

Page Was Famous Journalist



PAGE TOMB — This is the tomb of Ambassador Walter Hines Page in Old Bethesda Cemetery near Aberdeen.

(Continued From Page 6)
The News and Observer, folded the Chronicle into the better paper, and established for himself, his sons, and his grandsons leadership in North Carolina journalism.

Page moved back to New York and hired out as an editorial writer for the Brooklyn Union at \$1,800 a year. He had a few more things to say to North Carolina. From Brooklyn he sent Daniels the celebrated "Mummy Letters," a sort of postscript assault on the state's "mummified" leadership. Daniels printed them for two reasons: (1) they were good; and (2) they were free.

Besides writing for the Union and Daniels, Page turned out political and literary notes for the Nation and Harper's Weekly. In 1887 he shifted to the New York Post. Then he said goodbye to newspapering and joined Forum, a monthly review, as business manager; soon he was back in his element as editor, and it wasn't long before he was in charge of the whole enterprise, in which he acquired a substantial interest. But he lost a move to raise the editorial budget by going public with the magazines and pulled out—seven more years down the drain.

Not quite. For Walter Hines Page had made himself a highly regarded editor. The Atlantic Monthly quickly established him as the nation's most prestigious.

He stripped the Atlantic of its New England-whalebone corset, honed its prose, and enlarged its focus. Woodrow Wilson, who had followed him to Johns Hopkins and became president of Princeton University, was among his favorite contributors.

Still, Page felt unfulfilled. He believed, no doubt from his father's and brothers' examples in the Carolina Sandhills, that he ought to be in business for himself. At last he took the right plunge. He and F.N. Doubleday organized Doubleday, Page and Company, book publishers. His father died that year—1899. Among the old gentleman's last acts was to turn over to Walter \$10,000 of stock in a Raleigh bank.

Doubleday, Page published four magazines to complement its books, notably The World's Work, which Page edited. High honors came to him—membership on the Southern

Education Board, the General Education Board, the International Health Commission, the Country Life Commission. He was social, witty, and urbane. Two books bore his name, a collection of essays and a statement of his publishing record and creed; a third, a novel entitled "The Southerner," he signed "Nicholas Worth." He lived comfortably in Englewood, N.J., with his wife and their three sons and a daughter.

Appointed Ambassador
Page's early support of Woodrow Wilson led to his appointment in 1913 by the newly inaugurated President Wilson as Ambassador to the Court of St. James. The British were pleased with his personality and delighted with his pro-British politics as World War I threatened. But he didn't have the sort of money his post required. He tried to resign in 1914. Mr. Wilson supplemented his salary with privately-raised funds to keep him.

The President came to regret that. Weary at last of Page's hawkishness, he said to Josephus Daniels, who had departed Raleigh to be Secretary of the Navy, "I have reached the conclusion that Walter Page is the damndest fool we ever appointed. Don't you agree with me?" Daniels did not. He conceded that Page answered more to the

British Foreign Office than to the Administration he was supposed to represent. But he admired Page—and believed anyway that Wilson didn't mean all he said.

Upon the resolution of Page's differences with the President by Wilson's call at last for a declaration of war, the Ambassador found himself painfully at odds with his brother Robert, who was a member of the North Carolina Congressional delegation.

Representative Page had supported Wilson's efforts to maintain neutrality. But when Wilson found war to be inevitable and maneuvered for a declaration placing the United States on the Allied side, Page balked. As the Pages' father had opposed the Civil War, this son wished to stay out of the war sweeping Europe.

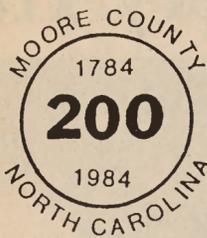
Back in his North Carolina district, Page encountered criticism. Among his critics was his able and influential brother Henry. Sharp messages from home "cut him to the quick," Daniels wrote in "The Wilson Era" (1941). Page announced immediately that he would not run again. Daniels, ranking him first among North Carolina congressmen, urged him to vote his convictions and "remain in Congress, where, as the most influential member of the Appropriations Committee, he could render great service."

But Robert Page would not

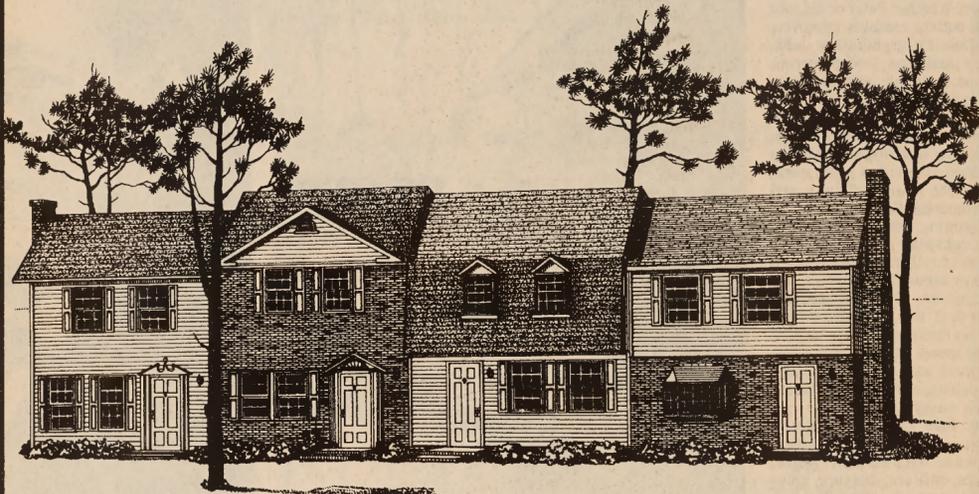
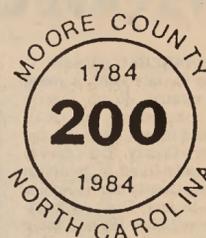
change his mind. When the war showdown came on April 2, 1917, he had left Congress. (The House vote was 373-50, the Senate vote 82-6.) Daniels continued: "Afterwards, when there was need for the appointment of an able man at the head of the Farm Bank for the Carolinas, I urged the President to name Page, the fittest man for the position. He would not do so, saying that at a critical time Page had failed, adding, 'Suppose all had done likewise in that critical period!'"

Ambassador Page's health broke under his wartime labors in London. He resigned in September 1918, and one last time came home. He reached Pinehurst, where he had a house, on December 12, a month and a day after the war ended. His son Frank carried him from the train. Nine days later he died, aged 63. He was buried in the Old Bethesda churchyard.

In one of his Mummy Letters, Walter Hines Page wrote: "No candid man who has seen the world and knows the people of any part of it, will deny that the people of North Carolina are good folks—in morals, in capability, in good-heartedness—as the sun shines on... Go down into Moore County among the Macs. Any man who has seen those people admires, honors, and even reveres them." Among those Macs he sleeps.



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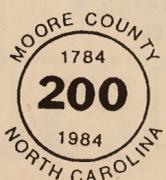
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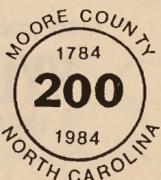
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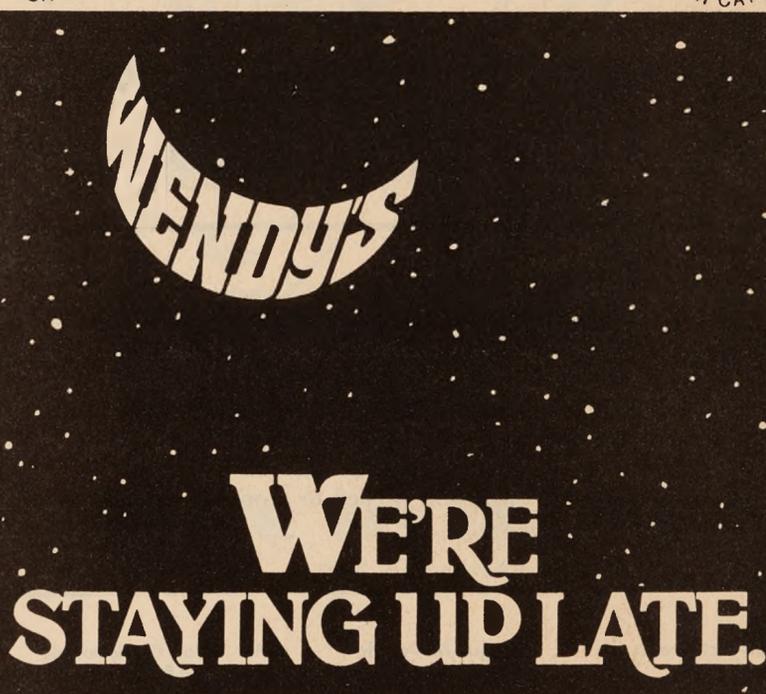
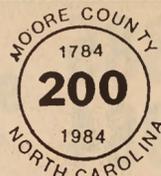


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