

PHILIP WHITLOCK, “RICHMOND GRAYS”

The following is from “The Life of Philip Whitlock, Written by Himself”, courtesy Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives Trust, Richmond, Va.

It is not my intention to write history, for many others have done that, but merely want to mention such matters that I was directly connected with. John Brown was condemned to be hung in December by the court that met in the city of Charlestown, Jefferson County, now W.Va. There was a rumor that a party was organizing in the North to rescue John Brown; therefore, the Governor again called out the State Militia to go.

The 1st Regiment assembled on Broad St. near the depot, which was then on the corner of 8th where the old Bijou now stands—that was one Saturday night about the 1st of December, in the year 1859. Many of us were surprised to see John Wilkes Booth, who was then acting in the Marshall Theatre, in a Richmond Gray uniform. We afterwards were informed that he joined the Company in order to go along with us. He is the same John Wilkes Booth who shot Abe Lincoln just after the way. We got to Charlestown and there we met a great many soldiers from the whole State of Virginia. Among them were many who have made History since: General Lee, J.E.B.Stewart, and many others.

We staid there three weeks until he was hung, in which our company was present as a Body Guard, being about 30 feet from the gallows. John Wilkes Booth, being about the same height as I, was right next to me in rank. When the drop fell, I noticed that he got very pale, and I called his attention to it. He said that he felt very faint and that he would give anything for a good drink of whiskey. Of course, he did not get it then. We stayed in Charlestown about three weeks and then returned to Richmond.

Just about six months previous to this time I took out citizens papers. I then felt that I had accomplished something by becoming a citizen of this great and glorious country where a man is a man and where a man has the opportunity to elevate himself by helping himself by his own exertion which I tried my best to do in spending my leisure time in reading all the standard novels and books of information that I could procure and by visiting the Theatre where at that time they played very instructive plays. The Stock Company includeed some of the very best actors that our country has produced; for instance Joseph Jefferson, Edwin Adams, George C. Boniface and John Wilkes Booth were in that Company. The stars that played here were: Edwin Booth, Barney Williams, Maggie Mitchel, Charlotte Coleman, and many others. I was very fond of Shakespeare’s plays which I rarely missed, and Hamlet was my favorite. This will appear to some that I was extravagant, but the cost was not so great as I did not go in the pitt which was 50¢ but in the gallery which only cost 25¢. The highest price seat was then 75¢.

That was about all the expense that I had except that sometimes and that was very seldom I would participate in a game of pool. I played not a single game of cards, for I had no time as I kept at my work and saved some money which was in the hands of my brother Herman who needed it in the business. I then had about \$500.00 and was contemplating in a year or so to go

into the merchant tailoring business for myself or get a partnership with my brother.

Our records show that Philip Whitlock was born in Kovall, Poland Mar.14,1838. He came to the US in 1853, settling in Richmond, Virginia. Philip enlisted in Co. "G" Apr.19,1861 as a Private. He was a clerk for E. Morris and Co. In 1862 he was detailed to the Quartermaster Department in Richmond, making uniforms. On November 17, 1863 Philip married Eva the daughter of Abram Abrams of Richmond, Virginia. The wedding took place at Philip's brother Herman's house at 19th and Broad, Richmond. Eva's sister was married to Philip's brother Herman.

Philip also relates a Civil War story about he and his future brother-in-law Ellis Abrams traveling to New York through enemy lines to purchase goods in the North that were scarce in the South. Does not seem they made much money from their smuggling venture and on a subsequent attempt Ellis was arrested and spent nine months in prison.

Philip went on to be the originator of the Old Virginia Cheroots cigars producing them in his factory in Richmond, Virginia until the business was sold to the American Tobacco Co. in 1891. His factories became the P. Whitlock branch of that company. The P. Lorillard Company later sold "P. Whitlock's Old Virginia Cheroots" in small wooden boxes with stylized portrait of "Uncle Phil" as their Trade Mark.

It is believed that the "Whitlock Double House" listed in the Historic American Buildings Survey at 628-630 North Seventeenth Street, Richmond, Virginia was connected to Philip Whitlock.

Philip and Eva had eight children, six daughters and two sons but we have not yet come across anyone descended from this part of the Whitlock family.

SOURCES: R1150; R18/6; X2969; X624/367; UBC70; X5661