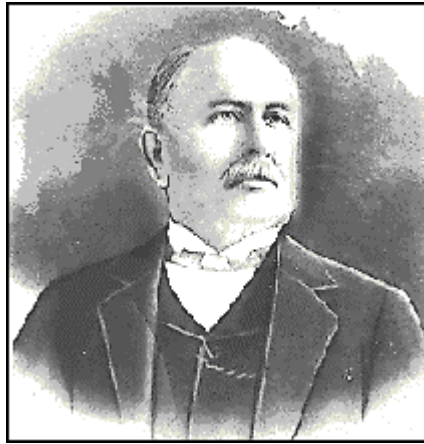


**The Life of MW Mann Page**

**Grand Master of Masons in VA, 1894**



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Mann Page was born April 21, 1835 at Shelly Plantation in Gloucester Co., VA to father Thomas Nelson Page and mother Juliana Randolph. The Page family had long been one of the most prominent in VA, going back to the earliest days of the colony.

The Page lineage in Virginia began with the arrival of Colonel John Page at Jamestown in 1650. Col. Page was a prominent founder of Middle Plantation, which was later renamed Williamsburg. His grandson, Mann Page I, was educated at Eton in England and became prominent in VA politics. His plantation, called Rosewell, was built in Gloucester Co. (next door to Shelly Plantation where our Mann Page was born) and when it was completed it was said to be the grandest home in all of VA, including the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg. It was such a large and spectacular place that it practically bankrupted several generations of the Page family before it burned in 1916. (Shelly Plantation, where Mann Page was born, burned in 1883.) The ruins of Rosewell are still very impressive and can be visited in Gloucester Co. today.

The grandson of Mann Page I was John Page (1744-1808), who also lived at Rosewell and became Governor of VA. John Page graduated from the College of William and Mary in 1763, where he became a close friend of Thomas Jefferson, and the two exchanged a great deal of correspondence through the years. Jefferson courted (unsuccessfully) John Page's sister, and it is said that Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence while he was visiting his friend John Page at Rosewell.

Page served under George Washington in an expedition during the French and Indian War. He was a delegate to the state constitutional convention in 1776. He also served during the Revolutionary War as a Colonel in the Virginia state militia, raising a regiment from Gloucester County and supplementing it with personal funds.

Page was also involved in politics. He became the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia and served 1776-1779. He was then a member of the Virginia House of Delegates 1781-1783 and 1785 - 1788. Page served four terms in the United States Congress and reelected to the Second and Third Congresses, and to the Fourth as a Republican. Overall, he was Congressman from March 4, 1789 to March 3, 1797.

After his terms in Congress, he was again a member of the Virginia House of Delegates in 1797, 1798, 1800, and 1801. He became the Governor of Virginia in 1802 and served to 1805. After being governor, he was appointed United States commissioner of loans for Virginia and held office until his death in Richmond, Virginia on October 11, 1808. He was interred in St. John's Churchyard in Richmond.

Governor Page was quoted by George W. Bush in his inaugural address in 2001. Writing to his friend Jefferson shortly after the Declaration of Independence was published, Page said of the Declaration and the Revolution: "We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?"

Gov. John Page's son was also named Mann Page, and he was the grandfather of our Mann Page. He lived from 1766 to 1813 and was a member of Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4. His wife was Elizabeth Nelson, whose father, Thomas Nelson, built the Nelson House, which still stands in Yorktown. Nelson was a Governor of VA, a General in the Revolutionary War and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was our Mann Page's great-grandfather.

As I said earlier, the Mann Page who our lodge is named after was born April 21, 1835 at Shelly Plantation in Gloucester Co., VA to father Thomas Nelson Page and mother Juliana Randolph. His father died in October that same year, and his mother went to live with relatives in Cumberland Co., VA. On the 1850 census we find Mann Page, 15, living with his mother on the Cumberland Co. farm of her uncle, George Harrison. George Harrison was descended from Benjamin Harrison, who was another signer of the Declaration and who built Berkeley Plantation in Charles City Co..

According to the Librarian for the Grand Lodge of VA, Mann Page "...was educated for a business career, and worked for the commission house with the firm of Randolph and Page until the Civil War."

On April 21, 1861, four days after Virginia seceded from the Union, Mann Page, still living in Cumberland Co., joined Co. F of the 21<sup>st</sup> Virginia Infantry. He would've fit right in to this unit, since the 21<sup>st</sup> was widely known as an elite regiment, composed mainly of men from the 'First Families of VA'. On Feb. 15, 1862 he was promoted to Full Sgt. Major, and on March 15<sup>th</sup> to Captain. Some of the battles that the 21<sup>st</sup> VA participated in were:

Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign  
Antietam  
Gaines Mill  
Wilderness  
Cold Harbor  
Petersburg

Another battle that we know Mann Page was in was the battle of Cedar Mountain, which was fought August 9, 1862, near Gordonsville, VA in Culpeper Co.. One of the best books on that battle was written by historian Bob Krick, called "Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain", and Krick mentions Mann Page by name:

"Another survivor from the regiment was Adjutant Mann Page, who had started the war in Company F. Page had a close call. A Federal soldier gathered him in as a prisoner and was threatening "to blow the damned rebel's brains out" at the moment that a nearby Confederate managed to finish capping his musket and shoot the Federal dead. Page was captured again almost at once and again escaped."

Toward the end of the war he worked on the staff of Gen. Jubal Early. He served honorably in the 21<sup>st</sup> until the end of the war, and he was known as "Major Mann Page"

for the rest of his life. He was badly wounded in the war and found after the surrender that his wound did not permit him to do office work.

Another plantation owned by Mann Page's mother's uncle George Harrison was Lower Brandon, which still stands in Prince George Co. . Lower Brandon is a very old and historic plantation, and was built around 1712 by Col. Nathaniel Harrison. In 1867, Mann Page moved to Lower Brandon and became the plantation manager, and he was to stay there for the rest of his life. Robert E. Lee was a close relative of the Harrisons, and he stayed at Lower Brandon for a few days in 1870, and I'm sure Mann Page must have showed him around the farm while he was there.

He was mentioned in the 1888 edition of 'The Homemaker' magazine , which in an article about Lower Brandon plantation, said:

“There are 7000 acres in the estate as at present, 800 of which are in admirable cultivation under the skillful management of Major Mann Page, Mrs. Harrison's near relative, who has been a member of her household for twenty-one years.”

Mann Page was married for the first and only time in 1888, when he was 53 years old, to Catherine (Kate) Crane. They had no children. He was a Democrat and served in the Virginia Legislature in 1875 and was nominated in 1883 for State Senator. He was a member of the Episcopal church for over thirty years, and served as vestryman and treasurer of the parish of Martin-Brandon and Southwark.

He became very active in the Farmers Alliance of Virginia, which was sort of a union for farmers, and was a very powerful and influential group in the 1890's. In 1894 he became the President of the National Farmers Alliance, and there was talk that Mann Page would run for Governor of VA for the Populist party, but in the end he refused to be a candidate.

He was a member of Brandon Lodge No. 192, located at Brandon Church, in Disputanta in Prince George County. This Lodge was chartered in December 1875 but surrendered its charter February 1945. We don't know his degree dates because their records were not turned over to Grand Lodge when the Lodge went dark. He first appears on the rosters of Brandon Lodge in 1876. He was Master in 1880 and 1881 and again in 1886, 1887 and 1888.

He was installed as Grand Master of Masons of Virginia in December, 1893 and served until December, 1894. He was asked to serve a second term, but declined. Here are some of the high points from his outgoing address to the Grand Lodge, as summarized in the Grand Lodge Proceedings of 1894 :

-he reported peace, harmony and general Masonic prosperity, notwithstanding the financial depression through which VA had been passing

-he made a strong appeal for more general support of the Masonic Home, and recommended, if necessary, an increase of Grand Lodge dues to provide annually for its support.

-he reported that he presided over the dedication of the monument to the mother of George Washington, in Fredericksburg, VA on May 10, 1894., and that among those present were the Governor of VA, the President of the United States, the Vice President, and several Justices of the Supreme Court.

-he reported that he had granted nine dispensations for new lodges

-he summarized several of his decisions. Some of these were:

-that it shall be considered unmasonic conduct to publish a criticism of any Lodge officer in a newspaper or magazine. Instead, all complaints should be directed through the proper Masonic channels.

-he decided that the suspension of a Brother who holds dual membership by one of his lodges for non-payment of dues, suspends him from membership in all of his lodges

MW Page died May 28, 1904 and is buried in Hollywood Cemetery, in Richmond. For many years the members of Mann Page Lodge made a pilgrimage to his grave on Memorial Day to place flowers, and this might be a good tradition to begin again.

In conclusion, Mann Page was born into a prominent and wealthy family, but was not satisfied to live off his family's reputation. According to the Grand Lodge Librarian, "He was described as a Virginia gentleman of the old school - frank, open-hearted, kind, considerate, a true patriot, worthy citizen, honorable, and a faithful and devoted husband." He served honorably and courageously in the War Between the States, was a successful farmer of a large plantation for 40 years, and was a well-respected Mason and Grand Master, and we should be proud to have him as our Lodge's namesake.