

Bagley, Dudley Warren ^[1]

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by Thomas S. Morgan, 1979

18 Apr. 1889–27 Oct. 1964

Dudley Warren Bagley, experimental farmer; state legislator; civic, educational, and farm leader; and assistant comptroller general of the United States, was born in Moyock, [Currituck County](#) ^[2], to Raleigh Old and Eva Berryman Dudley Bagley. His father, who had been reared as an orphan, had become a leading progressive farmer in Currituck County. His brother, Charles, was a [Rhodes Scholar](#) ^[3] and professor of Romance Languages at [Dartmouth College](#) ^[4].

Bagley was educated at Trinity Park School (1906–8) and [Trinity College](#) ^[5] (1909–10). He entered the [University of Virginia](#) ^[6] in 1912 with the intention of pursuing a career in engineering but had to leave school because of ill health. He returned to the family farm in Moyock and developed a renowned truck and seed farm at Highland Farm, which he operated with his father. To compete with the tenant farmers nearby, he began to specialize and to experiment with improved varieties of corn and soybeans. He developed a business of growing crops for seeds, the only farm in North Carolina to do so.

During [World War I](#) ^[7], he enlisted in the army and rose to the rank of lieutenant as a machine gun instructor, though he did not see action abroad.

In 1930 he helped found the Currituck Mutual Exchange, a cooperative in which farmers pooled their resources to obtain credit and market advantages. He was also active in the North Carolina Farmers' Cooperative Exchange and was a vice-president and director of the National Fruit and Vegetable Exchange from 1932 to 1936.

As a member of the state senate from 1933 to 1935, Bagley gave particular support to education programs including opposition to a reduction in the school term and in teacher salaries. He helped to found the [North Carolina Rural Electrification Association](#) ^[8] and was appointed its director by [Governor J. C. B. Ehringhaus](#) ^[9]; he held the post from 1935 to 1940. A close associate of [Lindsay C. Warren](#) ^[10], member of the [U.S. House of Representatives](#) ^[11], Bagley was made his assistant when Warren accepted the post of comptroller general of the United States. As Warren's assistant from 1940 to 1946, he ran the internal affairs of the comptroller's office, especially the work of the General Accounting Office. He studied accounting at night in order better to supervise the operations of the office and made an important contribution by improving its auditing.

His interest in education and progressive farming made him a strong supporter of [North Carolina State College](#) ^[12], of which he was a trustee from 1923 to 1932. After it merged into the [Consolidated University of North Carolina](#) ^[13], Bagley was a university trustee (1932–40).

After his retirement from Washington on 30 June 1946, Bagley returned to Highland Farm, where he continued his agricultural experiments and his activities in state affairs. He was a member of a commission appointed by Governor [Gregg Cherry](#) ^[14] to study conditions in the public schools. The commission produced a report in 1948 [Education in North Carolina—Today and Tomorrow](#) ^[15]. He also served on a later commission to study higher education, which produced a report in 1955.

Bagley's other activities included service as trustee of the North Carolina Institute of Fisheries Research (1948–53), trustee of [Elizabeth City State College](#) ^[16] (1953–55), and director of the [Rural Rehabilitation Corporation](#) ^[17] (1952–62).

In 1917, Bagley married Ida Frost Bray, a native of Sligo and an active participant in [Democratic](#) ^[18] party politics and philanthropic activities. Mrs. Bagley was a trustee of the Knapp Foundation, an agent for the Knapp philanthropies, and chairman of the Currituck County Board of Charities and Public Welfare. The Bagleys had no children.

Bagley died at Moyock and was buried in the Bagley Memorial Cemetery there. The Bagley papers are a rich deposit in the [Southern Historical Collection](#) ^[19] at the Library of [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[20].

References:

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William S. Powell, ed., *North Carolina Lives* (1962).

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Additional Resources:

Dudley Warren Bagley Papers, 1846-1964 (bulk 1920-1964) (collection no. 03338). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/b/Bagley,Dudley_Warren.html [21] (accessed February 14, 2013).

Study Reports Held by the Legislative Library, By Year : 1966 and Earlier:
<https://www.ncleg.net/library/Collections/studies/year1966.html> [15]

Ben Dixon MacNeill Papers, 1937-1960 (collection no. 03617). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
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Bagley Collection in Historic Forsyth:<http://www.historicforsyth.com/archon/?p=digitallibrary/digitalcontent&id=6> [23]

Dudley Warren Bagley : a biography, by Charles Rutherford Bagley; Frank Porter Graham:
<https://www.worldcat.org/title/dudley-warren-bagley-a-biography/oclc/043936625> [24]

Session laws and resolutions passed by the General Assembly [1963-1965], North Carolina Digital Collections:
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/session-laws-and-resolutions-passed-by-the-general-assembly-1963-1965/4009074> [25]

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