James Waddell Alexander Encyclopedia Article

James Waddell Alexander

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James Waddell Alexander

1888-1971

Alexander was born in Sea Bright, New Jersey, in 1888. He was fortunate to study mathematics and physics under Professor Veblen at Princeton University. After earning a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics, he was invited to become a faculty member of the mathematics department at Princeton. Alexander achieved recognition in his field when he generalized what was known as The Jordan Curve Theorem and, later, when he discovered the Alexander Polynomial, which is still in wide use in knot theory. The American Mathematical Society awarded Alexander its coveted Bocher Prize for his memoir, *Combinatorial analysis situs*. He remained at Princeton until retirement in 1951 and was a life member of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. He died in 1971.