

John Sherrod Whitehurst,

PLANT CITY MARSHAL AND MAYOR

The Whitehurst family was a pioneer family in the new colony and a number of its territories as they moved southward over the years. Sailing from England, William Whitehurst arrived in Virginia in 1635. His descendant, Simon Sheridan Whitehurst, whose lineage we will follow, was born in 1755 in North Carolina. He served in a company of Minutemen, under the overall command of General Benjamin Lincoln, during the Revolutionary War, was captured by the British at the Battle of Brier Creek, Georgia, in March 1779. Imprisoned on the brig *Munificence*, Simon escaped and joined a unit probably led again by General Benjamin Lincoln. He was wounded at the Battle of Stono Ferry, south of Charleston, in June 1779. (It was here that Andrew Jackson's brother, Hugh Jackson, was mortally wounded.)

Simon Sheridan Whitehurst married Mary Ann Scott, whose family ties reportedly included General Winfield Scott (1786-1866), and Pocahontas (1595-1617). The family lived first in North Carolina, then migrated southward settling in Hamilton County, Florida. The couple had many children including John Sheridan (1783), Susannah (1786), Daniel Scott (1790), Hillary (male, no date listed), Asa (1793), Levi (1796), Lenora (1799), Newton (1805), and Anna (1813). Mary Ann Scott Whitehurst died in 1830, and Simon Sheridan Whitehurst died in 1848.

John Sheridan Whitehurst was born in North Carolina in 1783 and moved to Hamilton County, Florida, sometime between 1826 and 1830. He had first married Mary Collins, who died in childbirth, delivering daughter Mary Whitehurst. John Sheridan Whitehurst's second wife was Mary "Polly" Griffin, a native of Georgia or South Carolina. They had seven children, including Walton Whitehurst, born in Georgia in 1886.

The John Sheridan Whitehurst family moved farther south in Florida and were among the first settlers in Brooksville. They moved into Ozona, Florida, which was then the western section of Hillsborough County. John Sheridan Whitehurst

was a farmer with land in the Ozona area; he died in 1878 and is buried in the Curlew Cemetery, Ozona (Palm Harbor), Florida.

John Sheridan and Polly Whitehurst's son, Walton Whitehurst, was born in 1826 in Georgia just before the family relocated to Florida. In 1852 he married Louisa June Edwards, apparently born in Georgia in 1834. They had nine children, the first of whom was John Sherrod Whitehurst, born in Hillsborough County in May 1856.

Walton Whitehurst was a successful farmer and expanded his interests. Walton Whitehurst died in 1905; Louisa Jane Edwards Whitehurst lived to an old age, passing away in May of 1931.

Their oldest son, John Sherrod Whitehurst, spent his early life in the Palm Harbor area, and after moving to Plant City became a prominent citizen in the young town, with diverse business interests, including farming. He had married Rhoda Rebecca Crum (born in 1861) in December 1878 and became associated with businessmen such as W.B. Herring, W.F. Burts, the Crum family (a pioneer family in the Plant City and Lakeland area), and attorney G.B. Wells. In 1908 the city government included G.B. Wells, mayor, W.L. Lowry, clerk-treasurer, William Schneider and S.E. Mays, councilmen, and John Sherrod Whitehurst, marshal.

By 1911 the fledgling Plant City Board of Trade was floundering and a small group of businessmen, including John Sherrod Whitehurst and W.B. Herring, and led by H.B. Wordehoff, made a promotional trip to Chicago to tout the advantages and quality of life in Plant City. He later succeeded W.B. Herring as Mayor of Plant City and served in 1914 and 1915.

John Sherrod Whitehurst and Rhoda Rebecca Crum Whitehurst had seven children: Flossie Estelle (1879), Mary Ellen "Mamie" (1881), Melvin Leroy (?), William Phillip (1886), David Sanky (1888), Rhoda Ellen (1890), and Leon Walton (?). Mary Ellen "Mamie" Whitehurst

married Charles Evan Barnes, a businessman in insurance and real estate. Charles Evan Barnes served as Postmaster for the City of Plant City 1908 – 1913, and Mamie Barnes served as Postmaster for the City of Plant City from 1922 through 1934. William Phillip Whitehurst later had an interest in the phosphate industry, and his son, Harold Owen Whitehurst, was a partner in the Plant City Steel plant.

Rhoda Rebecca Crum Whitehurst died in 1925; John Sherrod Whitehurst died at the home of his son, William Phillip Whitehurst in 1925 and is buried in Oaklawn Cemetery.

Sources: Documents submitted by Hilton Owen Whitehurst, great-grandson of John Sherrod Whitehurst; Quintilla Bruton and David E. Bailey, Jr., Plant City; Its Origin and History, Plant City Photo Archives, and Plant City Photo Archives Oral History Project 2007.

