

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

St. Elmo Brady

chemist, educator

“He was never too busy to listen to the problems of a student or fellow faculty member”

Page | 1



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Background Information

Born: December 22, 1884

Death: December 25, 1966

Brady was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1884 to Thomas and Celeste Brady. He was the eldest of three children. He graduated from high school and at age 20 began college at Fisk University, a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in Nashville, Tennessee. While there, he was mentored by Thomas Talley and encouraged to pursue chemistry in higher education. After graduating from college, he taught at the famous Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and then was offered a scholarship to the University of Illinois to pursue a degree in Chemistry.¹

Brady's Resistance

While at the University of Illinois, Brady conducted research to better understand the hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon atoms and how they interact with each other. He studied under Professor Clarence G. Derick and received a Master's degree in 1914. Brady was the first black person to receive a PhD in Chemistry in 1916. Additionally, he was the first black person to be inducted into Phi Lambda Upsilon, the chemistry honor society.¹

After graduating, Brady went on to have a successful career in teaching. Brady worked at multiple HBCUs including Howard University in Washington, DC, and Fisk University, helping to develop their chemistry programs. He also founded the first chemistry graduate program at a Black college.² Brady was respected by many in his field and was known to be caring towards others. He fought for better opportunities in higher education for Black colleges. Fundraising and helping to develop undergraduate programs at HBCUs were his passion.³

Achievements

In 1916 Brady was the first African American to receive a PhD in Chemistry. Fisk University honored Brady by naming a building in his honor.³ Brady's commitment to elevating the chemistry departments at HBCU's has educated countless African American chemists.

¹ St. Elmo Brady. (n.d.). American Chemical Society. Retrieved October 20, 2020, from <https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/whatischemistry/landmarks/st-elmo-brady.html>

² St. Elmo Brady. (2020, June 10). Science History Institute. <https://www.sciencehistory.org/historical-profile/st-elmo-brady>

³ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). St. Elmo Brady. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Elmo_Brady

