

Sprunt, James Menzies ^[1]

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by Pearl Canady McGowen, 1994

14 Jan 1818–6 Dec. 1884

See also: [James Sprunt](#) ^[2], nephew



A 1908 postcard of the James Sprunt Institute, named after James Menzies Sprunt. The Institute was formerly known as the Grove Academy and renamed for Sprunt in 1896. Image from the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

^[3]James Menzies Sprunt, educator, [Presbyterian](#) ^[4]minister, and Confederate chaplain, was born in Perth, Scotland, the son of Laurence and Christina Sprunt. He was educated in Edinburgh.

In 1835 he left Scotland for the West Indies, where he worked as an accountant for a mercantile firm owned by his brother Alexander. When the company went bankrupt in 1839, Sprunt sailed for New York with the hope of finding a teaching position. On the way his ship was damaged in a storm, forcing it to make port in Wilmington, N.C. There he saw an advertisement for a teaching job in [Duplin County](#) ^[5]. In January 1840 he arrived in Hallsville, Duplin County, where he taught school for the next five years before moving briefly to Richlands in [Onslow County](#) ^[6]. In 1845 he became principal of the Grove Academy in Kenansville and remained there until 1860. About the time he settled in Kenansville, Sprunt became interested in the ministry. He was licensed by the Fayetteville Presbytery in 1849 and was ordained pastor of Grove Presbyterian Church at Kenansville in May 1851. Soon afterwards he also served Mount Zion Church near Charity and Union Church between Bowdens and Warsaw.

In 1860 Sprunt was chosen principal of the Kenansville Female Institute, where he served until June 1861, when he was appointed chaplain of the Twentieth North Carolina Regiment. He served with the regiment in northern Virginia until 17 July 1863, when he was obliged to resign because of dysentery. Returning home, he served the pastorates of Grove, Mount Zion, and Union churches for the remainder of his life. In addition, he was county register of deeds from 1865 to 1879 as well as stated clerk of the Wilmington Presbytery from 1872 to 1884.

In his later life Sprunt became interested in gardening and botany; he sold some of his plants to the national botanical gardens in Washington, D.C. Several years after the death of his wife, he died at his home in Kenansville following a yearlong illness and was buried in the Hall Cemetery, Hallsville. He had four daughters and two sons, N. H. and J. E.

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Additional Resources:

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[Religious Leaders and Clergy](#) [14]

[Educators](#) [15]

[Military personnel](#) [16]

Authors:

[McGowen, Pearl Canady](#) [17]

Origin - location:

[Duplin County](#) [18]

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1 January 1994 | McGowen, Pearl Canady

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