

Mann, Thomas Nicholson ^[1]

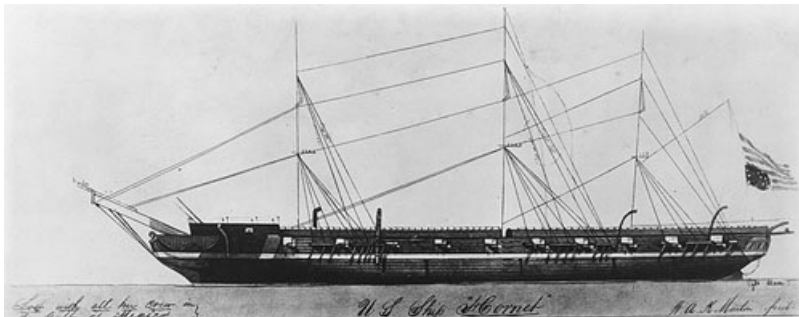
Mann, Thomas Nicholson

by William S. Powell ^[2], 1991; Revised by Jared Dease, Government and Heritage Library, December 2022

29 Dec. 1797–17 July 1824

Thomas Nicholson Mann, lawyer, legislator, and U.S. agent to Guatemala-designate, was born in Nash County ^[3], the son of Allen Mann, a wealthy planter, and his wife, Elizabeth Nicholson. Named for his maternal grandfather, he entered The University of North Carolina ^[4] in 1815 but was suspended following an episode of rowdy behavior by a group of students on 18 Sept. 1816 in support of one of their group who was reprimanded by President Joseph Caldwell ^[5]. Where Mann continued his education is not known, but he became a practicing attorney and occasionally accepted a young man to train in the law. One of his outstanding pupils was Bartholomew F. Moore ^[6]. Mann represented Nash County in the House of Commons ^[7] in the sessions of 1822 and 1823–24 and was a member of the committee on education during both terms. On the death of his father, he inherited all of his father's land on the north side of Swift Creek.; He also inherited the rights to continue enslaving a portion of the people enslaved by his father. His brother, James N., inherited the land on the south side with another portion of the people enslaved by his father.

At the recommendation of senators Nathaniel Macon ^[8] and John Branch ^[9], President James Monroe ^[10] directed Secretary of State John Quincy Adams ^[11] to invite Mann to accept appointment as an informal agent to the region between Colombia, Mexico, and Peru which "appears to have established the separate government of Guatemala." A letter of 21 Apr. 1824 from Adams explained that he was to consider this appointment confidential but that it would involve observing and reporting on conditions in the region so that it could be determined whether the United States should support the new government. At his own initiative Mann discovered something about the dangers he might face including the hazards of travel, the lack of conveniences, and the threat of robbers, yet he agreed to accept the assignment. He was already in Norfolk, Va., prepared to sail as instructed by the secretary of state, when the terms of his employment were agreed upon on 4 July 1824. Mann requested that a young relative be permitted to accompany him and serve as his secretary; this apparently was Samuel L. Arrington, his half brother. On 17 July, aboard the U.S. ship *Hornet* off Old Point Comfort, Mann died suddenly of pulmonary consumption, as tuberculosis was then called.



Sketch of hulls and rigging (not to scale) of the U.S. *Hornet*, by William A.

K. Martin, circa 1843. From the U.S. Naval History and Heritage

Command. Thomas Mann was aboard the *Hornet* when he died.

^[12]Meeting later in the month, members of the Nash County bar, of which B. F. Moore was secretary, adopted resolutions in Mann's honor, mentioning his "unwearied industry, indefatigable research, distinguished talents and correct and honorable deportment." These qualities, it was noted, "acquired for him an early and elevated standing in his profession." Young Mann drew up a will shortly before he left Nash County as he was "about to take a sea-voyage and reside in foreign parts." The land inherited from his family he left to his brother James. Other property was willed to his half brothers Samuel L. and Archibald Arrington and to his half sister Elizabeth A. N. Arrington. For many generations members of the Arrington family used Thomas Mann as given names for their sons.

Mann's successor as U.S. agent to Guatemala, former governor William Miller ^[13] of Warren County ^[14], also died in transit before taking up his post.

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Martin, A. K. ["U.S. Ship Hornet."] Illustration. 1843. U.S. Naval and Heritage Command Photograph. <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-h/hornet3.htm> ^[12] (accessed July 8, 2014).

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