

ANDERSON, Mae Ruth. May 31, 1899–March 28, 1948.

CONCORDIA COLLEGE (BA 1920), UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (MA 1923, PhD 1936).

Mae Ruth Anderson was born near Westby, Wisconsin, the daughter of Ida (Berg) (1862–1942) and Norton Alfred Anderson (1862–1930), both natives of Wisconsin of Norwegian ancestry. Her parents married in about 1894; it was a second marriage for Ida Anderson and a first for Norton Anderson. In 1900 Ida Anderson had two surviving children of three born; her son from her first marriage was born in 1887 in South Dakota and was living with the family in Vernon County, Wisconsin, in 1900 but not in later census years. Norton Anderson was a merchant.

Sometime after 1910 Mae Ruth Anderson and her parents moved to Shelly in western Minnesota, where her father again owned a store. Anderson graduated from high school in Halstad, Minnesota, a few miles from Shelly, in 1916 before entering Concordia College in neighboring Moorhead, Minnesota.

When Anderson was at Concordia, 1916–20, the mathematics department consisted of two faculty members, one of whom was Martha Brennun, who in 1917 was the first woman to receive a bachelor's degree from Concordia. Brennun, a mathematics major, had started teaching immediately after her graduation. At Concordia, Anderson was a member of the Alpha Society, Concordia's major scholastic honor society, and was on the staff of the *Crescent*, the student newspaper. A fellow student of Anderson's was [Ruth B. Rasmusen](#), who was at Concordia 1918–21 and who received her PhD from Chicago in 1936, as did Anderson.

After her graduation from Concordia in 1920, Anderson taught in high school in Gayville, South Dakota, for a year before beginning her master's work in mathematics at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1921. After six consecutive quarters, she received the MA in March 1923. She taught at Waldorf Junior College and Academy in Forest City, Iowa, from 1923 to 1928 and joined the faculty at Concordia College as instructor in 1928. She was promoted to assistant professor in 1929. While on the faculty at Concordia she resumed her graduate work at the University of Chicago by attending the summer quarters in 1929, 1932, 1934, and 1935. A leave of absence from Concordia College permitted her to be in residence at Chicago to finish her doctoral work from summer 1935 to summer 1936. Her replacement at Concordia that year was [Emma Olson](#), a 1932 Chicago PhD recipient.

In 1937 Anderson was promoted from assistant to full professor and became head of the mathematics department at Concordia, positions she retained until her death. In addition to teaching mathematics, she taught some French and was noted for her tireless efforts to help students. Excerpts from Concordia College yearbooks of 1946 and 1947 convey a sense of her qualities: "Her obvious love of her subject, her patience and sense of humor instill a lasting respect in her students." "Her demands for work, thoroughness, concentration, and more work bring results." While at Concordia, Anderson was also active on the graduate scholarship committee. During World War II she was secretary of the Committee on Relations to the Armed Forces, a committee that wrote to former students who were in the war.

Mae Ruth Anderson died of leukemia in a Rochester, Minnesota, hospital at age forty-eight in 1948. Her bequest to the Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead reflects her involvement with that church as officer of the Senior Sunday School and active member of the Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation. Anderson's mother, who lived in Moorhead after being widowed, predeceased her in 1942. Anderson

was survived by an uncle and two aunts. Funeral services were held in Moorhead and in Shelly, where she was buried.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, Sigma Xi.

Thesis and dissertation:

1923 An inclined rotational pendulum. MA thesis, University of Chicago. Typescript.

1936 Representation as a sum of multiples of polygonal numbers. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, directed by Leonard Eugene Dickson. Private edition, distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries.

References to:

"Dr. Mae R. Anderson, 48, of Concordia Faculty Dies." Unidentified newspaper clipping.

"Dr. Anderson Funeral to be Held Thursday." Unidentified newspaper clipping.

Other sources: PhD dissertation vita 1936; Owens questionnaire 1937; communication with Concordia College Archives; US Census 1900, 1910 WI, 1920, 1930 MN.

Last modified: October 24, 2008.