

ARNOLDY, Sister Mary Nicholas. March 7, 1893–September 28, 1985.

KANSAS STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (BS 1929), CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA (MA 1930, PhD 1933).

Catherine Helen Arnoldy, born in Tipton, Kansas, was the eighth of nine children of Anna (Holz) (1855–1944) and Nicholas Arnoldy (1845–1920). Her mother was born in Iowa; her father, born in Germany, had emigrated with his family and settled in Iowa when he was nine. Both attended school through the eighth grade. They married in Iowa and in 1879 moved to Tipton, Kansas, where her father was a storekeeper. The first child of the marriage, Catherine, died as an infant in 1877. Her other siblings were John Peter (1878–1959), Elizabeth (1881–1911), Edward Conrad (1884–1886), George Matthew (1886–1979), Charles John (1888–1909), Mary E. (1891–1976), and Leo Matthew (1896–1976).

Catherine Arnoldy attended parochial school in Tipton and did her high school work at the Nazareth Academy in Concordia, Kansas, before entering the Nazareth Convent in 1910 and making her profession of vows in 1912. All three surviving daughters became Sisters of St. Joseph. The eldest daughter, Sister Modesta, died at twenty-nine; Sister Domitilla became a biologist and taught at Marymount College in Salina, Kansas, where Sister Mary Nicholas was to spend most of her career.

In the seventeen years before she entered the Catholic University of America for graduate work, Sister Mary Nicholas had various teaching assignments in Kansas; these included schools in Schoenchen, Emmeram, Antonino, and Manhattan. In this same period she was doing her undergraduate work. From 1921 to 1923 she attended the Fort Hays Kansas State Normal School (now Fort Hays State University), and in 1923–24 she was among the first women to attend teachers' courses at Creighton University, a Jesuit institution in Omaha, Nebraska. She received her bachelor's degree from Kansas State Agricultural College (now Kansas State University) in 1929 after studying there during the first semesters of 1924–25 and 1928–29 and summer sessions every summer from 1924 until 1929, except for the summer of 1928 when she studied at Creighton. She also took one course in music from Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, Pius X School of Liturgical Music, New York, in each of the winters of 1923, 1924, 1925.

Sister Mary Nicholas entered Catholic University in 1929, received her master's degree in 1930, and completed her doctoral work in September 1932 with minors in physics and education. She then taught for the next thirty-four years at Marymount College in Salina, Kansas. Founded in 1922 by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Marymount was the first four-year liberal arts college for women in Kansas. She was director of the mathematics department and, for several years, was the only mathematics instructor; at various times she was also the college registrar.

After her retirement from Marymount College in 1966, two years before it became coeducational, Sister Mary Nicholas taught at Sacred Heart High School in Salina; Notre Dame High School in Concordia; and then worked part time at Central Catholic High School in Grand Island, Nebraska. She was known for her hard work, for her love of gardening, and for her mastery of tatting. She was taciturn and had a very dry sense of humor.

At age eighty Sister Mary Nicholas retired to Medaille Center in Salina. At ninety she moved back to the Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia, where she died

two years later, in 1985. She had been a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia for seventy-five years and was buried in the sisters' cemetery there.

Thesis and dissertation:

1930 The curves used in the duplication of the cube. MA thesis, Catholic University of America. Typescript.

1932 The reality of the double tangents of the rational symmetric quartic curve. PhD dissertation, Catholic University of America, directed by Aubrey Edward Landry. Printed for The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. PhD granted 1933. Review: *JFM* 58.0701.01 (E. Schönhardt). See also **1934**.

Abstracts:

1934 Reality of the double tangent contact parameters of the rational symmetric quartic curve. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 41:407 #7. Presented to the MAA, Topeka, KS, 17 Mar 1934. Based on PhD dissertation.

1949 Requirements for a bachelors degree with a major in mathematics. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 56:711 #6. Presented to the MAA, Manhattan, KS, 2 Apr 1949.

1954 A survey of the certification requirements in mathematics for elementary and high school teachers. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 61:291 #4. Presented to the MAA, Topeka, KS, 11 Apr 1953.

1955 Magic circles. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 62:696 #3. Presented to the MAA, Hays, KS, 26 Mar 1955.

Reference to:

"Nun Math Professor Dies." *Register*, 11 Oct 1985.

Other sources: Owens questionnaire 1937; Religious Women in Mathematics Survey 1983; Smithsonian questionnaire 1985; communication with Sisters of St. Joseph, Concordia, KS; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920 KS; SSDI.

Last modified: July 19, 2009.