

A Guide to the Papers of Thomas Nelson Page, 1878-1923

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1878-1923

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Descriptive Summary

Accession number

7581-m

Language

English

Physical Characteristics

This collection consists of 290 items.

Repository

Special Collections, University of Virginia Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

See the [University of Virginia Library's use policy](#).

Acquisition Information

This collection was purchased on 1990 January 4.

Preferred Citation

Papers of Thomas Nelson Page, Accession #7581-m, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

Scope and Content Information

This collection of 290 items, 1878-1923, and n.d., consists mainly of letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page (1867-1888), the daughter of Charles and Sarah (Seddon) Bruce. Charles Bruce was originally from Halifax County, Virginia. Sarah Seddon was the youngest sister of his brother-in-law, the Honorable James A. Seddon. They resided at "Staunton Hill" in Charlotte County, Virginia after their marriage. The material in this collection relates chiefly to Annie and her family, as well as to Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922), her husband, and his family, of Oakland Plantation, Hanover County, Virginia.

Most of the letters are from Thomas Nelson Page to Annie throughout their courtship and marriage, from 1883 to 1888. The letters are principally love letters, but they also contain information about his literary career and legal practice in Richmond with Thomas Nelson Carter, his cousin. A letter of March 1, 1885 mentions James G[illespie]Blaine (1830-1893), [Grover] Cleveland (1837-1908); hearing Mark Twain and [George Washington] Cable (1844-1925) read; seeing the opera "Falka"; and political musings. A March 24, 1885 letter mentions a meeting with a Mr. [Charles?] Scribner, a publisher in New York, and a publishers' dinner where he met other authors, including [William Henry] Bishop (1847-1928), H[enry]C[uyler]Bunner (1855-1896), and George Parsons Lathrop (1851-1898), Nathaniel Hawthorne's son-in-law; a program from "'Mark Twain" Cable Readings.' On March 31, 1885, he discusses submitting his book to [Edward Livermore] Burlingame (1848-1922) and being asked to revise it, and mentions [Richard Watson] Gilder (1844-1909) in connection with the book. In letters from April 4 to July 30, 1885, he mentions the progress he is making on a story, revealed in later letters as "Meh Lady". There are similar mentions of stories-in-progress throughout his correspondence with Annie. A May 6, 1885 letter discusses his law practice and refers to two cases. In his June 25, 1885 letter, he refers to a trip to New York where he tried a case; discusses a visit to Scribner and Sons; mentions a novel, *Across the Chasm*, by a Virginia woman author, [Julia Magruder (1854-1907)]; and mentions a visit to Mrs. [Sophia M'Ilvaine Bledsoe] Herrick's (1837-1919). He also mentions that other people have political aspirations for him in letters of September 2, 1885 and July 22, 1887. On October 8, 1885, he mentions meeting President Cleveland in Washington, D. C. An October 10, 1885 letter mentions an earthquake in Richmond, but does not give many details. Letters of November 7 and 14, 1885 mentions his practice and some cases. Page attended the University of Virginia in 1873, and a letter dated November 29, 1885, refers to his work on the school newspaper at the University. The same letter also expresses his self-doubt and refers to an editorial in *Sunday Statement* mentioning himself along with [George Washington] Cable and Joel Chandler Harris. From these letters, we also get some glimpse of social life in Virginia. In letters dated December 16, 23, 24, and 27, 1885 to Annie, Page mentions dinner parties and other social occasions. Throughout 1885, he discusses his works-in-progress, *Unc' Edinburg*, *Meh Lady*, and *Red Rock*.

A letter of January 19, 1886 mentions H[enry]C[uyler]Bunner. On February 2, he mentions encounters with [Richard Watson] Gilder, [Henry Mills] Alden (1836-1919), and Howard [Randolph] Bayne (1851-1933). A letter of February 13, 1886 mentions Alden, [Montgomery] Schuyler (1843-1914), and Charles Scriber (1854-1930). On February 24, 1886, he mentions the indictment of two men from creditors' corporations. On April 1, 1886, he discusses his comparisons to [George Washington] Cable and [Mary Noailles] Murfree (1850-1922) as defender of the "Old South." Both Annie and Thomas seem to have been prone to illnesses. Annie's were usually concerned with her eyes, as mentioned in an April 3, 1886 letter, and later in the correspondence. Page mentioned being forced to take a break from working and writing in order to recover from malaria in two letters, dated April 30 and May 13, 1886. On May 15, 1886, he mentions *Meh Lady* being published in *The Century* soon. Letters of May 27 and 28 mention [William] Gordon McCabe (1841-) and John C[odman]Ropes (1836-1899). Letters of June 3 and 4 mention *Meh Lady*, *Marse Chan*, and *Unc' Edinburg*.

A July 7, 1887 letter mentions Jim [James Douglas] Bruce (1862-1923). There is mention of Charles Scribner in a July 8, 1887 letter. On July 22, 1887, a meeting to appoint delegates to the Roanoke Convention is mentioned. Page's letters also describe his search for a house in Richmond (July 26 and August 4 and 7, 1887). In an August 12, 1887 letter, Page mentions signing a contract for a house which he describes in

some detail. Page also mentions family servants, "Old Balla" and Tildy, in letters dated July 10 and August 7, 1887.

Letters from July 15, 1886 and December 7, 1887 mention some of Page's speaking engagements. The second one mentioned was at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. While in Nashville, he did several public readings of his stories, and he describes how he was received (December 8, 1887 letter). In an October 18, 1888 letter, he mentions a trip to Charlottesville and a visit to the University where he saw Professors [William Elisha] Peters (1829-1906) and [Maximilian] Schele de Vere (1820-1898). He also mentions his fraternity, Delta Psi, and having read some of his works for an audience there.

An undated letter, August 5, [post 1886?], mentions an accident on the C & O Railroad the previous night, giving some details about the accident. Another undated letter, April 9, mentions his desire to write a novel about the Old South to set the record straight.

The next group of letters are from family members and friends to Anne. Letters from Ellen (Bruce) Baylor, Annie's sister, contain family matters and references to local people and events. A letter of August 5, 1887, mentions the tobacco harvest at Staunton Hill.

There are six letters from Charles Bruce to his daughter Annie from 1883 to 1887. The earlier letters are filled with moral instructions for Annie as well as fatherly concern. In a January 20, 1887 letter, Bruce mentions an "African village beyond the stable" at Staunton Hill, probably referring to the quarters of servants and workers there.

Mary (Anderson) Bruce wrote several letters to Annie, her sister-in-law. Three letters dated June 26, 30, and July 4, 1886 mention Annie's engagement and wedding plans. Letters of February 23 and March 22, 1888 describe some of her trip to New Orleans, Louisiana; St. Louis, Missouri; and, St. Paul, Minnesota.

There are several letters, 1886-1888, in the collection to Annie from her mother, Sarah (Seddon) Bruce. They mention family matters and local happenings. She corresponded with Annie and Thomas while they were in Europe following their marriage.

Letters from Charles Washington Coleman, Jr. to Annie mention his visits to Staunton Hill as a friend of Annie and Douglas, one of Annie's brothers. He seems to have been a potential suitor for Annie.

There are four letters from Nellie and Meade Minnigerode to Annie. All of these were written from Europe and describe her experiences in Brussels, Amsterdam, and other cities. Nellie spent at least a month in Paris. A letter of December 7, 1886, from Paris, discusses her experiences in Amsterdam, Netherlands and Berlin, Germany; describes travel in Europe through Germany, Austria, and France; and, mentions the Crown Prince and stag suppers. A June 23, 1887 letter, from London, mentions the birth of their son, Meade (1887-1967).

There are several letters from Elizabeth Burwell (Nelson) Page, Annie's mother-in-law. Most of her letters were written from "Oakland," the Page family home. Letters of March 3 and July 9, 1886 mention her brother, R[obert]Nelson of Charlottesville. On March 16, 1886, she mentions "old Balla" and "others of his race," and some consumptive cases. A letter of April 24, 1886 mentions Hugh Thomas Nelson (1805-) of Charlottesville treating Thomas Nelson Page's illness. She mentions that the rivers in their area had overflowed and prevented travel in a July 9, 1886 letter. She mentions Dr. Hugh Thomas Nelson of Charlottesville in an April 24, 1886 letter. "Old Balla" is mentioned again in one of Elizabeth's letters (March 16, 1888).

Letters from various family members span the period 1878 to 1887 and include letters from Annie's brothers to their mother, letters to Annie from Rosewell Page, and letters to Annie from her cousins. Included are: December 1, 1878, from Charles Morelle Bruce; October 3, 1886, from J. Douglas Bruce, Berlin, Germany, concerning life there; and, April 18 and June 29, 1887, from J. Douglas Bruce, describing his visit to Vienna, Austria and Prague, Czechoslovakia, in detail. On November 3, 1887, Rosewell Page wrote concerning a speech about the organization of a railroad company from Danville, Virginia and Henderson, North Carolina. Miscellaneous letters covering the period 1882-1888 are from friends and acquaintances to Anne. They include receipts and details from Annie's wedding preparations. There is a letter, April 15, 1887, from Amelie Rives (1863-1945), in response to sympathy for her cousin Alice's death. Mary Gordon Pryor Rice wrote on July 28 and August 9, 1887, discussing Tolstoi and Amelie Rives. An undated letter from M. P. Myers, mentions Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) and women's rights.

Miscellaneous letters to Thomas Nelson Page, 1884 to 1887, are from friends, family, and business and literary contacts. On August 24 and 25, James R. Osgood of Harper and Brothers, London, wrote, mentioning [James] Brander Matthews (1852-1929). In a September 5, 1886 letter, William W. Archer mentions Virginia's lack of literary giants, discusses Thomas' literary contributions and compares some writers to him, such as Virginius Dabney (1835-1894) and Mary Greenway McClelland (1853-1895). There are two letters, September 9 and 16, 1886, from Elizabeth Burwell (Nelson) Page, chiefly about personal and family news. On September 13, 1886, E[dward]L[ivermore]Burlingame of *Scribner's Magazine*, assuring Thomas that they want stories from him. There is also a letter, July 13, 1887, from Thomas N. Carter, onboard R.M.S. "Britannic."

This collection was a gift to the Library from Mrs. William Maury Hill of Richmond, Virginia through Mrs. James H. Scott, Jr. of Charlottesville, Virginia, on January 4, 1990. There are no restrictions.

Contents List

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Box 2

**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from her father, Charles
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Box 2

**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from Mary (Anderson)
Bruce 1886-1888**

Box 2

**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from her mother, Sarah
(Seddon) Bruce 1886-1888**

Box 2

**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from her brother,
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**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from Charles
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**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from Nellie and Meade
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Box 2

**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from her mother-in-law,
Elizabeth Burwell (Nelson) Page 1886-1888**

Box 2

**Letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page from various family
members, and related 1878-1887**

Box 2

Miscellaneous letters to Annie Seddon (Bruce) Page 1882-1886

Box 2

Extent 2 folders

Miscellaneous letters to Thomas Nelson Page 1884-1887

Box 2

Miscellaneous papers 1882-1923, n.d.

Box 2

Photograph of Thomas Nelson Page and Henry Field n.d.

Box 2

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