

1 **Chapter 6**  
2 **Charles Albert Browne (1870-1947)**  
3 **The Historian of the American Chemical Society**  
4

5 Of all the members and officers of HIST, Charles Browne is the one who had the  
6 largest impact on the documentation of the history of the American Chemical  
7 Society. He was the author of *A History of the American Chemical Society:*  
8 *seventy-five eventful years* (1952). He died before it was published and Mary  
9 Elvira Weeks (1892-1975) finished the text and shepherded it into print.



11  
12  
13 **Figure 1** Charles Albert Browne, Historian of HIST  
14

15 One of the best biographies of C.A. Browne appears in *American Chemists and*  
16 *Chemical Engineers* (1976), the compilation by Wyndham Miles (HIST Pres.  
17 1957-59), and was written by Claude K. Deischer (1903-1992), a Professor at the  
18 University of Pennsylvania. Deischer was one of the founders of the journal  
19 *Chymia* and published a biography of Browne in the first issue in 1949. This  
20 article also contains a complete bibliography of the historical papers and books of  
21 Charles Albert Browne. It is highly recommended!

22  
23

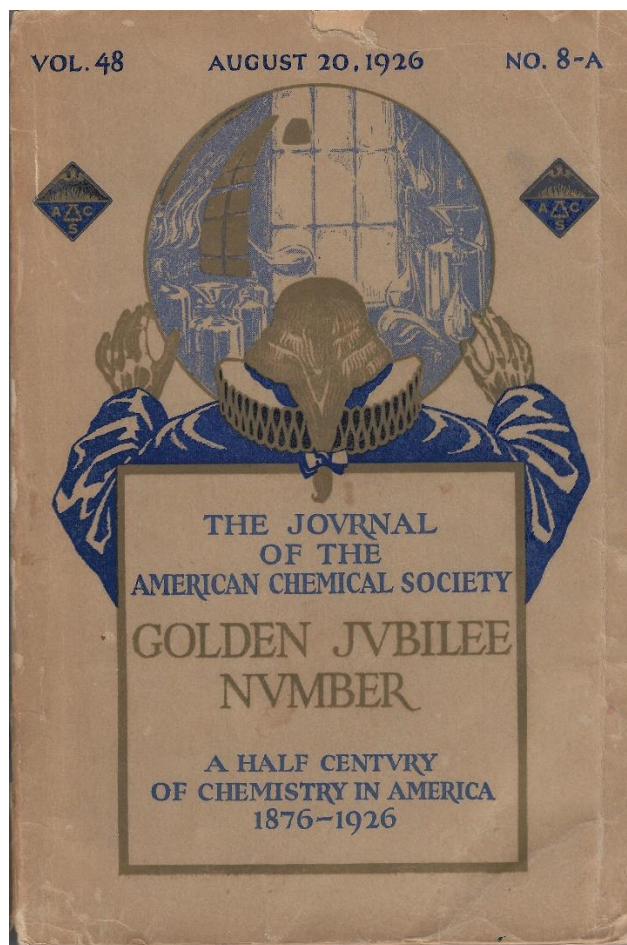
24 Charles Albert Browne was born on August 20, 1870 in North Adams,  
25 Massachusetts. He was educated at Williams College (A.B. 1892. A.M. 1896). He  
26 was a dedicated analytical chemist and served as an instructor at Pennsylvania  
27 State College. He also served at the Agricultural Experimental Station in State  
28 College, Pennsylvania. In order to further his knowledge of analytical chemistry  
29 he worked with Bernhard Tollens (1841-1918) at the University of Gottingen and  
30 received his Ph.D. in 1902. In addition, he developed a sweetness for sugar  
31 science and worked at the Louisiana Sugar Experiment Station from 1902-1906.

32  
33 Browne became the leading American sugar scientist and was the U.S. delegate to  
34 the 1906 Sixth International Congress of Applied Chemistry. He was appointed  
35 chief of the Sugar Laboratory at the U.S. Bureau of Chemistry. He organized and  
36 became the chief chemist at the New York Sugar Trade Laboratory, Inc. from  
37 1907-1923.

38  
39 Charles Browne never slept. He was an exceptionally active member of the  
40 American Chemical Society. He was an assistant editor at *Chemical Abstracts*, an  
41 assistant editor of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* and an assistant  
42 editor of *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*. When many new Divisions were  
43 being formed after the World War, Browne served as Chair of the Division of  
44 Sugar Chemistry and the Division of History. He was the editor of the ACS  
45 Golden Jubilee volume *A Half-Century of Chemistry in America* (1926). (Fig. 2)  
46 During this very active period Charles Browne returned to Washington as Chief of  
47 the Bureau of Chemistry and served from 1923-1940.

48  
49 One of the great American love affairs was between Edgar Fahs Smith and Charles  
50 Albert Browne. They shared a love of all things chemical and historical. After the  
51 death of Smith, Browne played a role in the organization and collection of the  
52 books and artifacts for the Edgar Fahs Smith Memorial Library at the University of  
53 Pennsylvania. Browne also donated many books and ephemera. The Division of  
54 the History of Chemistry should never forget these two giants.

55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



61  
62

63 **Figure 2** Golden Jubilee Number of the Journal of the American Chemical Society

64

65 In 1937 C.A. Browne presented a talk on “The Past and Future of the History of  
66 Chemistry Division” at the ACS meeting in Rochester, NY. It was published in  
67 the *Journal of Chemical Education*, **14**, 503-515 (1937). Browne cites Benjamin  
68 Silliman, Jr. as the first professor of chemistry to undertake serious study of the  
69 History of Chemistry in America (see Chapters 2 and 3). He discusses H.  
70 Carrington Bolton and identifies the location of his magisterial book collection  
71 (Library of Congress). Browne next presents Edgar Fahs Smith and his *Chemistry*  
72 *in America* (1914). This book focuses on Philadelphia and E.F. Smith hoped that  
73 others would expand on his work elsewhere.

74

75 The first-hand story of the famous meeting of Charles Browne and Edgar Fahs  
76 Smith in 1920 is recounted in detail in this article. The organization of a Section  
77 for the History of Chemistry proceeded rapidly and a more formal meeting was  
78 held in Rochester, NY in 1921. Browne listed all the attendees and wrote a

79 paragraph about all of them, including well-known chemical historians like Frank  
80 Moore of MIT. (See Chapter 4) Lyman Newell (1867-1937) of Boston University  
81 was selected as the first Secretary of the Section under Charles Brown and Frank  
82 Dains, and the first Chair of the Division in 1926. Browne also gave short  
83 obituaries of those members who had died by 1937.

84  
85 In addition to meeting and discussing, the little band of “cranks” were also busy  
86 organizing historical activities. One of the early collaborations was associated  
87 with the Priestley House in Northumberland, Pennsylvania. Edgar Fahs Smith  
88 wrote a “little book” on *Priestley in America* (1920). Charles Browne was  
89 meticulous and kept a detailed journal. It is a treasure trove of chemical and  
90 historical tidbits. “The Priestley House and Museum were formally dedicated on  
91 Sunday, September 5, 1926, as part of the Golden Jubilee Meeting of the American  
92 Chemical Society.” (The event is memorialized in Volume 4, No. 2 of the 1927  
93 volume of the *Journal of Chemical Education*.) The historical program for the  
94 Fiftieth Anniversary of the ACS was organized by Charles Browne, George Coyle,  
95 Frank Dains, Lyman Newell and Edgar Fahs Smith. This resulted in a special  
96 number of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society: A Half-Century of*  
97 *Chemistry in America 1876-1926*. (Fig. 2)

98  
99 Charles Browne was especially interested in Industrial Chemistry. In 1926 he  
100 compiled a “Chronological Table” of some leading events in the history of  
101 industrial chemistry in America from the earliest Colonial settlements until the  
102 outbreak of the World War. (*Ind. Eng. Chem.*, **18**, 884-892 (1926)) This gem  
103 should be known and read by every historian of American Chemistry. One of my  
104 favorite entries is for 1913: “Establishment of the Mellon Institute of Industrial  
105 Research at Pittsburgh.”

106  
107 Browne was also specifically interested in Agricultural Chemistry. He published  
108 “A Sketch of Agricultural Chemistry in America from 1663 to 1863,” *Science*, **60**,  
109 87 (1924). He also published an article on “A Half-Century of Agricultural  
110 Chemistry in America (1876-1926)” (*J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, **48**, 177-202 (1926)) He  
111 published many articles on sugar refining and its history.

112  
113  
114

115 Charles Browne published many articles about Frederick Accum (1769-1838)  
116 (Fig. 3). The major example is the three parts published in 1925 in successive  
117 issues of the *Journal of Chemical Education* (2, 829-851, 1008-1034, 1140-1149).  
118 Browne was a protégé of Harvey Wiley, the crusading head of the Office of  
119 Chemistry and author of the Pure Food and Drug Act. Frederick Accum led the  
120 way in this area in England. In 1820 Accum published “A Treatise on  
121 Adulterations of Food, and Culinary Poisons.” Since he identified the actual firms  
122 guilty of adulteration or worse, he was attacked by powerful forces in London. He  
123 returned to Germany and eventually died of gout! As Director of the Office of  
124 Chemistry, Browne also fought to keep America’s food pure and unadulterated.  
125



LONDON, Published for the European Magazine by J. Asperne, 32 Cornhill 1<sup>st</sup>, July 1820.

*Frederick Accum Esq.<sup>re</sup>*

*F. S. G. & C.*

126  
127  
128  
129  
130

**Figure 3** Frederick Accum, the Father of Pure Food and Drugs

131 *A History of the American Chemical Society*

132

133 When it came time to write a serious history of the first 75 years of the American  
134 Chemical Society, Charles Albert Browne was the obvious choice. As noted above  
135 he died before it was finished and Mary Elvira Weeks completed the task. (Fig. 4)

136

*A History of the*  
**AMERICAN CHEMICAL  
SOCIETY**

— *seventy-five eventful years* —

by  
CHARLES ALBERT BROWNE  
*Historian of the American Chemical Society*

and  
MARY ELVIRA WEEKS  
*Research Associate in Scientific Literature  
Wayne University*



AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1952

137

138

139 **Figure 4** ACS History (1952)

140

141

142 The Preface to this volume includes a eulogy to Charles Browne by Charles L.  
143 Parsons (1867-1954).(Fig. 5) Parsons was the Executive Secretary of the  
144 American Chemical Society from 1919-1946.

145



146

147

148 **Figure 6** Charles Lathrop Parsons. Executive Secretary of the ACS and close  
149 friend of Charles Albert Browne

150

151 The eulogy includes a priceless short summary of the life of Charles Albert  
152 Browne by Willard Dell Bigelow (1866-1939). (Browne had written a biographical  
153 appreciation for Bigelow (IEC, **23**, 718(1931)))

154

In his character are combined traits and qualities that would seem to be contradictory. He is a specialist but endowed with versatility, combining an intimate knowledge of such widely separated fields as world history, world literature, mathematics, Latin and Greek, geology, soil types, the nature of vegetation, and a true appreciation of art. He has a keen sense of humor and is a good raconteur without ever becoming tedious. He is a bookworm without being bookish. He is an organizer without a liking for executive work. He has an encyclopedic memory, but a memory whose accumulation of data does not interfere with his imaginative and accurate thinking. He is modest, self-effacing, but with a personality that at once commands respect and confidence. As a young man he made lasting friendships with the then leaders of his profession; as one of the older men in the profession he now enjoys the friendship and high regard of those just entering upon their careers. He rests from one task chiefly by working at another. He has been busy all his life, but his latchstring is always out. He imparts a tremendous personal stimulation to his associates in their attacks on their problems, and he spares no effort to secure information that others may seek from him in personal calls or by correspondence. The young chemist just beginning his first piece of research and the chemist who has taken up the final study of the results of research which he plans shall be his last receive from Browne the same interested, kindly, helpful consideration.

155

156 The history is a major contribution to the literature of American chemistry (526  
 157 pages). It is written in Browne's elegant style and should be read by every  
 158 member of the ACS. It places the ACS in full historical context. It is based on the  
 159 full archives of the ACS and Browne's own extensive holdings. It is a frank  
 160 appraisal of the evolution of the Society. Browne was both a skilled historian and  
 161 a meticulous administrator. The Table of Contents reveals both the depth and the  
 162 breadth of the work.  
 163

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Dedication . . . . .	v
Preface and Memorial to Dr. C. A. Browne . . . . .	vii
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
I. Precursors . . . . .	1
II. Beginnings . . . . .	14
III. The Secession Period . . . . .	26
IV. The New Order . . . . .	41
V. The Twenty-fifth Anniversary—Before and After . . . . .	55
VI. Specialization and Dangers of Disunion . . . . .	68
VII. Strivings for Consolidation . . . . .	81
VIII. International Relations, 1876–1914 . . . . .	97
IX. The American Chemical Society and the First World War . . . . .	108
X. The Society Completes Its First Half Century . . . . .	127
XI. The Start of the Society's Second Half Century . . . . .	139
XII. The American Chemical Society During the Second World War . . . . .	156
XIII. The Postwar Reorganization . . . . .	179
XIV. Growth and Readjustment . . . . .	189
XV. Increasing Professional Consciousness . . . . .	205
XVI. International Relations, 1918–1951 . . . . .	250
XVII. Contributions of the Divisions . . . . .	264
XVIII. Publications . . . . .	296
XIX. Awards, Memorial Lectures, and Research Foundations . . . . .	427
XX. The Diamond Jubilee . . . . .	435
Chronology . . . . .	451
Presidential Addresses . . . . .	468
Biographical Sketches . . . . .	471
Appendix . . . . .	503
Editors of American Chemical Society Journals . . . . .	503
General Meetings of the American Chemical Society—1890–1951 . . . . .	504
Honorary Memberships . . . . .	506
Active Divisions—1951 . . . . .	508
Active Local Sections—1951 . . . . .	508
Officers of the American Chemical Society . . . . .	509–512
Name Index . . . . .	513

164  
 165  
 166  
 167  
 168