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Portraits of Robert Charlton Reid and Marion Whitelaw Reid

Lynn A. Brock
Cedarville University, brockl@cedarville.edu

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Portraits of
Robert Charlton Reid, 1795-1865
and
Marion Whitelaw Reid, 1804-1895
parents of Whitelaw Reid, 1837-1912
return to the Reid homestead
on Conley Rd. near Cedarville, Ohio



May 7, 2021

Courtesy of the
Cedarville University Archives
Cedarville University
Cedarville, OH 45314

Robert Charlton Reid
-father of Whitelaw Reid-

1795-1865

Courtesy of the Cedarville University Archives



Small white tag with illegible text, likely an inventory or identification label.

Marion Whitelaw Reid
-mother of Whitelaw Reid-

1804-1895

Courtesy of the Cedarville University Archives



Who is Whitelaw Reid?

Whitelaw Reid, born near Cedarville, Ohio, on October 27, 1837, was a newspaper editor and American politician, as well as the author of a history of Ohio in the Civil War among other works. Following his graduation from Miami University in 1856, he worked as a journalist and later as an editor on a newspaper in Xenia, Ohio from 1858 to 1859. During the Civil War, he was an acclaimed correspondent for the Cincinnati Gazette, and in 1868, he joined the New York Tribune editorial staff. He assumed control of that paper in 1872 and married Elizabeth Mills in 1881. Reid was active in Republican Party politics and served as Benjamin Harrison's ambassador to France (1889-1892). He ran for vice-president in 1892 with President Benjamin Harrison, who lost his bid for re-election, and he served as a member of the commission to negotiate a treaty with Spain following the Spanish American War. Reid also served as United States ambassador to Great Britain (1905-1912). Reid was a benefactor of the Cedarville community in a number of ways. The architectural plans for the current brick Opera House, built in 1888, a 1/3 scale model of the Royal Albert Hall in London, were brought to Cedarville from England by Reid, and his portrait hangs above the Opera House stage. In 1905, Reid assisted Cedarville College (now University) in gaining a donation from Andrew Carnegie for the construction of a new library for the College and the community, which opened in 1908. He also donated funds to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Cedarville, Ohio, built in 1902 and now part of Grace Baptist Church, to purchase a Tiffany stained glass window in memory of his father, Robert Charlton Reid. Whitelaw Reid died in London in 1912.

How did the University obtain the portraits?

The portraits of Whitelaw Reid's parents came into the possession of Cedarville University in 1983 as the result of a bequest from the estate of Vera Andrew Harvey, class of 1903. A letter from Vera Andrew Harvey, dated September 5, 1983, to Cedarville Alumni Director Gary Kuhn, describes how her family came into possession of the portraits which hung in the Reid home on Conley Rd. in Cedarville. A copy of the letter follows:

September 5, 1983

Dear Mr. Kuhn,

During one of the many times when we were residents of Cedarville there was quite a sale out at the Reid farm. I did not attend but my husband did and purchased the Reid pictures that now hang in my front room here. For some unknown reason the data that hung on the back of the pictures has been lost. That data gave the initials of Whitelaw's father and stated the fact that he had been for fifty years the presiding elder of the Reformed Church. I feel sure that whatever records there are of that church the initials of Mr. Reid would be given. However one source of such initials could be found on the gravestone; he would undoubtedly been buried in the Massies Creek Cemetery west of town. The name of Whitelaw's mother was Marion, belovedly called Aunt Marion by people in Cedarville. She lived on the Reid farm which adjoined my grandmother's farm; the two were great friends.

After the purchase of these pictures, with the lovely Florentine frames, and overture was made for the purchase of these by the Greene Co. Historical Assoc. - I believe this was the name. Fortunately my husband paid no attention to the overture. Had they been there when the tornado struck, April 3, 1974, they would not now be hanging in my home.

I have some scattered memories of Cedarville events. I attended the funeral of Marion Reid, stood in the lines bordering the gravel walk down which the stately and handsome President McKinley walked to his car in the procession formed to go the cemetery. I lived in the age when there were handsome pullman cars. These travelled without stops from city to city. There was only one stop ever made in Cedarville. When the residents

heard the train stop they paused in awe and watched the carriage go by driven by Mr. Conley and glimpsed Whitelaw going out to the farm to see his mother. Mr. Reid had no associates in Cedarville. He stayed only overnight and no one had any conversation with him. Mr. and Mrs. Conley were devoted to Mrs. Reid and lived with her in the mansion still standing. I am not sure about who purchased the farm which was sold, I believe, at the sale Mr. Harvey attended. The farmhouse became the palatial residence it now is. I am under the impression that the residence was an addition to the house already standing there.

Sharon Collins, my secretary and reader, was good enough to copy the information found in the Encyclopedia of American Biography, edited by John A. Garraty, concerning Whitelaw Reid, which I am enclosing. There are some noticeable omissions in this article. The name of Whitelaw's wife is not mentioned. I believe her fortune was made during the Gold Rush to California. At least this was the impression in Cedarville. Another omission is the names of the children. My impression is that the publishing of the New Tribune was carried on by Whitelaw's son whose name I do not know. I cannot understand why the son was not at the sale of the personal things. Those beautiful Florentine frames and pictures surely should have remained in the family. The frames could have been purchased in Florence about 100 years ago or longer. There must have been many other possessions of great value that the family would like to keep. I believe Whitelaw had only one child but do not know for sure.

I note in the article that I am sending you that Xenia is listed as his birthplace. I cannot understand this. However, it could be when the mail routes were established the Reid farm was located in Xenia township. I cannot conceive of anybody from Xenia ever moving to Cedarville. I know Grandmother never sent any mail from Xenia. Important as Xenia was there was only one train stopped on the Pennsylvania and that was in Cedarville. Trains were stopped in Xenia to transfer them.

to the main division of the Pennsylvania railroad.

I do not want to detract in any way from the glory of Xenia but I do want the celebrity of Cedarville preserved.

From Mr. Conley I learned that Marion Reid was a Whitelaw. That accounts for the name Whitelaw. I believe Mr. Conley thought they came from the east, Marion and her husband. I imagine Reid is a Scotch name.

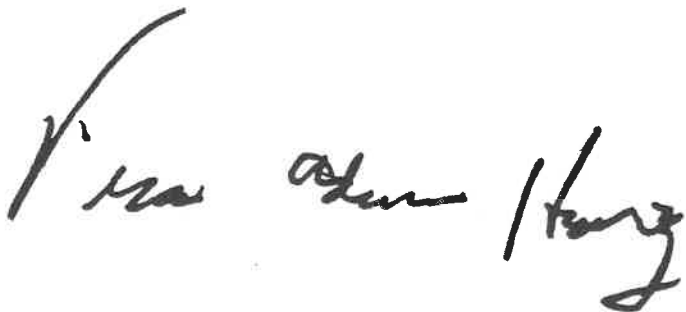
I trust these memories may some way be of help to you.

The pictures in their frames are now bequeathed to Cedarville College. I think it more appropriate for Cedarville to have them. I am sure you will be glad to put them in an appropriate place.

My lawyer, Paul McCreight, will be here in a few days with a notoriety to make the bequest final.

Most of my friends think these frames are too valueable to ship. Will you please arrange to take them over in a car well packed with blankets and materials so that the frames will not be damaged. I want to keep the pictures and frames here as long as I am here. You will be notified when the time comes to take back to Cedarville.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Wm. Adam Harg". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Sincerely,".

