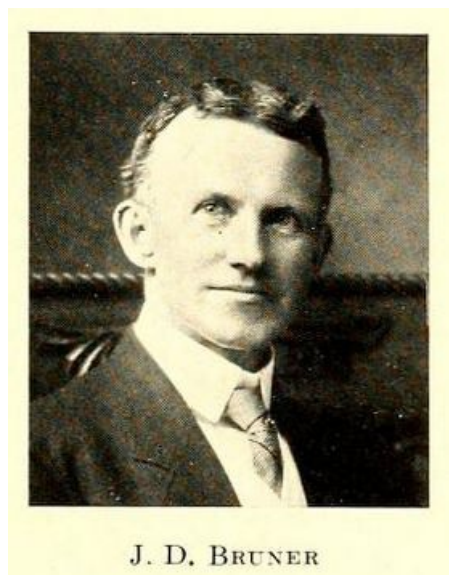


Bruner, James Dowden ^[1]

Bruner, James Dowden

by R. Hargus Taylor, 1979

19 May 1864–6 Apr. 1945



James Dowden Bruner. Image courtesy of UNC Libraries.

^[2]James Dowden Bruner, educator and college administrator, was born in Leitchfield, Ky., the son of Isaac Willis and Maggie Ellen Rogers Bruner. The recipient of an early classical education, he was awarded degrees by Franklin (Ind.) College ^[3] (A.B., 1888) and by Johns Hopkins University ^[4] (Ph.D., 1894). He pursued additional studies in linguistics in universities in Paris and Bologna in 1892–93, and was awarded the honorary Litt.D. by Georgetown (Ky.) College ^[5] in 1917.

Bruner taught Latin at Georgetown College in 1885–86 and French and German at Franklin College from 1887 to 1889. He was principal of Cary's Boy's School, Baltimore, Md., prior to his appointment as assistant professor of romance languages at the University of Illinois ^[6] in 1893. He left this latter position in 1895 to become assistant professor of romance languages and literature at the University of Chicago. There he advanced to the rank of associate professor and served two years as the acting head of his department.

In 1905, Bruner became associate professor of romance languages and chairman of the department at The University of North Carolina ^[7]. After four years there, he was elected to succeed John C. Scarborough ^[8] as president of Chowan Baptist Female Institute ^[9], Murfreesboro, in July 1909. Under his administrative leadership, the trustees of the institute approved the change of its name to Chowan College ^[9]; the state legislature allowed charter changes that enabled the granting of the standard A. B. degree, with the first such degrees awarded in 1911. Bruner earned the plaudits of the institution's board of trustees for his success in securing pledges of financial aid to the debt-ridden college and for an ambitious plan aimed at securing a sizeable general endowment.

His report to the college's board of trustees in May 1913 noted a greatly expanded curriculum, including the addition of instruction in the German and French languages, and a record enrollment of 150 during the previous academic year. One year later, however, Bruner submitted his resignation in the wake of rumors attributing to him certain unspecified moral indiscretions. The college's board of trustees accepted his resignation, after refusing to prefer charges against him or to be a party to any investigation of his conduct.

Returning to his native Kentucky, Bruner was elected president of Daughter's College, Harrodsburg, holding that office from 1915 to 1917. He subsequently taught languages at Kentucky State Normal School, Richmond (1917–21), Shurtleff (Ill.) College (1921–22), Carson-Newman (Tenn.) College (1922–27), and Tennessee State Teacher's College (1927–33). His retirement years were spent in Virginia, California, and Tennessee.

Bruner was the author of *The Pistoiese Dialect* ^[10] (1894), *Studies in Victor Hugo's Dramatic Characters* (1908), and numerous magazine articles on philological and literary subjects. He also prepared and published editions of Chateaubriand's *Les Aventures du Dernier Abencerage* (1903), Feuillet's *Le Jeune Homme Pauvre* (1904), Hugo's *Hernani* (1906), Corneille's *Le Cid* (1908), Racine's *Iphigenie*, *Andromaque* and *Phèdre* (1921), and *Esther and Athalie* (1929). A revision of his edition of *Hernani* appeared in 1932.

A Democrat and a Baptist, Bruner married Elizabeth Cutting Cooley (d. 9 Apr. 1931) on 19 Dec. 1894. To them were born three sons, James Willis, Arthur Cutting, and Lee Moulton. In 1935, Bruner married Helen Cooley McNitt, a niece of the first Mrs. Bruner.

Bruner was buried in Highland Memorial Cemetery, Knoxville, Tenn.

References:

Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Chowan College (Murfreesboro) 1909–14.

Who Was Who in America, vol. 4 (1968).

Additional Resources:

James Dowden Bruner in the Internet Archive:<https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Bruner%2C+James+Dowden%2C+1864-%22> ^[11]

Register of the Officers and Faculty of the University of North Carolina 1795 - 1945, UNC Libraries:
<http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/ref/unc/faculty.html> ^[12]

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Kemp P. Battle (Kemp Plummer), 1831-1919. History of the University of North Carolina. Volume II: From 1868 to 1912. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1912. UNC Libraries. Available from
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/battle2/ill14.html> ^[2] (accessed May 13, 2013).

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