Bond Department

Barnett National Bank

Jacksonville, Florida.

Rose Shepherd, Writer.

ALEXANDER MITCHELL, FINANCIER.

Mr. Mitchell was contacted after banking [hours?] in his office in the bond department of the Barnett National Bank. He is a small man, about five feet four inches tall, rather stockily built, with blond hair and quick-moving gray eyes, and is thirty-five years of age.

He was energetically busy with a list of statistics, his desk arrayed with numerous reference sheets, and evidently in the midst of compiling a monthly report of the activities of his department. A warm afternoon had induced him to remove his coat, which was carefully arranged over the back of a nearby office chair. He quickly transferred his coat to the top of the railing which fenced off his department from the lobby of the [olderssection?] of the bank, and invited the writer to come in and be seated.

"I have been in this position five years, and before that was connected with the office of Smith-Richardson and Conroy, caterers to the hotel supply trade.

Library of Congress

"I am sorry to say I knew very little of my great-grandfather, my namesake, who was a financial power in the late 1860's in his home state of Wisconsin," said young Alexander Mitchell III. "He and also my great-grandmother were of English descent and [Episcopalians.?] All family papers have been lost by one means or another and I have nothing to authenticate their arrival and settlement in Milwaukee. However, his financial activities are a matter of record." Producing a small paper-bound volume from the top left-hand drawer 2 of his desk - an alphabetical list of early national organizations - he turned quickly to the A's and read:

"Alexander Mitchell, organizer and first president of the American Bankers' Association; organizer and stockholder of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad; and organizer and first president (1869) of the Northwestern National Insurance Company.

"I can give no first hand information regarding Villa [Alexandria?]. For a long time I kept a newspaper clipping of a writeup of the Villa by Harriet Beecher [Stowe?], but that, too, has been misplaced and I do not know where I could now lay hands on it.

"Naturally, I feel reluctant in going into any personal history of my immediate family. My father and other separated many years ago; I have always made my home with my mother and her people, and know practically nothing of the Mitchell family history.

"My father/ David Mitchell, I have not seen for considerably over a year. I do not know if he is at present in Jacksonville. However, Mr. Bainbridge Richardson, Mr. Francis P. Fleming, Mr. J. Y. Wilson, may be able to give some clue as to his whereabouts."

His hands played nervously with a pencil, and he was evidently anxious to get back to the compilation of his report.

"No, I do not know if I will ever attain to any such reputation as my famous ancestor enjoyed in the financial world, but I am glad to have become associated with the oldest

Library of Congress

banking institution in Jacksonville, and I am earnestly trying to make good - just as if I were the first Mitchell in the country, with no ancestral background or achievements to live up to.

“A banker's life is not a bed of roses - it means long hours and hard work, just the same as any other vocation, with the added burden of responsibility for other people's finances. When 3 the slides go down at the tellers' windows at 2 p.m. and noon on Saturday, and the doors are closed, working hours are not over for the employees; sometimes it means all afternoon like today, with me, and often far into the night during special rushes or busy seasons.

“I could not discuss my work, that would have to come from the head of my department,” he said, clipping his sentences with the finality of dismissal.

“Always work? Well, I have a little recreation. I am very fond of swimming and I have just taken up golf - but I don't think I'll ever become a ‘bug’ about that. Not so much time to [look?].

“My early teachers were in a private school, then I attended the Duval County public schools, later graduating from the University of Florida. Now, I am studying a special course in finance by the American Institute of Banking, and other things in relation to my work, that takes up a great many of my off hours.

“Vote? Yes I vote, as a matter of course, but I am afraid I would never make a ward politician,” he laughed -“too many [crooks?] and turns. Nationally, I like President Roosevelt's ideals, and believe in time he will/ get finances, labor, and living conditions of the American people on the up-and-up.”

March 7, [1939?].

Bainbridge Richardson

Library of Congress

Realtor

15 Blum Bldg.,

Jacksonville, Florida.

Rose Shepherd, Writer

ALEXANDER MITCHELL, FINANCIER.

Mr. Bainbridge Richardson was interviewed in his office, Room 15 Blum Building, 214 West [Forsyth-st?].

"I can confirm the fact that Mr. Alexander Mitchell, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was the organizer and first president of the American Bankers' Association.

"As to David Mitchell, his grandson and the father of Alexander Mitchell III, of Jacksonville, I have not seen him for three or four months. I do not know just where he may be, but when he returns, I'll be glad to let you know.

"You have heard about under-privileged children? Well, David Mitchell was over - privileged. He was the "apple of his grandmother's eye," so to speak, and had everything under the sun lavished upon him that money could buy or influence secure - education, travel, and all possible advantages.

"It is reported that in his early manhood he had a fall from a pole [pony?] on the grounds of Villa Alexandria, suffering severe injuries, including a fractured skull. At any rate, he developed into an unreliable, erratic individual, sometimes unaccountable, and at other times rational."