

JOHN W. WHITLOCK OF RISING SUN, INDIANA

John William Whitlock was born in Indiana May 2,1871 and died there August 25,1935. In between those dates he packed in a life full of achievement. His grandson, also John William Whitlock has sent us a chronology of his grandfathers life:

"Early training in saw mill, wood working shop and boat yard.
1894-1899 Spent in inventing an automatic musical instrument (forerunner of the present day "juke box").
1900 Organized his own company for the manufacture of these automatic harps which continued until 1912.
1907 Began a career of designing, building and racing speed boats which he followed throughout his life.
1913 Organized and built a machine tool company for the development of a new type gasoline engine which he had invented.
1914 Organized the J.W. Whitlock furniture company for the manufacture of chairs.
1915 Modernized his father's saw mill and entered the hard wood lumber business.
1917 Converted the tool plant to war work.
1918 Enlarged the furniture business by the addition of new buildings and power plant.
1919 Developed a new type of phonograph motor and started the manufacture of same.
1920 Developed a complete phonograph and manufactured them for several years.
1921 Developed and started the manufacture of a revolutionary type of wood working machine tool.
1922 Worked along with the pioneers of radio and manufactured and sold one of the earliest complete radio sets.
1922 Built new boats for the purpose of hauling pedestrians and vehicles on the Ohio river and established a ferry business between Indiana and Kentucky.
1923 Developed a new speed boat which was the fastest single engine boat of that time.
1926 Bought a run down country club, rebuilt, enlarged and converted it into a beautiful summer hotel.
1930 Designed and built a complete line of commercial boats, both outboards and runabouts.
1931-1932 Invented a new type of pin ball game.
1933-1935 Spent in inventing a record changer for automatic phonographs which was completed just before his death."

The Whitlocks of Rising Sun, Indiana were very proud of their Whitlock ancestry including their descent from the Revolutionary War soldier, Lieutenant Colonel Ephraim Lockhart Whitlock of New Jersey. Ephraim's son and two grandsons continued their membership in the Society of the Cincinnati in New Jersey which was organized by officers in the colonial forces.

John Tiebout Whitlock (1811-1881) was the first to leave New Jersey for Indiana, arriving in the 1830's. He became an undertaker and started a long tradition of woodworking by making his own caskets. He also made home furnishings and other items required by the fledgling community. His son William Henry Whitlock (1841-1912) expanded into the sawmill business and established a mill at Rising Sun. He produced a great variety of wood products including furniture, boats and farm implements. His business grew from a small shop to an established and thriving business. It was in his father's shop that John William Whitlock learned new skills and tested his first inventions. This also gave him his first taste of boat building with was to be such a large part of his adult life.

Our thanks to John W. Whitlock for providing the details on his family.

Sources: NP272; NP543; R1951; R1952; X2973