

BOYCE, Fannie W. March 16, 1897–February 13, 1986.

CENTRAL HOLINESS UNIVERSITY (BA 1918), PENN COLLEGE (BA 1921), UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN (MA 1928), UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (PhD 1938).

Fannie Wilson Boyce was born near Lentner, in Shelby County, Missouri, and moved to Colorado with her younger sister and her parents, Mary Virginia (King) (1867–1956) and George Wesley Boyce (1866–1942), when she was four. Her mother was born in Missouri and her father in Delaware. Her parents had married on April 18, 1895. Her father was a farmer in Missouri in 1900 and later a grocer. Her sister, Lura (1898–1990), was also born in Missouri, earned a BA, taught mathematics, married, and was a county treasurer for sixteen years.

The family was living in Colorado Springs in 1900, and Fannie Boyce attended grade school in Colorado 1903–10. Her family moved to University Park, Iowa, and she did her high school and first college work there. She indicated in her PhD dissertation vita that she was at the academy of John Fletcher College 1910–14 and received her BA from John Fletcher College in 1918. The college was called Central Holiness University at the time she was there; it adopted the name John Fletcher College in 1925. After her graduation from college in 1918, she taught in Iowa high schools two years; she taught mathematics in Leon 1918–19 and mathematics and Latin in Rolfe 1919–20. She then attended Penn College (now William Penn University), a Quaker college in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where her sister had earned her BA in 1919. Boyce was at Penn College one year to earn a second bachelor's degree in 1921.

Boyce taught at two schools during the next six years. In both she taught mathematics at the academy level and the first two years of Greek at the college level. In 1921–22 she was at Olivet University (Olivet College after 1923, now Olivet Nazarene University) in Illinois, and in 1922–27 she was at Marion College in Indiana.

Boyce studied at the University of Wisconsin during the academic year 1927–28 and received a master's degree in 1928. After receiving her degree she applied for a position at Wheaton College in Illinois "but was turned down, since the dean was looking for 'a man with a PhD'" (David D. Malone, Special Services, Buswell Memorial Library, Wheaton College to J. LaDuke, 29 Oct 1991). She taught in the high school in Platteville, Wisconsin, 1928–29 and in the high school and junior college in LaSalle, Illinois, the following year before being hired by Wheaton College in 1930. Professor E. B. Skinner of Wisconsin wrote in a letter of recommendation to the college president on January 29, 1930, that "during her residence here she was regarded as one of the most careful and conscientious students that we had at that period. She never took anybody's word for anything, and was never satisfied until she had herself gone through every step of detail in the demonstration of every theorem and every problem. She did excellent work . . . She is a high class woman in every way; a sincere and devoted member of one of the smaller Protestant churches, and is without a trace of frivolity or careless attitude toward her work and toward her associates" (Wheaton College Archives).

Boyce remained at Wheaton as assistant professor 1930–41, associate professor 1941–46, and professor 1946–62. She pursued her graduate work at the University of Chicago by taking leaves of absence in the academic years 1933–34 and 1936–37 and by taking courses every summer 1933–37 except 1936. She received her doctorate

in August 1938. At some point during her tenure at Wheaton she was chosen to participate in a summer institute at Stanford sponsored by the National Science Foundation.

Boyce's parents lived with her when she was in Illinois. It appears that they were living in Chicago, at least in 1936–37 while she was completing her graduate work, and moved to Wheaton when she returned to resume her position at the college. Her father died in 1942. In March 1953 Boyce offered to resign since she was unable to carry her full load because of the time she needed to care for her mother, who was injured nearly a year earlier. Her mother died about three years later.

After her retirement from Wheaton College in 1962 as professor emeritus, Boyce took a position as associate professor at Olivet Nazarene College, where she taught from 1963 to 1970. She was then at Owosso College in Michigan in 1970. She returned to Wheaton, where she was a member of the Wheaton Bible Church and tutored students in her home until she was in her eighties.

Fannie Boyce was a resident of a health care center in Lombard, Illinois, at the time of her death from cardiac arrest at eighty-eight in 1986. It was noted in her obituary that she was an accomplished artist, working with oils. She was survived by her sister and nieces and nephews.

Organizational affiliation: MAA.

Thesis and dissertation:

1928 A determination of types of groups whose orders are less than 18. MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, directed by Ernest Brown Skinner.

1938 Certain types of nilpotent algebras. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, directed by Abraham Adrian Albert. Private edition, distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries.

References to: AmMSc 7–8; AmMWSc 12P.

“Dr. Fannie Boyce, Lombard.” (Obituary) unidentified newspaper clipping, 1986.

Related manuscript material:

Oral History Collection, Wheaton College Archives, Wheaton, IL.

Other sources: PhD dissertation vita 1938; Owens questionnaire 1940; Smithsonian questionnaire 1985; University of Wisconsin Archives; Wheaton College Archives (Academic Affairs (RG 3.3) Record Group); US Census 1900 MO, 1910 CO, 1920, 1930 IA.

Last modified: December 8, 2008.