

Walter Hines Page Biography

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Biography

The American journalist and diplomat Walter Hines Page (1855-1918) edited several distinguished periodicals and served as ambassador to Great Britain during World War I.

Born in Cary, N.C., on Aug. 15, 1855, Walter Hines Page was educated at Trinity College (now Duke), Randolph-Macon College, and Johns Hopkins University (1871-1878), concentrating his study on the Greek classics. He began his journalistic career in St. Joseph, Mo., as editor of the *Gazette* (1880-1881). He then published a series of articles based on travels in the South and the West, some appearing in the *New York World*.

In 1883 Page returned to the South, hoping to help modernize the region, but his editorial advocacy of social and political reforms in the *State Chronicle* of Raleigh, N.C. (1883-1885), aroused local animosity and he went back to New York. As editor of the *Forum* (1891-1895), *Atlantic Monthly* (1898-1899), and the *World's Work* (1900-1913), he became known as a leader of reform. He helped develop the publishing house of Doubleday, Page and Company in 1899.

Page was one of the earliest political supporters of Woodrow Wilson, and this led to his appointment as ambassador to Great Britain in 1913. He rapidly won the respect and affection of British leaders. After World War I broke out, however, he became estranged from the president. Wilson was an assiduous exponent of neutrality and mediation; Page, convinced of Germany's war guilt, favored diplomatic and economic assistance to the Allies. Occasionally his dealings with British statesmen blunted Wilson's policies. Page strongly criticized the president's measured response to the *Lusitania* sinking of 1915 and opposed the peace mission of Edward M. House in 1916.

When the United States entered the war in 1917, Page immediately urged extensive aid for the Allies, particularly naval and financial assistance. Pleased that his country had finally taken steps he deemed essential, Page remained critical and suspicious of Wilson. In Washington his extensive correspondence was generally dismissed as Anglophile propaganda. Plagued by ill health, the ambassador stayed loyally at his post until August 1918, when he could no longer carry on. He died that year in Pinehurst, N.C., on December 21.

Page wrote two books dealing with his lifelong interest in southern development, *The Rebuilding of Old Commonwealths* (1902) and the novel *The Southerner* (1909), and a third considering his profession, *A Publisher's Confession* (1905).