

**NEWTON, Abba V.** February 19, 1908–May 5, 1996.

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE (BA 1929), UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (MA 1931, PhD 1933).

Abba Verbeck Newton was the younger of two daughters of Sarah C. (Verbeck) (1880–1962) and Samuel Smith Newton (1875–1964). Her father, born in Albany, New York, and her mother, born in Ballston Spa, New York, married in 1905. Abba Newton and her older sister, Katharine Marguerite (1906–1994), were both born in Ballston Spa, where their father worked in the office of the American Hide and Leather Company. Katharine Newton became an elementary school music teacher.

Abba Newton attended Ballston Spa High School 1920–24 and St. Margaret's School in Waterbury, Connecticut, 1924–25 before entering Mount Holyoke College. While there she was in the class choir and was a Sarah Willison scholar before graduating magna cum laude with major subjects mathematics and chemistry in 1929. She taught mathematics at Science Hill School, a girls' preparatory school in Shelbyville, Kentucky, the following year and studied mathematics education at Teachers College, Columbia, in the summer of 1930.

Newton attended the University of Chicago from the fall of 1930 through the summer of 1933, taking off only one quarter, summer 1932, during that time. She held a scholarship during 1932–33. She received her master's degree in 1931, with a thesis directed by [Mayme Logsdon](#), and her doctorate in 1933, with a dissertation directed by E. P. Lane.

Having received her PhD in the midst of the Great Depression, Newton was unemployed until April of 1934 when she began teaching in an instructor's absence at American International College in Springfield, Massachusetts. She remained there as instructor of mathematics and chemistry until 1938. Newton then joined the faculty at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, replacing [Hazel Schoonmaker \(Wilson\)](#) as the professor of mathematics after Schoonmaker left to marry in the summer of 1938. Newton remained at Hartwick until 1943, after which she taught two classes in the summer of 1943 at the University of Chicago and held a one-year appointment as assistant professor at Smith College 1943–44 as a substitute for a member of the faculty on leave for war work.

In 1944 Newton accepted an assistant professorship at Vassar College, where she was to remain for the next twenty-nine years. She was promoted to associate professor in 1950 and to professor in 1957. She chaired the department at Vassar 1950–51, 1953–58, and 1966–67, and retired as professor emeritus in 1973. While at Vassar she was a faculty fellow at the Institute Henri Poincaré at the Sorbonne in 1951 and at Duke University in 1966. She was an NSF science faculty fellow at the University of Michigan 1958–59 and a visiting research fellow at Princeton in 1971.

After her retirement, Abba Verbeck continued to live in Poughkeepsie, New York. When she was younger, she had indicated an interest in tennis, rowing, and hiking. Newton was a member of the Adirondack Mountain Club from about 1946 at least through the early 1980s. She served as an alumnae trustee of St. Margaret's School 1965–70 and was a member of the Dutchess County Council on World Affairs. She was an Episcopalian and sang in the choir at Christ Episcopal Church in Poughkeepsie. Newton died at age eighty-eight at Eden Park Nursing Home in Poughkeepsie. She was survived by cousins and was buried in the family plot in the Ballston Spa Cemetery.

**Organizational affiliations:** AMS, MAA, AAUP, Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi.

**Thesis and dissertation:**

**1931** On tangents common to a surface and its polars. MA thesis, University of Chicago, directed by Mayme Irwin Logsdon. Typescript.

**1934** Consecutive covariant configurations at a point of a space curve. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, directed by Ernest Preston Lane. Private edition, 1934[?], distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries, reprinted from *Trans. Amer. Math. Soc.* 36:44–62.

**Publications:**

**1934** Consecutive covariant configurations at a point of a space curve. *Trans. Amer. Math. Soc.* 36:44–62. Published version of PhD dissertation. Reviews: *JFM* 60.0653.03 (M. Pinl); *Zbl* 008.22401 (V. Hlavatý). Presented to the AMS, Chicago, 22 June 1933; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 39:502 #200.

**1968** Review of *Evolution of Mathematical Thought*, by H. Meschkowski. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 75:213–14.

**References to:** AmMSc 7–8, 9P–11P; AmMWSc 12P–13P, 14; WhoAm 38; WhoAmW 5–9.

“Abba V. Newton, Vassar College Professor.” (Obituary) *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 8 May 1996.

**Other sources:** MA thesis vita 1931; PhD dissertation vita 1933; Owens questionnaires 1937, 1940; Smithsonian questionnaire 1982; Mount Holyoke College Archives; Smith College Archives; Vassar College Archives; communication with Hartwick College Archives; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 NY, 1930 KY; SSDI.

Last modified: March 26, 2009.