

**BAXTER, Elizabeth (Pillsbury).** June 8, 1906–April 14, 1966.

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE (BA 1927), UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN (MA 1935, PhD 1939).

Margaret Elizabeth Pillsbury was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the elder of two children of Margaret May (Milbank) (1880–1972), born in New York, and Walter Bowers Pillsbury (1872–1960), born in Iowa. Her mother earned a BA degree from the University of Michigan in 1905, and her parents married in June of that year. Her father, who had received a BA from the University of Nebraska in 1892 and a PhD from Cornell in 1896, was appointed to the department of philosophy and psychology at the University of Michigan in 1897. He became the chairman of the psychology department when the disciplines were separated in the 1920s and remained on the faculty at Michigan until his retirement in 1942. His interests lay primarily in reasoning and attention; he was starred in the fifth edition of *American Men of Science* and was a member of the National Academy of Sciences. A son, Walter Milbank, was born in 1919 in Ann Arbor, held an MBA from Harvard University, was a management officer with the US Department of the Army, and died in 1969 in Washington, D.C.

After Elizabeth Pillsbury's graduation from Ann Arbor High School, she entered Bryn Mawr College. While there she held a James E. Rhoads junior scholarship and three scholarships her senior year: the Charles S. Hinchman memorial scholarship, the Elizabeth S. Shippen scholarship in science, and the Elizabeth Wilson White memorial scholarship. Pillsbury graduated summa cum laude in mathematics and chemistry in 1927.

Elizabeth Pillsbury first enrolled at the University of Michigan in the summer of 1927. She also studied at Göttingen in 1927 and in Berlin in 1928. From 1928 to 1932 she was a graduate student in chemistry at the University of California in Berkeley. Also during this period she married, in 1930, Warren Phelps Baxter, born in Montreal in 1901, a chemist who had received a PhD from the California Institute of Technology in 1928. In 1930 he was a chemist for Shell Development, the research division of Shell Oil Company, in Emeryville, near Berkeley, California. In 1949, while employed by National Technical Laboratories in South Pasadena, he and a colleague patented a glass electrode to measure pH in highly alkaline solutions. Elizabeth and Warren Baxter had a daughter, Margaret Elizabeth, in 1934, and a son, John Walter, in 1939.

In summer 1935 Baxter enrolled as a candidate for a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Michigan. Since she was given credit for some of her work at California, she received the master's degree from Michigan in 1935. She continued her work there in the academic year 1935–36, the summers of 1936 and 1937, and part time in the second semester of 1937–38. She completed her dissertation in 1938 and received the PhD from Michigan in February 1939.

From 1945 to 1947 Elizabeth Baxter worked as a research analyst for the Douglas Aircraft Company. In 1947 she was hired by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology. The following year she registered for a three-day symposium on modern calculating machinery and numerical methods that provided the participants information about then current ultra-high-speed numerical calculation. Baxter was a theoretical analyst 1947–50 and a research engineer after 1950, working mainly in the area of numerical analysis.

Having worked as an engineer for eighteen years, Elizabeth Baxter died at fifty-nine in April 1966 as a result of colon cancer and liver cancer of two years duration. She died in the Don Carlos Convalescent and Nursing Home in Pasadena, California, and was cremated. Warren P. Baxter had died two months earlier.

**Organizational affiliation:** SIAM.

**Dissertation:**

**1938** On the geometry of the Dirac equations. PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, directed by George Yuri Rainich. PhD granted 1939.

**References to:** AmMSc 8, 9P–11P.

**Related manuscript material:**

Walter Bowers Pillsbury Papers, 1858–1960, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

**Other sources:** Bryn Mawr College Archives; University of Michigan Archives and Alumni Records Office; communication with Bryn Mawr College Alumnae Association; NatCAB 44 (Pillsbury, Walter Bowers); WhAm 4 (Pillsbury, Walter Bowers); AmMSc 5 (Baxter, Dr. Warren Phelps); US Census 1900 NY, 1910, 1920, 1930 MI, 1930 CA; California death certificate.

Last modified: December 8, 2008.