

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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PHILLIP I. BRUST 1879 - 1942

“What makes a man noble? ... something in passion which is special though not conscious ... a sense of heat in things which for others are cold; a preception of values for which no estimate has been established; ... a courage that claims no homage; a self-sufficiency which is super-abundant and unites men and things. --Nietzsche

Phillip I. Brust was born in Germany and emigrated to the United States as a young boy with his parents. His family first located in Rochester but in the early 1890's chose Medina for their home. Phillip attended the Medina High School and at an early age became employed by George L. Owens in the clothing and custom tailoring business. At the age of 19 in 1898 he opened his own clothing and tailoring shop at the corner of Main and Center Streets in Medina where he continued in business for the rest of his life. He later set up two more clothing stores, one in Gasport and the other in Lyndonville. At the Medina shop he became well-known for his ability to pattern, cut and sew some of the finest men's suits in the area. He employed as many as twelve people at one time. In 1899 he married Mary Ryan and moved to North Avenue in Medina where they resided until his death. Seven of their children are still living including: Grace, Harold, Loretta, Edward, Geraldine, Gertrude and John.

During Phillip Brust's life time he always took a very active interest in civic and political affairs. He had a special interest in the local volunteer fire department and at the age of twenty-three was elected president of the Western New York Volunteer Firemen's Association. For many years he was a Republican Committeeman and was a close friend and follower of Senator Irving L'Hommedieu of Medina. In 1907 he was elected to the Medina Village Board of Trustees and served through 1909. He was a charter member of Council 651 of the Knights of Columbus and served in various offices culminating in his election to the office of Grand Knight for 1908-09. He always supported local sports and became a key figure in their promotion. In 1921 President Warren G. Harding appointed Phillip Brust, Postmaster in Medina, an office in which he served until 1926.

Upon his death in 1942 the Journal Register ran an editorial in testimony to him from which some excerpts are included here. “Phil Brust ... belonged to a generation who knew Medina thoroughly. There was no phase of community endeavor that did not hold his attention. He was energetic. It was like Phil Brust and his generation who engendered community growth. He was part of a long line of men whose names are familiar in the pages of Medina's history, who lifted the village out-of-the-commonplace and gave it deserved recognition.”

I would only add that it was men of Phillip Brust's caliber, who really have made America great. His tenacity and ambition as an immigrant in starting a business at the early age of nineteen is a marvel indeed. Surely there is an example set here worthy of the attention of today's teenagers.