Whitehead, Zollicoffer Wiley [1]

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by J. Marshall Bullock, 1996

1862–1 July 1923

Zollicofer Wiley Whitehead, businessman, editor, and journalist, was born in Kenansville, one of three children of Wiley W. and Cordelia Hussey Whitehead. After attending the county public schools, he completed his education at Grove Academy in Kenansville under the tutelage of Dr. James Sprunt [2].

In 1881 Whitehead joined the staff of the *Greensboro Patriot* [3] as an office boy; from that position he became associate editor and half owner, and in 1886 editor and sole owner. Under his direction, the *Patriot* grew from a weekly to a daily paper and became a strong supporter of the Democratic party [4]. The masthead read, "Democratic Supremacy for the Good of All, And a Democratic Administration Administered by Democrats." Ill health caused Whitehead to sell the paper in late 1888. Recovering his health, he purchased the *Fayetteville Observer* [5] in 1889 and published it until 1892. He sold the *Observer* in 1893 in order to accept a position in the Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C.; the job may have been a political reward for his newspaper's strong support of President Grover Cleveland. Moreover, Whitehead had been a member of the National Democratic Committee that had nominated Cleveland.

Returning to North Carolina in 1896, he settled in Wilmington [6], where he established and published two trade journals, the *Southern Lumber Journal* and the *Carolina Fruit and Truckers' Journal.* The *Southern Lumber Journal* eventually opened offices in Norfolk, Va., and Savannah, Ga. Both journals were sold and continued publication after his death. In 1904 Whitehead organized a convention in Savannah of southern yellow pine manufacturers and northern wholesalers that developed a new set of grading and inspection rules for merchantable southern lumber; these much-needed changes were the first enacted since 1883. Also active in Wilmington business circles, he served as chairman of the board of directors of the Wilmington, Brunswick, and Southern Railroad [7], as a director and then president of two steamship companies, as secretary-treasurer of a Wilmington [6] lumber company, and as a board member of six local banks. Whitehead was a commissioner of the 1903 St. Louis World's Fair. In 1918–19 he was president of the North Carolina Press Association [8].

In 1885 he married Warren Smith in Winston-Salem. They were the parents of Anna, Wiley, and Thomas Ruffin. Whitehead, a Presbyterian [9], died from a stroke and was buried in Oakdale Cemetery, Wilmington. His obituary noted that he "was one of the best beloved of the citizens of the city."

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