

FOWLER, Sister Mary Charlotte. August 26, 1899–August 26, 1997.

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA (CATHOLIC SISTERS COLLEGE) (BA 1927), CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA (MA 1935, PhD 1938).

Josephine Fowler was born in Mechanicsville, Maryland, the eldest of eleven children of Charlotte (Burch) (1879–1975) and Thomas Henry Fowler (1854–1920), natives of Maryland. Her parents married in 1898; it was a second marriage for her father who had four children by his previous marriage. He was a merchant and later a farmer. Her siblings were Ann Elizabeth (1900–1991), Mary Rebecca (1903–1991), Charles Burch (1906–1991), Joseph Alfred (1908–1977), Charlotte Turner (1910–2002), Dorothy D. (1912–1986), Ernest deSales (1914–1915), Mary Walter (1916–2000), Mary Rita (1918–1918), and Mary Jane (b. 1920).

Josephine Fowler attended public school until 1916 and then attended St. Mary's Academy in Leonardtown, Maryland, 1916–18. Upon graduation she was awarded the gold medal for mathematics. On September 24, 1918, she entered the novitiate of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, in Nazareth, Kentucky, and took the religious name Sister Mary Charlotte Fowler.

Sister Mary Charlotte taught religion, mathematics, physics, English, and history primarily in high schools from 1920 to 1933. In the same period she was doing course work, including five summers at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where she took courses in Latin, English, art, and education, as well as correspondence courses in trigonometry and American literature. She also studied one summer at Notre Dame University where she took courses in statistics and modern algebra. Her first teaching assignment was at St. Vincent's Academy in Union County, Kentucky, 1920–21. Others were in Henderson, Kentucky, 1921–23 and in Yazoo City, Mississippi, 1923–26.

Fowler was in residence as a student at Catholic Sisters College of the Catholic University of America 1926–27 and received her bachelor's degree in 1927. She then taught in a high school in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, 1930–32 and in summer school at Nazareth Junior College in Kentucky in the summers 1927–30.

Sister Mary Charlotte was an assistant instructor in mathematics at Nazareth College in Nazareth, Kentucky, 1932–33 after which she was on leave for study at Catholic University. She was in residence at Catholic from 1933 until 1937 and earned her master's degree in 1935. When she left Catholic in 1937 she began teaching mathematics and physics at the Nazareth College campus in Louisville, Kentucky. The next year, 1938, she received her PhD with minors in physics and education, having written a dissertation in algebraic geometry under the direction of Aubrey Landry.

Nazareth College in Louisville was established in 1920 as a branch of Nazareth Academy in Nazareth. When Sister Mary Charlotte began teaching at Nazareth College in Louisville, she joined [Sister Charles Mary Morrison](#) who had come in 1931 and who was at various times head of the department, registrar, and dean of the college. Sister Mary Charlotte Fowler was professor of mathematics and physics until her retirement from the college in 1969. She was chairman of the department from 1950 until she was appointed president of the college in 1961. She taught some after she became president until her administrative duties became too great.

When Sister Mary Charlotte Fowler became president of Nazareth College in Louisville in 1961, the two campuses at Louisville and Nazareth became two distinct

colleges. In 1963 the name of the college in Louisville was changed to Catherine Spalding College to distinguish it from the college in Nazareth. In 1969, when Sister Mary Charlotte's tenure as president ended, the college in Louisville merged with the one in Nazareth, became coeducational, and adopted the name Spalding College (now Spalding University).

Fowler is credited with many positive changes and innovations while president of the college. These included overseeing a period of growth of about fifty percent in the student population and conducting the first capital campaign in the college's history. Graduate programs were added, and science, library, and dormitory buildings were constructed. The Fowler Fellowships, which allowed anyone sixty-five or older to take classes tuition-free, were created as was the Center for Continuing Education for the non-traditional student.

Sister Mary Charlotte was active in the community and was inducted into the Honorable Order of the Kentucky Colonels in 1967. She was a member of the Kentucky Academy of Science. In 1992 she described her political affiliation as Democrat. Among hobbies she enjoyed were reading, crafts, photography, stamp collecting, collection of unusual recipes, and weaving, which continued well into her retirement. She also was a member of the American Association of Physics Teachers.

In the early 1970s, she was living in St. Vincent's Home, an orphanage for boys, in Roanoke, Virginia. At some point, after the orphanage disbanded in 1975, she was living at the Motherhouse in Nazareth, Kentucky. Sister Mary Charlotte died on her ninety-eighth birthday in the Nazareth Home in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1997. She was survived by three sisters and a half-sister, and she was buried in the Nazareth Motherhouse Cemetery.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA, NCTM.

Thesis and dissertation:

1935 Certain of the metric properties of conic sections and their projective bases. MA thesis, Catholic University of America, directed by Aubrey Edward Landry. Typescript.

1937 The discriminant of the sextic of double point parameters of the plane rational quartic curve. PhD dissertation, Catholic University of America, directed by Aubrey Edward Landry. Printed for The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, by J. H. Furst Co., Baltimore, MD. PhD granted 1938. Review: *JFM* 63.0616.02 (R. Weitzböck).

Abstracts:

1939 The discriminant of the sextic of double point parameters of the plane rational quartic curve. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 46:467 #1. Presented to the MAA, Murray, KY, 29 Apr 1939.

1946 Color reproduction matrices. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 53:620–21 #2. Presented to the MAA, Louisville, KY, 27 Apr 1946.

References to: AmMSc 8, 9P–11P; AmMWSc 12P; WhoAmW 3–8; WhoSSW 13.

Hawpe, David. "President Credited for Spalding College Growth." *Louisville Times*, 1965.
Glamann, Philip. "Ex-Spalding President Sister Mary Fowler Dies." *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 27 Aug 1997.

French, Stephanie. "Mary Charlotte Fowler, SCN: August 26, 1889 – August 26, 1997." *Spalding University News*, Fall 1997.

"Sister Mary Charlotte Fowler Dies." *Record* (KY), 4 Sep 1997.

Other sources: Owens questionnaire 1937; authors' questionnaire 1992; Catholic University Archives; communications with Spalding University Public Relations and Spalding

University Archives; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 MD, 1930 KY; SSDI.

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