

LAREW, Gillie A. July 28, 1882–January 2, 1977.

RANDOLPH-MACON WOMAN'S COLLEGE (BA 1903), UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (MS 1911, PhD 1916).

Gillie Aldah Larew was born near Newbern, in Pulaski County, Virginia, the daughter of Gillie Augusta (Glendy) (1846–1887) and Isaac Hall Larew (1840–1904), both natives of Virginia. Her father had served as a captain in the Confederate army during the Civil War. Her parents married on February 12, 1867. She had four older siblings, John Glendy (1869–1876), Mary Alma Lyle (1872–1875), Cyrus Guy (1875–1908), and Robert Joseph (1877–1880), only one of whom was living at the time of her birth; she also had a younger sister, Julia (b. 1884). Her father was a farmer and a lawyer; he married a second time in about 1890 and had five more children. A later tribute indicated that she was “reared in a Christian home in an atmosphere of liberal Presbyterianism” and that “the place in the family’s daily worship given to the great hymns of the Church and the Christian message” was important to her (Lipscomb 1953, 34).

Gillie Larew received her primary and secondary education from private tutors before entering Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in Lynchburg, Virginia, in September 1899, near the end of the college’s first decade. (The college was renamed Randolph College in July 2007 and became coeducational in September 2007.) Immediately after Larew’s graduation in 1903 she became an instructor in mathematics there. She attended courses in the mathematics department at the University of Chicago in the summers of 1906 and 1909 and in the spring and summer quarters of 1911. She wrote her master’s thesis in mechanics to complete the work for her master’s degree in 1911.

Larew continued at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College, except for leaves, for the remainder of her career. Having been made adjunct professor in 1909, she returned to the University of Chicago for seven quarters during the years 1914–16. She was a fellow in 1915–16, wrote her dissertation in the calculus of variations, and received her PhD in 1916. She returned to Randolph-Macon Woman’s College and was promoted to associate professor in 1918 and to professor in 1921. She served as acting head of the department for a year in the early 1920s.

Apparently at the suggestion of G. A. Bliss, Larew’s dissertation advisor, she spent the year 1929–30 in Munich studying mainly with Carathéodory. In 1936 she became head of the department at Randolph-Macon and remained so until 1950, when that position went to [M. Gweneth Humphreys](#), who had been hired from Newcomb College the year before, when Larew had become dean of the college. Larew became dean emeritus and professor emeritus upon her retirement in 1953, at age seventy. After her retirement she served on the college steering committee and helped with the alumnae development program. In 1952, shortly before her retirement, she presented her personal philosophy on the Edward R. Murrow radio program “This I believe.” These views appeared the following year in an article, “But as for me. . .,” in the *AAUW Journal*. The article was described as: “A fellow Virginian borrows Patrick Henry’s famous words to introduce some thoughts on nonconformity” (1954, 3).

Larew was active in a number of professional organizations. In the 1920s she served as secretary of the Mathematics Section of the Virginia Educational Conference. After joining the MAA as a charter member, she attended many national

meetings of the MAA and meetings of the Maryland-District of Columbia-Virginia Section, for which she was on the executive committee in the early 1930s and was chairman 1937–38; she served as regional governor from July 1945 to July 1947. Larew served on the research committee of the Virginia Academy of Science in the early 1940s and was elected to the council in 1945. She was also very active in the AAUW and served as president of the local branch in 1922 and president of the state division 1938–40. The biographical notes to Larew’s 1954 article say that “her services to AAUW have been too numerous for listing here. She is presently a member of the Standards and Recognition Committee, having recently completed four years as Vice-President from the South Atlantic Region” (p. 3).

Larew’s contributions to Randolph-Macon Woman’s College were recognized in several ways. In 1948 the college alumnae association endowed the Gillie A. Larew Chair of Mathematics. In June 1953 she was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters by the college, and that month’s issue of the *Alumnae Bulletin* was dedicated to her. In 1968 the Gillie Aldah Larew Distinguished Teaching Award was established by a member of the class of 1916 and her husband. An obituary in the *Alumnae Bulletin* noted that she was “the first alumna to be made a full professor at R-MWC, ... the first alumna to head a department at the College, ... [and] the first person to receive an honorary degree ... from the R-MWC” (“We Mourn Dr. Gillie A. Larew”).

Gillie Larew died at her home in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1977. She was ninety-four. She was survived by two half-sisters, nieces, and nephews, and was buried in the Larew Cemetery near her birthplace in Pulaski County, Virginia.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA (charter member), AAAS, AAUW, Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi.

Thesis and dissertation:

1911 case of constrained motion on a right circular cone. MS thesis, University of Chicago, directed by William Duncan MacMillan. Typescript.

1916 Necessary conditions in the problem of Mayer in the calculus of variations. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, directed by Gilbert Ames Bliss. Private edition, 1919, distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries, reprinted from *Trans. Amer. Math. Soc.* 20:1–22.

Publications:

1919 Necessary conditions in the problems of Mayer in the calculus of variations. *Trans. Amer. Math. Soc.* 20:1–22. Published version of PhD dissertation. Review: *JFM* 47.0477.02 (H. Hahn). Presented by title to the AMS, New York City, 26 Oct 1918; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 25:146–47 #3.

1924 The Hilbert integral and Mayer fields for the problem of Mayer in the calculus of variations. *Trans. Amer. Math. Soc.* 26:61–67. Reviews: *JFM* 50.0338.03 (H. Hahn); *Rev. semestr. publ. math.* 32, pt. 1: 12 (P. Mulder). Presented to the AMS, New York City, 28 Dec 1920; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 27:256 #21.

1932 Current tendencies in the curriculum and the method of instruction of the American College. *Bull.* (Randolph-Macon Woman’s College) 19 (1): 1–9. Presented to the Virginia state convention of the AAUW, Mar 1931.

1942 The Committee on Research of the Virginia Academy of Science. *Alumnae Bull. Randolph-Macon Woman’s College* 36 (1): 16–17.

1954 But as for me. . . . *AAUW J.* 48 (1): 3–7.

Abstracts not listed above:

1930 Discontinuous solutions for the anormal case of the Lagrange problem in the calculus of variations. *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 36:808 #432. Presented to the AMS, Cleveland, OH, 31 Dec 1936.

1932 Some applications of Carathéodory's method of geodetic equidistance. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 39:4 #4. Presented to the MAA, Richmond, VA, 9 May 1931.

Presentations not listed above:

Minimum requirements in college mathematics from the standpoint of actual practice in Virginia and from that of an ideal curriculum. Presented to the Virginia State Teachers Assoc., Richmond, 28 Nov 1923.

A historical summary of the work of the section for the past five years. Presented to the Virginia Educ. Conf., Richmond, 27 Nov 1924.

References to: AmMSc 4–8, 9P–10P; AmWom 1935–40.

Lipscomb, Herbert C. "To Miss Larew, June 6, 1953." *Randolph-Macon Woman's College Alumnae Bull.* June 1953, 33–36. Reprinted as "No Finer Tribute." *Alumnae Bull.* (Randolph-Macon Woman's College) 70 no. 2 Winter 1977, 30–31.

"Math Professor: Dr. Gillie A. Larew, Retired R-M Dean, Dies." *Lynchburg (VA) News*, 3 Jan 1977.

"Larew." (Obituary) *Roanoke (VA) Times*, 4 Jan 1977.

"We Mourn Dr. Gillie A. Larew, Dean Emeritus and Professor of Mathematics." *Alumnae Bull.* (Randolph-Macon Woman's College) 70 no. 2, Winter 1977, 29.

Other sources: MS thesis vita 1911; PhD dissertation vita 1919; University of Chicago Archives; communications with Margaret A. M. Murray and with Randolph College Alumnae Office; US Census 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 VA.

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