

Cutten, George Barton ^[1]

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by [C. Sylvester Green](#) ^[2], 1979

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George Barton Cutten, clergyman, college president, and authority on early American silver, was born in Amherst, Nova Scotia, the son of William Freeman and Abbie Ann Trefry Cutten. After his preliminary education in local schools, he attended [Acadia University](#) ^[3], Wolfville, Nova Scotia, where he was graduated in 1896 with the B.A. degree. He then attended [Yale University](#) ^[4], New Haven, Conn., where he was graduated with a B.A. degree in 1897; that same year he was awarded the M.A. degree from Acadia University, on the basis of previously completed work. Subsequently, he continued his work at Yale. He received the Ph.D. in 1902 and the B.D. in 1903.

Having been ordained to the [Baptist](#) ^[5] ministry during his undergraduate days at Acadia, Cutten held the pastorate of a Baptist church in New Haven during his student days there and later was pastor at Corning, N.Y., and then at Columbus, Ohio.

After thirteen years as a pastor, he was elected president of Acadia University in 1910. During [World War I](#) ^[6] he was on leave from the Acadia presidency and served as a major in the Canadian Army. Following the 1918 munitions explosion that wrecked the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia, he was in charge of several phases of the rehabilitation of the harbor and the city. In connection with his military duties he served as chief recruiting officer for the Province of Nova Scotia.

In 1922, Cutten went to [Colgate University](#) ^[7], Ithaca, N.Y., as its president; there, for twenty years, he administered a program that doubled the physical equipment of the university, quadrupled the acreage of its campus, and doubled its endowment to a figure approximating ten million dollars. When he retired from the presidency of Colgate in 1942, he served one year as interim president of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, adjunct to Colgate University. In the next year the Cuttens moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where they lived until 1960. They went then to Amherst and Northampton, Mass., and Cutten lived in Northampton until his death at the age of eighty-eight.

Cutten was a distinguished scholar in the fields of theology, psychology, and history. He served on many boards and committees and was active in numerous organizations connected with educational instruction and administration, as well as those interested in general culture.

Typical among the high civic posts Cutten held during his active career, he was at one time president of the National Council of the [YMCA](#) ^[8]; an early president of the International Association of Torch Clubs, he was a charter member of the [Durham](#) ^[9]-Chapel Hill Torch Club.

Cutten was the recipient of several honorary degrees: D.D., Colgate (1911), McMaster (1920); LL.D., Acadia wrote an article on education that appeared in [School and Society](#) ^[10] and was widely quoted and reprinted. He wrote more than a dozen books on psychology, education, and religion.

North Carolinians are indebted to Cutten for his exhaustive study *The Silversmiths of North Carolina*. Before coming to North Carolina he had published similar studies of silversmiths in New York and Virginia, and the catalog of the [Library of Congress](#) ^[11] credits him with the authorship of a small shelf of books on early American silver. He accumulated a vast and valuable collection of North Carolina silver and comprehensive data on the silversmiths themselves. That collection became the property of the State of North Carolina in 1956 through a special purchase arrangement; it may be seen at the [North Carolina Museum of History](#) ^[12], Raleigh.

Cutten was the recipient of several honorary degrees: D.D., Colgate (1911), McMaster (1920); LL.D., Acadia (1914); Ph.D., New York State College for Teachers (1932); Doctor of Humane Letters, Muhlenberg (1935); and Sc.D., Alfred (1942). He also received the Goodrich Award for Distinguished Service in Education.

Cutten was married to Minnie Warren Brown of Nova Scotia, with whom he had four children, Muriel, Claire, William F., and Sarah (d. 1926). Cutten died at Cooley-Dickinson Hospital in Northampton, Mass., and was buried in a local cemetery.

References:

George Barton Cutten, *Silversmiths of North Carolina* (1973).

New York Times, 4 Nov. 1962 (obit.).

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

Additional Resources:

George Barton Cutten in the Internet Archive:<https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Cutten%2C%20George%20Barton%2C%201874-1962%22> [13]

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