

HILL, Sister Mary Laetitia. December 22, 1898–April 10, 1992.

OUR LADY OF THE LAKE COLLEGE (BA 1922), CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA (CATHOLIC SISTERS COLLEGE) (MA 1926), CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA (PhD 1935).

Maria Anna Hill was born in Koerth, Texas, the first of two surviving daughters of Mary Bradley (Watson) (1866–1922), born in Georgia, and Thomas James Hill (1863–1936), from Texas. Her father had been married previously and had three sons with his first wife. At that time, he was in the livestock business. After his first wife died in 1891, he attended medical school in Louisville, Kentucky, settled in Seguin, Texas, and in 1893 moved to Koerth and married Mary Bradley Watson. He practiced medicine and continued in the stock business. Their other surviving daughter, Catherine Jane, was born in 1905. In 1912 the family moved to Yoakum, Texas, where Thomas Hill practiced medicine. His second wife died in 1922, and he remarried in 1923.

Maria Hill started her schooling at age four in a public school before attending, after one year, the Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville, near Koerth, and in 1913–14 the St. Joseph School in Yoakum, where she was taught by the Sisters of Divine Providence. She entered the convent of the Congregation of Divine Providence (CDP) in San Antonio in 1914, at age fifteen, and made her first profession in 1916.

During the years 1916–22, Sister Mary Laetitia Hill taught and completed the work for her bachelor's degree. She first taught at St. Mary's School in San Antonio; while there she taught high school, fifth grade, and kindergarten in the years 1916–21; in second semester 1920–21, she taught in Our Lady of the Lake high school. She taught at the Holy Family School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, from 1921 to 1925. In the meantime, she received her bachelor's degree in 1922 from Our Lady of the Lake College (now Our Lady of the Lake University of San Antonio). In 1925–26, she studied at the Catholic University of American and received her master's degree in 1926.

Sister Mary Laetitia Hill taught at Our Lady of the Lake College, established by the Sisters of Divine Providence, for forty-one years: as instructor 1926–32 and as professor 1935–70. The first six years she taught both mathematics and physics. In 1932–35 she was at Catholic University studying for her doctorate in mathematics. While there she wrote her dissertation in algebraic geometry and received her PhD in 1935 with first minor physics and second minor mechanical engineering. Starting around the time she received her doctorate, Sister Mary Laetitia joined several professional organizations: the AMS in 1935, the American Association of Physics Teachers in 1936, and the American Physical Society in 1937. She also became a member of the Texas Academy of Science and later joined the MAA and NCTM.

For nearly twenty-five years, starting in summer 1935, Sister Laetitia taught mathematics or physics or both during the school year and in most summer sessions. In addition to her teaching at Our Lady of the Lake College, she also directed an NSF-sponsored summer institute for high school teachers at the college for six weeks in 1959. She then received an NSF grant to participate for eight weeks in 1962 in a summer institute for college teachers of mathematics at Bowdoin College in Maine.

After Sister Laetitia retired from Our Lady of the Lake College in 1969, she worked in the college accounting office as a keypuncher until 1972. In 1972 she retired to the convent and Regan Hall for retired sisters. In July 1974 she came out

of retirement to go to the Congregation of Divine Providence house in Queretaro, Mexico, for one semester before returning to San Antonio. In August 1975 she joined the CDP community in Tuba City, Arizona, and remained for three years.

Sister Laetitia was a serious bird watcher, who was known to abandon class briefly, telescope in hand, if she spotted a particularly interesting bird out the window. She taught herself Spanish; shorthand; and to play the organ, flute, and violin; and was reported to have memorized all of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Sister Laetitia finally retired in 1979. She died at age ninety-three in McCullough Hall, the intensive care nursing facility of Our Lady of the Lake Convent in San Antonio, in 1992. She was buried in Providence Cemetery at the convent.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA, NCTM, Amer. Assoc. of Phys. Teachers, Amer. Phys. Soc.

Thesis and dissertation:

1926 The Wallace lines of a triangle. MA thesis. Catholic Sisters College of the Catholic University of America. Typescript.

1935 The number and reality of quadrilaterals in-and-circumscribed to a rational unicuspidal quartic with real tangents from the cusp. PhD dissertation, Catholic University of America, directed by Aubrey Edward Landry. Printed for The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, by J. H. Furst Co., Baltimore, MD. Review: *JFM* 61.0694.03 (M. Steck).

References to: AmMSc 7, 10P–11P.

“Sr. Laetitia Hill.” (Brief Autobiography) *CDP Times*, Jan 1982.

“Sister Mary Laetitia Hill, CDP.” (Obituary) *Today's Catholic (San Antonio)*, 15 May 1992.

Gallatin, Sr. Margaret Ellen. “Sr. Laetitia Hill Wanted to Go Where ‘Mama and Papa Are’.” (Obituary) *CDP Times*, May 1992.

Other sources: Owens questionnaire 1937; communications with Sister Martha Anne Hunter (relative), with Congregation of Divine Province Archives (San Antonio), and with Our Lady of the Lake University development office; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 TX.

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