

# J. Franklin Little

Senate Page (1910-1912)

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## Preface

by Donald A. Ritchie

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The uniformed pages who sit on the steps around the presiding officer's chair represent an old tradition in the United States Senate. Since [Henry Clay](#) and [Daniel Webster](#) appointed nine-year-old Grafton Hanson as the first page, pages have served in and about the Senate chamber, running errands, carrying messages, sorting papers, filling ink wells and snuff boxes, and doing whatever other tasks were assigned them. Truly children of the Senate, the pages had full run of the Capitol, racing through its corridors, climbing its dome, and even bathing in the marble tubs in its basement. After they grew up, some remained on the staff in higher capacities, and a few were elected to Congress. But for most, their terms as pages were simply unforgettable experiences of their youthful years. "It's having a chance to watch day by day that counts," said one former page. Lyndon Johnson once observed that pages had "a chance to see government without glamour--to learn that ideals alone don't make programs; that dreams do not automatically become reality."

J. Franklin Little served as a Senate page from 1910 to 1912, and as an extra policeman for the Taft and Wilson presidential inaugurations in 1909 and 1913. Born in Guyton, Georgia, Little came to Washington with his parents when he was five years old. His father worked as a clerk in the Census Bureau. Living on Capitol Hill, Little sold newspapers near the Capitol Building, where he caught the attention of Delaware Senator [Henry DuPont](#), who arranged for his appointment as a page. After his stint as a Senate page, Little attended college, served as a captain in the first World War, and was for many years in charge of a clinical laboratory at the Marine Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia. He retired to the Hermitage House in Annandale, Virginia, where he was interviewed in 1983 and gave his reminiscences of events in his life as a page seventy years earlier.

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**About the Interviewer:** Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has taught at the University College of the University of Maryland, George Mason University, and the Northern Virginia Community College, and conducted a survey of automated bibliographical systems for the American Historical Association. He has published several articles on American political and economic history, and a book, *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). He has also served as an officer of both the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR).

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