



Brand Whitlock

Of all individuals whose lives influenced our community's history, none showed more genuine courage in the face of extreme political stress or more concern about economic and judicial reform than Brand Whitlock, whose life began in 1869 at 510 S. Main Street in Urbana.

The son of a United Methodist minister and grandson of Joseph Carter Brand, Whitlock is remembered in history as America's first Ambassador to Belgium, author of 18 books and the four-term, patient yet courageous reform mayor of Toledo, Ohio.

His first career was news reporting, and he wrote for newspapers in the Toledo area as well as the Chicago Tribune. Whitlock then moved into law, passing the bar examination in 1897 and eventually opening an office in Toledo.

A crusader for humanized legal procedure and prison reform, he was elected mayor and served eight years -- constantly blasted with controversy over his attempts to reform what he viewed as a corrupt municipal government.

In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson appointed him United States Minister to Belgium, and he served the nation during the challenging years of World War I. Whitlock died in Cannes, France, May 24, 1934. In 1943, our nation recognized his lifelong work by christening the S. S. Brand Whitlock in Wilmington, Calif.

In the early 1930s, during his last years, Whitlock wrote this about our community: "What one wants at Christmas is the kind of snowstorms we used to have in Ohio, and a clear cold night of mystery and wonder, with sparkling stars and the light showing through the stained glass windows of the church, just as one wished to see it on Christmas cards. I could get quite sentimental about it and longing for it. And sometimes I have visions of going back to Urbana and looking for it."