

THE PASSING OF "A FINE OLD GENTLEMAN"

June 2, 1945

After complaining on the previous day of a severe pain in his chest, which grew intense by the following early morning, Leonard Wheeler, one of the earliest and best known residents of Ruskin, passed quietly away on Saturday last, in his home, in the presence of his two daughters and their husbands.

He was born in Watertown, N.Y. on September 15th, 1867, and lived there during his early years, in 1892 marrying Ida Whitlock of that city. Following his trade as an electrician he moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota, and then lived for a while at Sioux City, Iowa. He also spent several years in Wisconsin and Illinois, where he first met Dr. George McKay Miller and his wife Adeline, moving in 1910 to Ruskin to work with them in connection with the founding and operation of the Ruskin Common Good Society and the College connected with it.

While in Chicago, as superintendent of the Burlington-Quincy Suburban Railroad, he invented various things connected with electric transportation, including the "third rail system". He later invented a rotary gas engine for airplanes and automobiles.

Mr. Wheeler installed the first electric lighting system in Ruskin and also the first telephone system here, serving the original eighteen users of phones from his home. He wired most of the original residences.

He took an active part in local political and welfare work and in recent years organized and kept up the Ruskin Townsend Club, being its secretary from the time it was founded. He worked closely with State Senator Raymond Sheldon on his efforts for improved old-age assistance for Florida's elder citizens.

He is survived by his wife, now aged 74, and by three children and several grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He had two sons, Leonard and Herbert. Leonard was an ardent airplane enthusiast, and flew his own planes at State Fairs, Etc., and worked closely with his father in working out a lighter and better airplane engine, and while doing so met his death in a crash landing, in the year 1939. The shock of her son's tragic death greatly affected his mother, and she has suffered from the effects ever since. The remaining son, Herbert, is a Corporal in the American Air Force, at present in Belgium. He could not be reached with news of his father's death in time to be heard from before this goes to press. Herbert's wife is a resident of Tampa. Mr. Wheeler's two daughters, Ruth Barnes and Helen Phillips, both live in Ruskin. *One other daughter Edith Levine who was deceased*

Funeral services were held on Tuesday morning at the Adeline Miller Club House, and interment took place at Fellowship Cemetery. All who knew the deceased were impressed by his great sincerity and his enthusiasm for whatever he deemed good for humanity, and however much some may have differed his views on certain political and social questions, all unite in considering him to have been "a fine old gentleman".