

## **MacNider, William de Berniere** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by Marcus B. Simpson, Jr., 1991

**25 June 1881–31 May 1951**



An autographed photograph of Dr. William MacNider. Image from the Images from the History of Medicine, U.S. National Library of Medicine.

<sup>[2]</sup>William de Berniere MacNider, physician, pharmacologist, and medical educator, was born in Chapel Hill, the son of Virginius St. Clair and Sophia Beatty Mallett MacNider. Both his father and his grandfather were physicians. In 1898 MacNider enrolled in [The University of North Carolina](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, where he was graduated in the first class of the medical school with a doctor of medicine degree in 1903. Returning from special medical studies at the University of Chicago and Case Western Reserve, he resumed his lifelong association with the university in Chapel Hill, where he had served as assistant in biology (1899–1900), assistant in anatomy (1900–1902), and assistant in clinical diagnosis (1902–5).

In 1905 MacNider organized the university's first [Department of Pharmacology](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, where he served as professor from 1905 to 1918, Kenan Professor in 1918, and Kenan Research Professor from 1919 until his appointment as dean of the School of Medicine in 1937, following the retirement of Charles Staples Mangum. Desiring to devote his energies to research, MacNider resigned the deanship in 1940. He served as chairman of the Pharmacology Department until 1943 and as Kenan Research Professor until his retirement as professor emeritus in 1950.

As MacNider rose to national prominence in medical research and education, his influence and activities extended well beyond the Chapel Hill campus. In addition to his work at the university, he was physician-in-chief pro tem at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston (1925), Smith-Reed-Russell Lecturer at the George Washington University School of Medicine (1938), Brown-Sequart Lecturer at the Medical College of Virginia (1938), Mayo Foundation Lecturer (1939), Harvey Society Lecturer (1928–29), special lecturer in pharmacology at [Duke University Medical School](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, and Chandler Memorial Lecturer at Columbia University.

As a specialist in pharmacology, toxicology, and gerontology, MacNider contributed extensively to the study of human renal and hepatic diseases, both in original research publications and as associate editor of the *Proceedings of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine*, the *Quarterly Journal of Alcohol Study*, and the *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*. In recognition of his contributions to medical research, he received the Gibbs Prize for Medical Research for 1930–31 from the New York Academy of Medicine, the Research Medal of the Southern Medical Association in 1933, and the Kober Medal of the Association of American Physicians in 1941. He was awarded an honorary doctor of science degree by the Medical College of Virginia in 1933 and an honorary doctor of letters degree by [Davidson College](#) <sup>[6]</sup> in 1934.

MacNider was also widely recognized for his leadership and management abilities. He served as chairman of the Division of Pharmacology and Therapeutics of the American Medical Association in 1929 and as chairman of the Council of the Gerontology Society. He was elected president of the [Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society](#) <sup>[7]</sup>, [Medical Society of North Carolina](#) <sup>[8]</sup> (1925–26), the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (1932–34), the International Anesthesia Research Society (1934–35), and the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine (1941–42). MacNider served as consultant on gerontology to the National Institutes of Health, committee chairman of the National Board of Medical Examiners, and chairman of the American division of the International Club for Research on Ageing. He was an active member of the [National Red Cross](#) <sup>[9]</sup> committee on nutritional aspects of aging, the Executive and Cellular Physiology committees of the National Research Council, and the research committee of the National Anesthesia Research Society.

In addition to his leadership roles, MacNider was active in the American Physiological Society, American Association of Pathologists and Bacteriologists, American Association of Biological Chemists, American Association of University Professors, American Society of Experimental Pathology, Association of American Physicians, American Association of Anesthetists, American Association of the History of Medicine, [North Carolina Academy of Science](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, National Academy of Science, New York Academy of Science, American Society of Naturalists, American Philosophical Society, Harvard Society, British Physiological Society, Pathological Society of Great Britain, Phi Chi, Sigma Nu, Phi Beta Kappa, and Alpha Omega Alpha. In recognition of his work in the biomedical sciences, MacNider was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American College of Physicians.

An active member of the [Episcopal church](#) <sup>[11]</sup> and a [Democrat](#) <sup>[12]</sup>, he belonged to the [Cosmos Club of Washington, D.C](#) <sup>[13]</sup>, and the [Masonic order](#) <sup>[14]</sup>. His hobbies included hiking, natural history, gardening, and the collecting of bronze statuary, silver, and scientific and religious books. On 23 Jan. 1918 he married Sarah Jane Foard of [Davie County](#) <sup>[15]</sup>. They had one daughter, Sarah Foard. MacNider died in [Durham](#) <sup>[16]</sup> and was buried in the Chapel Hill Cemetery. [MacNider Hall](#) <sup>[17]</sup> in The University of North Carolina School of Medicine was named for him.

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## Additional Resources:

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"[William de Berniere MacNider] 2." Photograph. Before 1946. Images from the History of Medicine. U.S. National Library of Medicine. National Institutes of Health. <http://ihm.nlm.nih.gov/luna/servlet/detail/NLMNLM~1~1~101422603~183643:-William-de-Bernie%CC%80re-MacNider--2-> <sup>[22]</sup> (accessed June 24, 2013).

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