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Arthur T. Williams

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ARTHUR TILMAN WILLIAMS

In the afternoon of April 26, 1932, Arthur Tilman Williams, for eleven years president of The Florida Historical Society, died at his home in Jacksonville, of complications resulting from an attack of influenza.

He was born in Palatka, Florida, August 16, 1857, by a strange coincidence one hundred years to the day after the removal of his maternal ancestors from Spain to Florida. His parents were Marcellus A. Williams and Emma Wightman Williams. His father was Florida's most distinguished surveyor, who surveyed and platted for the United States government the most valuable set of section charts ever produced in the state. Young Arthur went with his father on many of his surveying trips into the then wild reaches of the Territory and thus gained first-hand knowledge of the elements that later became his life business-Florida timber lands. He later published several maps of Florida that are still in use. He was land commissioner of the old Florida Railway and Navigation Company, now the Seaboard, and afterward of the Florida Land and Mortgage Company. His advice and judgment upon land matters in the state were widely sought.

Mr. Williams never sought political office ; but yielding to the request of the people of Nassau County, whither the family had returned after a short residence at Palatka, he was elected to the state senate in 1896, and re-elected for every term until 1904, when he resigned upon his removal to Jacksonville. He was chairman of the state Democratic Committee in 1902. President Wilson appointed him Federal fuel administrator in November, 1917. His splendid administration of this difficult office was highly complimented. At the same time, he was on the executive committee of the Red Cross ; was active in all of the Liberty Loan and other campaigns for war work, and

an active member of the Duval County home guards during the war. He served his country well. His appointment to any office was considered by the public as fortunate and his service was always attended by confidence and respect.

The local business and social activities of Mr. Williams were very extensive. He was one of the organizers of the famous Wilson's Battery military organization of this city. He was one of the organizers and secretary of the American Trust Company, which is now affiliated with the Atlantic National Bank; a director of the Florida National Bank; and at the time of his death was president of the Realty Investment Corporation, owner of the Williams building in Jacksonville. He was a member of the State Library Board and of the National Economic League. Florida has lost a great man, a valuable citizen, a man who never turned away when duty or charity called.

For many years Mr. Williams was actively interested in the work and progress of The Florida Historical Society and was its president from 1921 until he resigned at the beginning of his late illness, only a little more than a month before his death. His knowledge of Florida's history, his love for his state, and a desire to help others seeking truthful information about it, brought him into contact with people from many distant lands. The Society possesses a very valuable library and it was largely through his personal efforts and help that this large collection of Florida material has been brought together. It is impossible to weigh the value of Mr. Williams's interest in the Society. Up to the time of his death he provided a room for the library at No. 7 West Forsyth Street, Jacksonville, without expense to the Society. The Florida Historical Society has suffered a severe loss in the passing of this friendly, kindly gentleman; but though we shall not see him again here, as long as The Florida Historical Society lasts, he will never be forgotten.

Mr. Williams married in 1887, Isabella M. Starke, daughter of Captain John M. Starke of Volusia County, who was a captain in the Second Regiment of Florida troops in the War for Southern Independence. His widow and four children survive him, among the latter being Mrs. Emma Rochelle Porter, assistant secretary of the Society and assistant editor of the **QUARTERLY**. The funeral of Mr. Williams was held at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, of which he was a faithful member. The body was taken to the old home at Fernandina for interment in the family plot.

T. **FREDERICK DAVIS**