

Page, Hubbard Fulton ^[1]

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by E. T. Malone, Jr., 1994

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Hubbard Fulton Page, folk poet, teacher, and composer, was born in northern [Sampson County](#) ^[2] near the old [Harnett County](#) ^[3] community of Averasboro. He was the son of Sion Cephas, a circuit-riding Baptist minister and farmer, and Johnnie Louise West Page. Young Page attended Buies Creek Academy, then taught Greek, Bible, and Latin there in 1902–3. In 1905 he was graduated from [Wake Forest College](#) ^[4]. After this time he returned to school and in 1911 received the master of arts degree from [Harvard University](#) ^[5]. For two academic years (1911–12 and 1912–13) he was assistant professor of English at [Texas Christian University](#) ^[6], where *The Horned Frog*, the student yearbook, referred to him as "fast becoming a poet of renown."

In the summer of 1913 Page returned to North Carolina and taught for three years at Buies Creek Academy, where one of his devoted students was Tar Heel playwright Paul Green, who lived on a nearby farm. From 1916 to 1926 Page served as assistant professor of English at [Texas A&M University](#) ^[7]. He then taught for one year (1927–28) at [Mississippi College](#) ^[8]. In 1930 he went back once again to Buies Creek to teach at [Campbell Junior College](#) ^[9] (formerly an academy), where he remained on the faculty until his retirement in 1947.

Known as an eccentric, Page cared little for appearances—as his rumpled clothing and mop of flaring reddish hair attested. He was sometimes the object of derisive laughter from students or townspeople because of his absent-mindedness or his mannerisms during lectures, from which students slipped away when he continued declaiming long after the bell to end class. On 20 Aug. 1925, at age fifty-one, he married Orilla Ellen Viers, a young woman thirty-one years his junior whom he had met in Florida where she had gone with her parents from West Virginia to pick strawberries. She talked him into returning to Harnett County during the year 1926–27 to farm, a project about which she said afterward "I was sorry I thought of [it]," and he soon resumed his teaching career. They had nine children, the last being born when Page was seventy-one.

In a 1980 interview, Paul Green said that Professor Page had been a major influence on his career. "I don't recall that we ever talked much about drama, except for *Hamlet*, but it was his great enthusiasm for his teaching and for literature that excited me and made me respect him," Green said.

During his lifetime, Page's best-known work was a collection of verse called *Lyrics and Legends of the Cape Fear Country* ^[10], published in 1932. In this volume he set a number of local folktales into verse, paid tribute to occupational types such as riverboat men and lumberjacks, and transcribed the lyrics and tunes of several Black songs and spirituals. The book contains many references to the Highland Scottish heritage of the Upper Cape Fear region. Also, quite a few of the poems are written in Black dialect. A second book of poems, *The Threshold* ^[11], published posthumously in 1963, is largely romantic, sentimental, and reminiscent. Many of its selections deal, once again, with the landscape and people of the [Cape Fear River valley](#) ^[12]. According to Green, most of what Professor Page wrote was imitative verse, patterned after the work of Robert Burns and John Charles McNeil. Page was restricted by his use of rhyme and his images were sometimes incorrect, but he had a very great enthusiasm for his subject matter, Green said, just as he did for his teaching. Page's poetry has been discussed and represented in *Who's Who in American Poets* and in Richard Walser's *North Carolina Poets* ^[13] (1951). A considerable number of his poems remain in manuscript and have never been published. For Campbell he wrote an "Alma Mater," which was used as the college song until the early 1970s.

His children included five sons—Brenton C. (d. 1947), Elmer Fulton (d. 1951), Ronald (of Fayetteville), Fordyce (of Hawaii), and Embert (of Denver, Colo.)—and four daughters—Ellen (m. J. H. Mincey, of Burlington), Edna Lee (m. B. R. Matthews, of Marietta, Ga.), Doris (m. John Lupton, of White Plains, Md.), and Virginia (m. the Reverend Jack W. Robbins, of Sulphur Springs, Tex.).

Page died in his sleep at his home in Buies Creek and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Dunn.

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