



The American Historical Society

Eng. by E. C. Williams & Bros. N. Y.

Stump Whitwell

R24651

REPRESENTATIVE CITIZENS

— OF —

CONNECTICUT

BIOGRAPHICAL
MEMORIAL



UNDER THE EDITORIAL SUPERVISION OF

SAMUEL HART, D. D., D. C. L.

PRESIDENT OF CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EDITION DE LUXE

THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEW YORK
1916

MSB

MSB
KJG

Sturges Selleck Whitlock



THERE ARE MANY reasons why life to-day should have as little of the element of poetry in it as is ever to be found, and the chief of these reasons is that men have turned their attention to other things and become preoccupied with an entirely different aspect of existence. It is no longer so much the beauty of things that men seek to extract from them as it is their power of advancing a certain material prosperity that serves pretty much as the standard of happiness for this age. This is not by any means an adverse criticism of the present time, since there is an ample reason why this should be so in the vast material problems that have of necessity claimed our attention and left us small opportunity for anything else. But whether consciously sought or otherwise, this element of poetry is never entirely missing although it may not be apparent to the contemporary eye. Thus, to the eye of the gallant of Queen Anne's day, the boots, the flowered waistcoats, the exaggerated stove-pipe hats seemed, no doubt, commonplace enough, where we discover the picturesque, and, by the same token, our own unpromising garb may charm the eyes of future times. But this poetry of the commonplace is far more vivid in another characteristic growth of this age than in the clothing, so vivid indeed that it is quite apparent even to us, if we will but pause to seek it for a moment. This is the huge development that has grown up as the visible accompaniment of our great industries, that is the mills and factories in which they are carried on, and whose beauty should be obvious to all. It is the way of life to forever disregard our conventions and none does she more ruthlessly do violence to than the canons of beauty we have fixed for the governance of our art. By none of these canons, indeed, are our mills adjudged beautiful, and, accustomed as we are to think in terms of these, it may perhaps be somewhat startling at first to be told that they have a new type of beauty unknown before. Yet such indubitably is the case as anyone may convince himself who will make the trial. Huge and gaunt they stand up filled with a certain wild and even terrible poetry, the inevitable reflection of the great plans of the brilliant men who have been responsible for the industrial activities of the country. And after all these men were unconscious poets in their own way, and the faculty of constructive imagination which was theirs and which they employed in the working out of their schemes is the same as that of the workers in every province of art. Many of them, indeed, were not unconscious of the beauty in their plans, for, although the times were not such as to put a premium upon culture, nevertheless there were many who rose superior to their times and environment and could see their achievements from the point of view of the artist. Such, as a good example, was Sturges S. Whitlock, the distinguished gentleman whose name heads this brief appreciation, and whose death at New Haven, Connecticut, on October 24, 1914, removed from that part of the State one of the most prominent and public-spirited of its citizens.

Sturges Selleck Whitlock

Born January 28, 1844, at Ridgefield, Connecticut, Mr. Whitlock was a member of a very old Connecticut family which had made its home in that region for many generations. There is a tradition concerning the actual founding of the Whitlock family in this country that three brothers of the name came from England to the "New World" during the early period of its colonization, one of them settling in Connecticut, one in New York and one in New Jersey, and that it was from these that all the various Whitlock families in the United States are descended. However this may be, it is certain that the ancestors of the Mr. Whitlock with whose life and career this sketch is concerned were living in Ridgefield during pre-Revolutionary days, the line being clearly traceable for five generations back.

Thaddeus Whitlock, who was the representative of the family during the Revolution, took a creditable part in that historic struggle, and his son, the grandfather of Sturges S. Whitlock, fought in the War of 1812. Mr. Whitlock's father, John Whitlock, was a very prominent man in the community in his day, with extensive manufacturing interests in Derby, Connecticut, where he founded the business afterwards developed to great proportions by his son. His wife, before her marriage to him in 1842 was Mary Ann Selleck, a daughter of Sturges Selleck, of Danbury, Connecticut, and Sturges S. Whitlock was one of the two children born to this union, the other being Charles Whitlock, who died as early as 1860.

Sturges S. Whitlock passed the years of his youth in the region of the State where he was born, but not all of it in his native town, receiving his education at Jackson's Academy in the neighboring town of Danbury. He proved an apt and industrious scholar and left school at the age of eighteen the possessor of a liberal education. Upon completing his schooling he entered the machine shop of his father at Derby and there learned to become a practical machinist, as well as the business side of the enterprise. Though still a young man of twenty-four, he stepped into his father's place on the retirement of the elder man in 1868 and from that time for twenty years had complete control of the business, which he conducted on the most progressive principles and with the highest degree of success. During the first ten years of his management he carried on the industry in the same manner that his father before him had done, at least in so far as the actual product of the mills was concerned. Mr. Whitlock was, however, a man of great inventive genius and about 1877 designed a printing press which had many features that greatly improved on the type then in use. This design he patented and in 1878 began the manufacture of his invention in his mills. The invention was a notable one and the new form of press rapidly displaced the older forms throughout the country so that the capacity of the plant was strained to the uttermost. This capacity was about one hundred presses a year and the manufacture of them at that rate was continued by Mr. Whitlock for about ten years longer. Finally, in 1887, it became impossible to supply the growing demand for the mechanism as practically every printing concern of any importance found it necessary to install one, and Mr. Whitlock formed the corporation known as the Whitlock Machine Company, which removed the following year to Shelton, Connecticut, where much more adequate quarters were provided for the carrying on of the

N67
N73

great business. It is here that the industry is still continued to-day under the same name, forming now as it has from the outset one of the most important manufacturing interests in the district. Mr. Whitlock, himself, up to the time of his death was a very prominent figure in the industrial circles of the State and a man whose reputation for probity and sound practical business methods was surpassed by none.

The great interests connected with his industrial operations made it impossible for Mr. Whitlock to devote as much time or attention to many other aspects of the community's life as both inclination and talent impelled him to. This was particularly true in the case of politics in which he was always keenly interested and in which he would unquestionably have risen high had it been possible for him to take part in public affairs to a great extent. Even as it was he became a prominent factor therein in the county, a recognized leader and held a number of important offices. He was a staunch supporter of the principles and policies of the Republican party with which he was identified from attaining his manhood until his death, and it was as its candidate that he was elected to the several offices that he held. For a year he was assessor for the town of Derby and later served a term as member of the board of burgesses for the borough of Birmingham. In the fall of 1896 he was elected to the State Assembly from the township of Huntington, and upon the completion of his term in that body in 1898 was sent to the State Senate from the Fifteenth Electoral District.

In the fall of 1868 Mr. Whitlock was united in marriage with Mary Olive Singer, a daughter of Isaac M. Singer, of New York City. To Mr. and Mrs. Whitlock were born two children: Olive Voulette, now the wife of Walter Randall, of Shelton, Connecticut, and Mary Lillian, now the wife of Alton P. Terrell, of Ansonia, Connecticut. Mrs. Whitlock died in August, 1898, and on June 2, 1902, Mr. Whitlock was united in marriage with Inez M. Wakefield, a daughter of Charles Everett and Louise D. (Wentworth) Wakefield, of Maine. Of this union one son was born, Sturges Selleck Whitlock, Jr., born February 24, 1904, died March 5, 1904. Mrs. Whitlock survives her husband and is now the wife of Yale D. Bishop, of No. 271 Crown street, New Haven, Connecticut.

Mr. Whitlock was a man of strong social instincts who enjoyed greatly the society of his fellows. He was prominent in Masonic circles and a member of Hiram Lodge, No. 12, Free and Accepted Masons, and of King Solomon Chapter, No. 3, Royal Arch Masons, of Derby. He was keenly interested in all matters pertaining to the public welfare and was active in many movements undertaken with this objective. He did invaluable service in aiding the developing of the town of Shelton as a member of its Board of Trade, of which he was a director for a number of years. In the matter of religion Mr. Whitlock was an Episcopalian and a very liberal supporter of the church's work. Mr. Whitlock possessed a rather unusual union of characteristics which, when taken together, almost invariably spell success. The capable business man and the inventor are rarely found together in one person, the qualities which make for ability in each line somewhat negating the others. In his case, however, this was not so and he was equally capable of inventing his splendid press and successfully putting it upon the

Sturges Selleck Whitlock

market. Nor was his invention one effort merely, but he followed it up by much valuable work, making great improvements from year to year in his own device, and had eventually above twenty patents on these various supplementary inventions. A man of strong personality, he was everywhere and in all relations a sort of leader among his fellows who readily deferred to views which he could at once urge with so much enthusiasm and back with argument so convincing. His relations with the other members of his own family and household and with his personal friends were of a most delightful kind, and his death left an unusually large circle of those who mourned him as a personal loss.

