

Subject: Biography of Roscoe Conkling Bruce

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Roscoe Conkling Bruce, the only child of the late Blanche Kelso Bruce and Josephine Bealle Willson Bruce, was born in Washington, D.C., on April 21, 1879.^{1.} His mother was the first colored teacher in the public school system of Cleveland,^{2.} and his father was the most successful political leader that the American Negro has yet produced.^{3.}

Born in slavery, Blanche Kelso Bruce rose to United States Senator, elected on a Republican ticket from the State of Mississippi. He served in this capacity from 1875-1881, and then became Register of the United States Treasury, Recorder of Deeds in Washington, D.C.^{5.} and while still in the latter office, he was appointed trustee of the Public Schools of Washington.^{6.}

During his term as Senator, he developed an interesting friendship with the New York Senator, Roscoe Conkling, and when young Bruce was born, his father named him in honor of his noted friend.

Young Bruce proved to be a talented and brilliant child, graduating with high rank from the Phillips Exeter Academy in 1898, being one of the Editors of the Exonian. In 1902, Roscoe was graduated from Harvard College magna cum laude with honors in Political Economy and in Philosophy. While in Harvard he won many laurels as an Intercollegiate debater and for two terms was President of the University Debating Council. The Pasteur and the T.J. Coolidge medals are among his treasured trophies. Bruce is given credit for being one of the founders of the Harvard Illustrated Magazine and was elected editor-in-chief. His brilliancy made him a welcome member of the Phi Beta Kappa Fraternity

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and in appreciation of his oratorical achievements, his fellow students proudly elected him Orator of the Class.^{7.}

His post-school record has been one of worthy accomplishment. The four years, 1902-1906, after graduation was spent as Director of the Academic Department of Tuskegee Institute, after which he served as Supervisor of one-fourth of the colored elementary Public Schools of Washington, D.C. for one year.^{8.}

It is evident that the Board of Education had utmost confidence in Bruce, because in 1907, he was appointed Assistant Superintendent "in sole charge of teachers, classes and schools in which colored children are taught."^{9.} In 1921, Mr. Bruce resigned from this position and reluctantly accepting his resignation, "the Board of Education unanimously passed resolutions in appreciation of his constructive services to the school system (in initiating the junior high school, the intermediate vocational schools, the Armstrong technical school, etc.,)."^{10.}

With this estimable recommendation, R.C. Bruce journeyed South to Kimball, West Virginia to accept the position of Principal of the Junior and Senior High School and here he remained until 1923, when he decided to leave the educational field for a time, and to operate a poultry farm (Kelso Farm) in Prince Georges County, Maryland.^{11.}

In 1925, he abandoned country life and came to New York City and two years later became Resident Manager of the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Apartments Inc., which was a new adventure in community building. The periodical connected with this project was edited by Mr. Bruce and named The Dunbar News. It was published from May 1929 to May 1934, and after its discontinuance, Mr. Bruce continued as Resident Manager of the Apartments until 1937. From the time of its foundation in 1928 and throughout its life, Mr. Bruce was a member of the Board of Directors of the Dunbar National Bank.^{12.}

Many civic groups have had the active support of Roscoe Conkling

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Bruce who was "chiefly instrumental in persuading editors and publishers of many newspapers and magazines (including Atlantic Monthly, Saturday Evening Post, and the New York Times) to treat the word Negro as a proper noun or a proper adjective as the case might be, printing the same with a capital N." ^{13.} Being in a position to the economic problems of Harlem, Mr. Bruce after careful consideration organized the Harlem Citizens' Committee on More and Better Jobs. ^{14.}

Mrs. Clara Washington Burrill Bruce, his wife, has been equally as active in educational, business, political and civic affairs and at present is Treasurer of the Bruce Realty Associates and the Bruce & Son, Business Brokers which were founded by her husband who is the President of both firms. ^{15.}

In viewing the New York activities of both Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe Conkling Bruce, we are assured that Harlem and the Negro has been greatly benefited by their fourteen years of residence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: - Cromwell, John W.. The Negro in American History, Washington, The American Academy, 1914. (Call No. 326.93C, Schomberg Collection, 135th Street Library.)
- Personal interview with Mr. Roscoe Conkling Bruce.

Reference Numbers	Source
1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	Personal Interview.
12, 13, 14, 15,	" "
3, and 4,	<u>The Negro in American History</u> , p.164.
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