

Manson, Otis Frederick ^[1]

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by Richard W. Slatten, 1991

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Otis Frederick Manson, physician and educator, was born in Richmond, Va., the son of Otis and Sarah Dews Ferrill Manson, who were married in Richmond on 1 Feb. 1818. Otis Frederick, the second surviving child of his parents, was the brother of Sarah Anna (b. 4 July 1820; m. Eli H. Richards of Richmond), George W. (b. 8 June 1825), Eliza Sanger (b. 7 Dec. 1827; m. Cornelius J. Eaton of Richmond), Charles Henry (b. 14 Jan. 1830), and Mary Ann (b. 27 Mar. 1832; m. Joseph Littlejohn of Oxford, N.C.). His mother was from Petersburg, Va., and the records of his maternal grandparents, William and Sarah Dews Ferrill, are located in Halifax and Pittsylvania counties. His father was the son of Frederick and Anna Hemmenway Manson, of Framingham, Mass., both of whom were buried in Shockoe Cemetery, Richmond.

The elder Otis Manson was established in Richmond by 1822; in December he advertised his readiness to supply drawings of plans and elevations of town and country houses. Records and appraisals of his work are in the Valentine Museum, Richmond, and in Scott's *Old Richmond Neighborhoods*. His son, Otis Frederick, was probably born in the family residence at the southwestern corner of Nineteenth and Franklin streets. He may have spent all of his childhood at that location since his father, although residing in 1850 at the corner of Ten and Main streets, probably did not move before 1840. The boy completed his early schooling at the Richmond Academy. Adopting the profession of his paternal great-grandfather, Dr. Ebenezer Hemmenway, he studied medicine at Hampden-Sydney College ^[2] (afterwards the Medical College of Virginia of Virginia Commonwealth University) and was graduated at an early age.

By 1841 Manson had settled in Granville County ^[3], N.C. The 1850 census lists him as a physician in the Nutbush District and the father of four children. He gave twenty years of service to the people of his adopted state and for a time was a member of its Board of Medical Examiners ^[4], a position he later held in Virginia. In 1862 Manson was commissioned a surgeon in the Confederate army and placed in charge of a hospital in Virginia for the care and rehabilitation of North Carolina troops. For his devotion to duty he received the personal commendation of Governor Zebulon Vance ^[5]. The community of Cheatamville in Warren County ^[6] changed its name to Manson in his honor.

After the war Manson returned to his native Richmond, where he devoted the remainder of his life to the practice of medicine and to teaching. From 1869 to 1882 he was professor of pathology and physiology at the Medical College of Virginia; subsequently its board elected him professor emeritus. His career was especially noteworthy for his work on the pathology and treatment of various fevers, a subject on which he published several works. The extent of his medical as well as his general knowledge may be judged from the catalogue of his extensive personal library. In addition, he served as a member of the Richmond City Council from 1874 to 1882.

Manson was married twice. His first wife was Mary Ann Spotswood Burwell, the daughter of Spotswood Burwell of Granville County and the great-granddaughter of Colonel Alexander Spotswood, a governor of colonial Virginia. Their children included Sallie Spotswood (m. A. L. Hunt), Otis, Eliza Sanger (m. T. L. Alfriend), William Frederick, Mary Anna (the second wife of A. L. Hunt), and Lewis Burwell. Manson's second wife was Mrs. Helen Gray Wattson, whom he married on 25 Oct. 1881. He died in Richmond and was buried in Hollywood Cemetery.

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