

Bernard, William Stanly ^[1]

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by Alfred Garvin Engstrom, 1979

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W.S. Bernard.
Courtesy of the
"History of the
University of North
Carolina"

^[2]William Stanly Bernard, professor of Greek in [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[3], was born in [Greenville](#) ^[4], the son of Dr. William Augustus Bernard, a surgeon captain in the [Confederate Army](#) ^[5], and Mary Smith, said to have been a direct descendant of [Landgrave Thomas Smith](#) ^[6] of South Carolina. From 1893 to 1895 he was a student in the Episcopal Theological Seminary of Virginia. He next served as commandant and instructor in [Trinity School at Chocowinity](#) ^[7]. He entered the university as a special student in 1897, was a member of the Philanthropic Literary Society, editor of the [North Carolina University Magazine](#) ^[8] (1899–1900), an outstanding debater, and one of the first three docents licensed to coach unprepared students (in Greek and Psychology). In 1900 he was awarded the A.B. degree and in 1904 the A.M. degree. He served as university librarian in 1900–1901, when reclassification of the library holdings was begun according to the Dewey System.

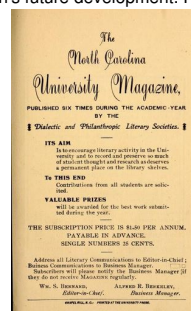


William Stanly Bernard. Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, UNC Libraries.

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Bernard taught English briefly (1902–4) in the university (his readings of "Enoch Arden" were later famous); but he had already been appointed instructor in Greek under [Eben Alexander](#) ^[10] in 1901 and had begun a brilliant teaching career in the classics that was to establish him (with the affectionate nickname of "Bully" Bernard) as one of the most memorable teachers in the university. Thomas Wolfe, in *Look Homeward, Angel*, refers to him as "Buck" Benson and pays eloquent tribute to "the vast sea-surge of Homer" as he heard it first to Professor Bernard's "slowly pacing feet and hexametrical drawl." Over the next thirty-eight years many generations of Carolina students were to experience the magic of "Bully" Bernard. Professor [Archibald Henderson](#) ^[11] referred to him as one of "the eloquent spellbinders" on the faculty.

In 1905, Bernard won an Early English Text Society Prize, and the following year he was promoted to the rank of associate professor of Greek. He studied at [The University of Chicago](#) ^[12] in 1906 and at [Columbia University](#) ^[13] in 1909, 1910, and 1911. In 1909, [President Francis P. Venable](#) ^[14] appointed him chairman of a committee to plan the reorganization of the alumni association, and his committee's recommendations were basic to the association's future development. He was one of four advisers on the debate



Issue of North Carolina University Magazine edited by Bernard [1899-900].
Courtesy of University of North Carolina at Chapel

committee during a period when the literary societies were outstandingly successful in their debating contests.[Hill](#).

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Under President [Harry Woodburn Chase](#) ^[15], Bernard presided over the historic meeting of 2 Oct. 1920 at the boardinghouse known as "The Coop" that led to the great "Campaign for Higher Education in North Carolina" in 1920–21. During the next decade he spoke in behalf of the university at numerous alumni banquets and dinners throughout the state. In 1920 he was promoted to the rank of professor of Greek, and on 8 July of that year he married Mrs. Adeline Dewey Claypoole Mitchell (1878–1935) of New Bern, by whom he had one child, Mary Stanly.

In the summer of 1924, Bernard introduced what seems to have been the first course in art history in the university; later he added two other courses in the subject. Although he was an [Episcopalian](#) ^[16], he taught for many years a large Bible class for men in the Chapel Hill Methodist Church. He was a member of the [Order of Gimghoul](#) ^[17] and of [Phi Delta Theta Fraternity](#) ^[18] and was faculty adviser to the [Order of the Grail](#), ^[19] of which he was an honorary member. In the early twenties he drove a Twombly convertible motor car that was something of a sensation in Chapel Hill.

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