

Mannsfield
Near Fredericksburg
Spotsylvania County
Virginia

HABS NO. VA-122

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PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORIC WRITTEN AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

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Historical Data
on
"Mannsfield"

It is a generally accepted fact that it was the fourth Mann Page, of that illustrious family of Pages who built Mannsfield.

His coming to Fredericksburg, the erection of this estate and his subsequent marriage to Mary Tayloe of Mount Airy are all believed to have taken place between 1770 and 1776.

When it passed from the possession of the Pages to that of the Bernards is unknown. It did however belong to the latter family at the time of the War Between the States when it was destroyed by fire. Since this time it has never been rebuilt but its remains now belong to Mr R.A. James of Fredericksburg Virginia.

P.S. Please note that a more complete report on the historical background of this estate is being prepared by the historical staff. Until such a report is ready I have included this sketch.

S.M.B. -- May 18th 1936

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTIONS AND OBSERVATIONSGENERAL

The stately pile that once was "Mannsfield" now stands in ruins beside the bank of the Rappahannock on the Tidewater Trail, two miles south of Fredericksburg. Once a stone-curbed, brick-paved road formed the avenue of approach to this fine estate. Today neither the brick pattern nor curb detail is discernible - only vague descriptions by local historians and occasional fragments exist to substantiate their statements.

Because the area surrounding the house has been cultivated for many years, it is impossible to ascertain whether or not a turn around once fronted the house. The terraces on the east side, and stone steps leading therefrom to a lower river garden and stone vaulted spring, are the only vestiges of the formal garden that must have at one time surrounded the mansion.

The counterpart of this pretentious estate and nearest rival in the field of the fine stone houses of Old Virginia is Mount Airy. Local tradition has it that Mann Page, who built Mannsfield, promised his bride that her new home would be as fine or finer than her ancestral home which was this same Mount Airy. These ruins bear mute testimony to the success of his architect.

It is impossible to say from examination of the remaining architectural evidence whether the main building, covered passageways, or the dependencies were built first. It is probable, however, that the passageways were a later addition or at least an afterthought, for on the north end of the main building a sealed break in the walls appears to have been originally intended for another set of exterior steps similar to those on the south end.

It is obvious from a study of the plan that this would have interfered with the present passageway. The southern passageway has been narrowed at the north end to provide room for exterior cellar steps. It also seems quite logical to assume that one of the flanking dependencies was tenanted by the owner during the construction of the large central building.

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This latter building was approached by a flight of stone steps ending in a broad platform probably located just below the first floor level. That the original scheme of the designer was changed is evident from the fact that the two sinkages of the rusticated wall were probably originally intended to be windows and show little or no signs of weathering. This latter fact implies that the platform of the front steps protected this area from the elements.

EXTERIOR
APPEARANCE

On the same rusticated plane near the outer corners the stone does not appear to have been so well protected. It follows that the platform foundations were pierced by some large opening, possibly an arch. A very careful search for balusters and coping was fruitless, although several pieces of moulded nosing were discovered which might logically support the assumption that the steps were so treated.

The stone from this building has reportedly gone into so many local buildings that it is quite possible that most of the carved stone was removed long ago. A very vigorous moulded stone water-table is believed to have surrounded the building and to have been made up of some carved pieces found on an estate near Fredericksburg. Sufficient evidence to justify the inclusion of the details of this stonework in the drawings has not been obtained. Several pieces of carved stone that may have been fragments of stone pilaster caps similar to those at the main entrance of Mount Airy, are shown on the sheets of stone details.

So many pieces of rusticated stone and stone quoins were found near this point that it is quite safe to assume that the central portion of the front was rusticated and had stone quoins on the corners. Whether or not this central projection was crowned with a pediment is a moot question. Assuming that Mount Airy influenced the rest of the building, it is probable that the pediment was also copied.

There are no fragments of carved stone that might be interpreted as being pieces of a stone cornice. Numerous small fragments of what is believed to have been exterior carved stone window architraves, were found. Since no stone detail was located that might be interpreted as forming a sill, it is likely that the architrave carried across the bottom of the window, or that the sills were very simple.

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The many pieces of honed finished ashlar lead one to believe that all other exterior wall surfaces other than the above mentioned rusticated areas were so finished. Several pieces of carved stone discovered throughout the ruins might be indicative of decorative chimney caps. Since no slate was found in any part of the ruins, the roof was probably covered with wood shingles. An unmoulded belt course might have been formed by some of the rusticated or random coursed ashlar.

The plan of the basement is indicative of the symmetrical lay-out of the floors above and reflects the classical tendencies in the great Georgian houses of this era. The stone vaulted room is quite unusual and was probably used for storage of wines and vegetables. This and the south-east room are the only ones that are paved. The vault floor is covered with ordinary brick composed entirely of stretchers laid flat. Why the direction changes in the middle of the floor is subject to conjecture.

THE PLAN

The south-east room was apparently paved with ~~red~~ ~~brick~~ brick tile approximately nine inches square. No evidence exists that the short walls projecting from the dividing partitions were used as fireplaces, such as charred and smoked stone. They apparently served to carry the stone chimneys above. The stone piers in evidence in the east rooms may quite possibly have been duplicated in west rooms - the condition of the ruins prevented the determination of the truth of this assumption.

Since the exterior cellar steps would apparently end in the first floor hall it is logical to assume they came out under the main (first to second floor) stairway, located at the east end of the main hall. Such a plan would be a reverse of the main building at Carters Grove. Because the river front in most buildings of this period was very important, an entrance to the hall must have appeared on that side. It may have been located under the stairway to second floor. Fireplaces on both floors must have been located similarly to chimney bearing walls in the basement.

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Beyond locating the entrances to the stone-flagged covered passageways shown on the plan little conjectural restoration is possible. Steps at the east end of both passageways would have been necessary in order to reach the first floor level of the main building. Some fenestration would be necessary to light the long passage. Transoms at the doorways would have proved inadequate. It is quite possible that a single window appeared on each side of the door on both wall faces. Probably a shed roof with wood shingles slanting to the river side protected these connecting units. The exterior walls were probably hone faced random coursed ashlar.

THE
PASSAGeways

The dependencies are practically identical in plan. The variety of hardware found in the south building as well as indications that the rooms here were smaller lead one to believe that this was the kitchen. Certainly the fireplaces have here received more use and the floor composed of odd flagstones and brick is not fine enough for a more pretentious building. Pieces of carved stone coping which may have been a chimney cap were also found in this vicinity. The north dependency must have had a wood floor or was left unfinished for only a dirt floor remains.

THE
DEPENDENCIES

As previously stated the fireplaces here have received little use. The brick pattern in the fireplace back is rather decorative for a kitchen fireplace. It is also safe to assume that these backs would not have withstood the hard use given such fireplaces. The fine stone lintel found here, rusticated to imitate a stone jack arch, would scarcely have been used at a fireplace or door head in a minor dependency such as a kitchen. Although the few pieces of hardware excavated at this point are of little aid in determining the use of this building, a fair hazard may be that it was a guest house.

With the exception of the hard gray stone flags in the passageway floors, the stone throughout was a warm light tan sandstone. Although it is reported by local amateur historians that this stone was quarried from a now deserted quarry close by on the Rappahannock, the stone is

MATERIALS
Stone

more like Aquia Creek stone than any other variety to which it can be compared. The size of some of the pieces of stone found is remarkable - one piece was 1' 0" x 1' 7" x 9' 0". See color chart for shade and pointing detail.

The brick tile found varies between 2" x 8-1/2" x 8-1/2" and 2-1/4" x 9" x 9". The regular brick varies widely in sizes, the two extremes being 2" x 3-1/4" x 7-3/4" and 2-1/2" x 4-5/8" x 9-1/2". The pointing is indistinguishable. Refer to color chart for shades.

Brick

The plaster found in basement of main building was poor, having little lime and carrying water color pigment of shade as shown on chart.

Plaster

Unfortunately no satisfactory descriptions of the other buildings reported to have been here nor evidence of their architectural character was found. That they were numerous is, however, very probable, for the maintenance and attendant responsibilities of so fine an estate must have been tremendous.

Stuart M. Barnette.

STUART M. BARNETTE

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MANNFIELD
Dinwiddie County, Virginia

ADDITIONAL DATA. FROM "THE TIERNAN AND OTHER FAMILIES", PAGE 417.

An army correspondent of the "New York Times" writes, May 9, 1863:

"FREDERICKSBURG presents a most desolate appearance. Nothing has been done to repair the serious injuries inflicted upon the place during the battle of December, 1862. Nearly every prominent building is more or less pock-marked with shot, shell and Minie balls. The tall, costly spire of the Episcopal Church is perforated by seventeen shot holes. Ruins of once elegant residences are seen on every hand.

"THE BERNARD HOUSE, a little below the city, which was used by the United States forces as a hospital during the Battle of December, 1862, has since been burned accidentally.

"The owner of this estate, A. H. H. Bernard, is a wealthy Secessionist, middle-aged, bachelor. Not long after General Franklin's force had crossed, he was detected endeavoring to steal into our lines, and believing that he had been conveying information to the enemy, General Franklin ordered him into durance vile, where he has remained ever since.

"His lordly mansion, built after the English style of architecture, was furnished with everything that wealth could furnish - Damask curtains, Brussels carpets, marble centre tables, elegant mirrors and chandeliers adorned the various apartments.

"There were rare paintings from the Italian masters suspended on the walls; and numerous libraries were found in various parts of the buildings.

"This home and all these adornments are now gone; and their owner is a prisoner in our hands.

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MANNSFIELD

Fredericksburg vicinity, Spotsylvania County, Virginia

Historical Data Relative to Mannsfield,
One of the Ancestral Homes of the
Page Family (Virginia Branch) in America

I. *Genealogy of the Page Family Pertinent to the Subject.

1. John Page of England and Williamsburg - founder of the family in Virginia.

2. His son, Matthew Page of Rosewell, Gloucester County, born in Williamsburg 1659, died Rosewell 1703. He married Mary Mann about 1689.

3. Their son, Mann Page (1), was born in 1691; began building the afterwards famous Rosewell in 1725 and completed it the same year that he died - 1730. He married first, Judith Wormeley, in 1712 who died in 1716 when Mann Page (2) was born. The infant died also and was interred with his mother.

Mann Page (1) married secondly, Judith Carter, in 1718.

4. Their son, Mann Page (3), was born at Rosewell about 1718. He married first, Alice Grymes, in 1743. He married secondly, Anne Corbin Tayloe of Mt. Airy, about 1748.

5. Their son, Mann Page (4), was born at Rosewell, about 1749. He removed to Mannsfield, Spotsylvania County, date unknown. He married, on April 18, 1776, his cousin, Mary Tayloe, of Mt. Airy. He died at Mannsfield in 1781.

6. Their son, Mann Page (5), was born about 1781. He married, but his wife's name is unknown.

7. Their son, Mann Page (6), married Miss Willis of Orange County. If there was any issue of this marriage, it is not known.

* Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia, pp. 51-73.

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Mann Page (4)¹ is the first of the family mentioned as having moved to Mannsfield. According to tradition, he promised Mary Tayloe of Mt. Airy, as an inducement to her acceptance of his marriage proposal, that he would build her a home similar to the one in which she had been reared.² Mary Tayloe was born in 1759 and she married Mann Page of Mannsfield, son of Mann Page of Rosewell, in 1776.³ Since Mann Page (4) was born in 1749 and married Mary Tayloe in 1776, and since he was the first of the family to remove from Rosewell to Spotsylvania,⁴ it follows that it was he who built Mannsfield. From the same data it may be inferred that the mansion was most probably built only a few years prior to his marriage with Mary Tayloe in 1776.

The expense of building and maintaining Mannsfield was apparently more than the family exchequer could bear. Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Philip Mazzei, dated April 24, 1796, stated, "... Our friend M. P. is embarrassed, having lately sold the fine lands he lives on ..."⁵ This information is borne out by a series of mortgages and deeds of trust with which the property was encumbered. The entire estate passed from the family in 1808, during the occupancy of Mann Page(5)⁶

William Bernard of King George County began to acquire the property in 1811. Shortly after that date, he moved to Mannsfield and his descendants owned the plantation until 1903.⁷

Alfred N. Bernard, a son of William Bernard, was living at Mannsfield when General W. B. Franklin's left Grand Division of the Army of the Potomac crossed to the right bank of the Rappahannock on December 12, 1862. During the Battle of Fredericksburg, which followed on the thirteenth, the Mansion

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1. See #5 above.
 2. Tradition in the Tayloe family. Excavations at Mannsfield prove the house to have been constructed on the same plan as Mt. Airy.
 3. Tayloe - Spero Meliora.
 4. The first mention of Mann Page's being in Spotsylvania County is of record 1771. Spotsylvania County Records, Deed Book G, p. 484.
 5. Fort, P. L., (Ed); The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. 8, p. 236. A footnote explains M.P. to be Mann Page.
 6. The break-up in the estate can be traced in the Fredericksburg Corporation Court Records, Deed Books, E, pp 57, 84, 263; C, pp 105, 156; D, pp 238, 328; E, 82, 111; F, p 158.
 7. Spotsylvania County Circuit Court Records, Deed Books, S, p 365; BB, pp 423, 463; LL, p 426; NN, p 61; UU, p 183; AF, p 2; and AQ, p 31.

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was used as a temporary hospital for the Union Corps engaged in the Hamilton's Crossing action. General Franklin set up his headquarters in a nearby grove.⁸

The circumstances surrounding the destruction of the Mansion are unknown. All that can be said in regard to the event is that we know the house served as a hospital for the Union forces on December 13, 1862, and that it was in ruins when artillery units of General Sedgwick's Sixth Corps occupied the adjacent fields in May, 1863, during the Chancellorsville Campaign.⁹

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- 8. Johnson, R. U., and Buel, C. C. (Ed.): Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. III, p 136.
 - 9. Miller, F. T.: The Photographic History of the Civil War, Vol. I p 22.
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 - 5. Miller, F. T.: The Photographic History of the Civil War, Vol. I, New York, 1912
 - 6. One of the Family: Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia, New York, 1883
 - 7. Watson, W. M., (Ed.): Tayloe - Spero Meliora, privately printed, Washington, 1872
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Prepared by Junior Historian O. F. Northington, 1936

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ADDENDUM TO
ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS OF
"MANNSFIELD"

This addendum is supplied in response to inquiries from the chief architect of the National Park Service setting forth the following questions.

(a) Is there any possibility that the rusticated Gate Piers in the old cemetery (on the edge of a negro quarter) could have come from Mannsfield?

There is no available evidence to substantiate such a possibility. Neither the size nor detail of the quoins lend any support to this theory.

(b) Do you believe the quoins found in the north dependency are definitely fireplace trim and not exterior detail?

A minute review of evidence presented by quoins and fragments of quoins lead me to believe that at least one piece of this stone formed part of a door jamb. There are however many fragments burned on only one side and too well preserved to have been exterior trim. These I assumed to be fireplace facing.

(c) What is the nature of the fragments at the Melchers house? A photograph of these would be an addition to the information on Mannsfield and the student could accept or reject the Mannsfield origin.

Included in this addendum is a set of drawings of the profiles of carved stone found on the estate of the late Gari Melchers at Falmouth Virginia. The locations assigned were supplied by Mr Mason Dillon of that city. Mr Dillon states that he helped to remove to remove this stone from Mannsfield and incorporate it in its present surroundings. Referring to profile "B" he states that two sections stood about eight feet apart in the center of the west wall and flanked some sort of an opening.

Mr R.A. James, owner of Mannsfield, verifies the report that Mr Melchers bought much stone from these ruins. He says however that the stone Mr Dillon refers to was a watertable.

Neither of these gentlemen will compromise on their story. I am inclined to believe they both were right. If one report must be discarded I feel the photograph showing the corner of this stone moulding will lend support to Mr Dillons information.


Stuart M. Barnette