




Saint Elmo Brady (1884-1966) -A National Historic Chemical Landmark

Wang Wang

DEI moment

May, 5, 2022

Portrait of St. Elmo Brady, undated.

 University of Illinois Archives

Early life and education

1884. 12. 22

He was born in Louisville, Kentucky

1904 Graduated from Louisville Colored High School

1904-1908 Fisk University
Received his bachelor's degree

1908-1912 Tuskegee University
Teaching

1912-1914 University of Illinois

Completed a M.S. in Chemistry under the direction of Professor Clarence Derick and Professor George Beal

1914-1916 University of Illinois

Work at Noyes Laboratory as Ph. D. under the direction of Professor Clarence Derick



Early Career

1917-1920 Tuskegee university

He served as head of the Division of Science and developed the undergraduate program in chemistry. In 1917, he published a 66-page monograph on Household Chemistry for Girls.

1920-1927 Howard University

He accepted an offer to chair the chemistry department at Howard University, an HBCU founded in 1867. For seven years, he established a reputable undergraduate department to begin graduate work, leading to a master's degree. In 1921, Brady and two colleagues initiated the first graduate program in chemistry at an HBCU (historically black colleges and universities).

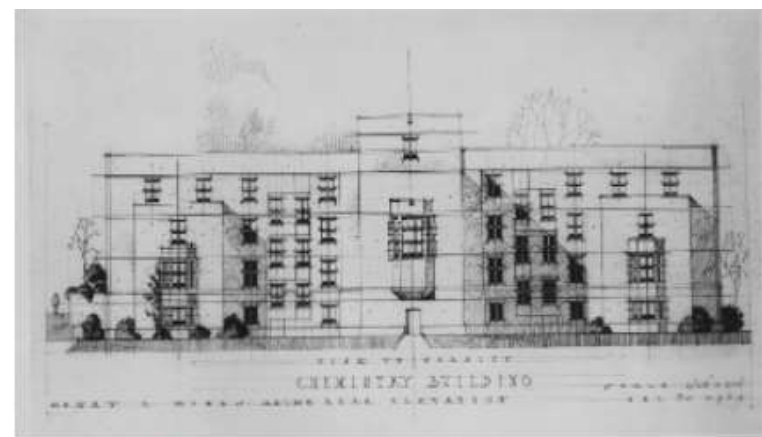
1927-1952 Fisk University

He became chair of Fisk's chemistry department, where he made his greatest impact as a chemist, mentor and leader. Over the next 25 years, he transformed the department at this leading HBCU. He taught general and organic chemistry to hundreds of students. He assembled an outstanding chemistry faculty and developed an undergraduate curriculum. In honor of his mentor, he began the Talley Lectures, which drew many famous chemists to Fisk University.

After retiring from Fisk University (1952), Brady spent 14 years collaborating with educators at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, to help build their chemistry department.

Groundbreaking building

In one of his most contributions to **Fisk University**, he coordinated construction of the **first modern chemistry building** at an HBCU. The Fisk facility now bears the name **Talley-Brady Hall** and is on the U.S. National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places. The 36,500-square foot building contains teaching and research laboratories, classrooms and faculty offices. **Today**, hundreds of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students pass through Talley-Brady Hall's doors each day to take general chemistry or organic chemistry, or to work in one of the research labs.



Talley-Brady Hall (1931), the chemistry building named in honor of Thomas Talley and St. Elmo Brady

Influence

St. Elmo Brady (1884-1966) became the first African-American to obtain a Ph.D. in chemistry in the U.S., for dissertation work with Professor Clarence G. Derick at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Brady went on to a research career in organic chemistry and served in leadership roles at Tuskegee, Howard and Fisk Universities and Tougaloo College. **He built strong undergraduate chemistry curricula and founded the first graduate chemistry program at a historically black college or university.** He was an inspiration to students and colleagues during his lifetime, and his courage, determination and impact on others continue to inspire successive generations.



References

- Samuel P. Massie, "St. Elmo Brady the Lenthened Shadow," *Chemistry* 1970, 43, 7.
- Crisis, August 1916, pp. 190-191.
- *JACS*, 40, 537-538, 1918
- Fisk News 40, Winter 1966, 19-20
- Fisk News, October 1928, Vo. II No. 1
- Tougaloo Gazette, Nov. 11, 1961, Homecoming Edition
- Tougaloo Southern News, October 1956, No 1.
- Fisk News, Nov-June, 1949-53, Vol. 23-26, p. 10.
- Washington (DC) Star, obituary 12/30/66