

**SEDGEWICK, Rose (Whelan).** June 16, 1903–June 7, 2000.

BROWN UNIVERSITY (WOMEN'S COLLEGE) (PhB 1925), BROWN UNIVERSITY (MA 1927, PhD 1929).

Rose Alice Whelan was born in Brockton, Massachusetts, the fifth of six children of Mary Theresa (Manchester) (1864–1942) and Daniel Edward Whelan (1868–1955). Her mother was born in Liverpool, England, immigrated to the United States in 1868, and was naturalized in 1892. Mary Whelan had no formal higher education but loved reading, music, and theater; she handled the family finances and, according to her granddaughter Norma Sedgewick Rockel, “managed to find the money needed to give her children a higher education.” Daniel Whelan was born in Massachusetts, and his formal education stopped at two years of high school; he was, however, “an omnivorous reader with wide ranging interests” (Rockel correspondence). He worked, mainly as a cutter, in a shoe factory. Norma Rockel also provided a detailed account of the other children in the family. They were Louise Manchester (1894–1984), who earned a bachelor's degree from Teachers College, Columbia University, and taught school in Massachusetts and New Jersey; Elizabeth Harford (1896–1974), who earned a BA and an MA in Guidance from Boston University and taught school in Brockton, Massachusetts; Daniel Edward Jr. (1897–1974), who earned a degree in civil engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and became dean of science at Loyola University in Los Angeles; John Henry (1900–1926), who went to sea for several years and died at age twenty-six; and Mary (1907–2000), who earned a BA from Brown University and an MA from Teachers College, Columbia University, and taught in Maryland and New Jersey.

Rose Whelan received her primary and secondary education in the public schools of Brockton, Massachusetts. While there she received the Benjamin Franklin Medal for excellence in American history, an award that her grandmother, Johanna Louney, had received. After her graduation from Brockton High School in 1921, Whelan entered Women's College in Brown University (Pembroke College in Brown University from 1928 until it merged with Brown in 1971). She received the PhB magna cum laude in 1925, having been elected to Phi Beta Kappa in her junior year.

Whelan remained at Brown University during 1925–26, as a part-time assistant in the mathematics department and as a graduate student in mathematics. She taught in the Women's College before completing the work for her master's degree in September 1926. She received the degree in 1927, after having spent the academic year 1926–27 as a resident fellow at Bryn Mawr College working primarily with [Anna Pell Wheeler](#). A February 1928 statement of the Department of Mathematics at Brown regarding Whelan contains a quotation from Wheeler. “Miss Rose Whelan took two courses with me at Bryn Mawr College during the year '26–'27. I found her a keen, thorough student. She has a questioning mind, and insists on settling all details, but also gets a good grasp of the subject as a whole. It was a great pleasure to work with her. She will be a clear lecturer, and her personality will win her students. She is very attractive in appearance and she has good health. Her interest in Mathematics, and her capacity for work, speak well for her mathematical career in the future. I have great hopes for Miss Whelan” (R. G. D. Richardson folder, R. L. Moore Papers, Archives of American Mathematics). It was noted that she was offered reappointment at Bryn Mawr for the year 1927–28 and that she was

named an alternate for the Margaret E. Maltby fellowship of the AAUW. However, Whelan returned to Brown for the 1927–28 year as holder of the Arnold fellowship.

Whelan also taught a section of freshmen at Women's College while studying for her doctorate and writing her dissertation on boundary value problems in differential equations under the direction of J. D. Tamarkin. In a letter of February 1928, R. G. D. Richardson, head of the department and dean of the graduate school at Brown, observed that Whelan would probably be finished by September 1928, that the dissertation should be publishable, and also that she had taught three summers at her former high school in Brockton, Massachusetts. He wrote, "She is one of the promising young women in Mathematics in the country. I wish it were possible to keep her here, but there seems no opening commensurate with her abilities. The department recommends her unreservedly for any position for which her experience and training fit her" (R. G. D. Richardson folder, R. L. Moore Papers).

During 1928–29 Whelan was an instructor at the University of Rochester and was sufficiently near the completion of her doctoral work that an abbreviated version of her dissertation appeared in the *Bulletin* of the AMS in January 1929. Her 1929 degree was the first PhD in mathematics granted by Brown. After receiving her doctorate, Whelan continued to teach at the University of Rochester. She was an instructor until 1932 and an assistant professor 1932–34.

On December 25, 1932, Rose Whelan and Charles Hill Wallace Sedgewick were married in Brockton, Massachusetts. Charles H. W. Sedgewick was born in Nova Scotia on August 21, 1902. He had worked as a bookkeeper and teller for a bank in Nova Scotia from 1917 to 1921 and as a high school teacher for two years after completing his bachelor's degree at Dalhousie University in 1925. In 1927 Sedgewick went to Brown, where he was an assistant, instructor, and then fellowship holder until 1932. He received his master's degree in mathematics in 1930 and continued his studies there until 1932, when he accepted an instructorship at Connecticut Agricultural College (from 1933 Connecticut State College and since 1939 the University of Connecticut) at Storrs.

After their marriage Rose Sedgewick returned to her teaching position in Rochester, New York, and Charles Sedgewick returned to his position in Storrs, Connecticut. In October 1933 Mary Elizabeth (Malia), the first of their four children, was born in Willimantic, Connecticut, near Storrs. In 1934 C. H. W. Sedgewick received his PhD in mathematics from Brown, he was promoted to assistant professor at Connecticut, and Rose Sedgewick gave up her position at Rochester. Their three other children were also born in Willimantic. They are Norma Louise, born in December 1935; John, born in July 1940; and Robert, born in December 1946. All of the children earned bachelor's degrees: Malia from the University of Connecticut in 1956, Norma with a major in physics from Bryn Mawr in 1956, and John and Robert with mathematics majors from Brown in 1962 and 1968, respectively. Malia also earned an MA from Vanderbilt University and an EdD from the University of Hawaii in 1987, and Robert earned an MA from Brown in 1969 and a PhD from Stanford in 1975. All have had careers: Malia as a professor of nursing, Norma as an electronic systems engineer, John as a mathematician, and Robert as professor of computer science.

Charles Sedgewick remained at the University of Connecticut until 1958. He was assistant professor 1934–41, associate professor 1941–46, and professor 1946–58. Rose Sedgewick was an instructor at Connecticut for some years beginning in 1943

and ending in 1956. She also taught at Hillyer College (now part of the University of Hartford) 1955–58.

In 1958 C. H. W. Sedgewick moved to the US Census Bureau in Suitland, Maryland, where he was a member of the staff of the industrial division 1958–61, chief of the foods section 1961–70, and supervisor of statistics from 1970 until his retirement. Rose W. Sedgewick was hired as an instructor at the University of Maryland in 1958 and was promoted to assistant professor in 1961; she retired at that rank in 1969.

The Sedgewicks' daughter, Norma, wrote in 2000 that her parents played contract bridge and were both life masters in the American Contract Bridge League. She also wrote that her mother "was an avid reader, as were all the Whelans, and read a book almost every day, even well into her 90s."

The Sedgewicks moved from Maryland to Dunedin, on the west coast of Florida, in 1971. Two of Rose Sedgewick's sisters, Louise Whelan and Mary Whelan, also eventually retired to Dunedin; Louise died there in 1984. Charles H. W. Sedgewick died in Dunedin at the age of eighty-six on November 5, 1988.

Rose W. Sedgewick was living at the Mease Continuing Care facility in Dunedin where she died suddenly of a heart attack in June 2000, shortly before her ninety-seventh birthday. Her sister Mary had died in the same facility just six weeks earlier. Rose Sedgewick was a member of St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church in nearby Clearwater, Florida. She was survived by her four children and ten grandchildren. In October 2001, the Rose Whelan Society was founded at Brown University as an organization for women graduate students and postdoctoral appointees in mathematics and applied mathematics.

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

**Thesis and dissertation:**

**1927** [Whelan, R. A.] Analogies between the solutions of second order differential equations and the corresponding linear equations. MA thesis, Brown University. Typescript.

**1929** [Whelan, R. A.] Approximate solutions of certain general types of boundary value problems from the standpoint of integral equations. PhD dissertation, Brown University, directed by Jacob David Tamarkin. Typescript. Abbreviated version, 1929, reprinted from *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 35:105–22.

**Publication:**

**1929** [Whelan, R.] Approximate solutions of certain general types of boundary problems from the standpoint of integral equations. *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 35:105–22. Published version of PhD dissertation. Reviews: *JFM* 55.0257.04 (Fr. Willers); *Rev. semestr. publ. math.* 35:14 (D. J. Korteweg). Presented as "Approximate solutions of certain general types of boundary value problems from the standpoint of integral equations" to the AMS, Amherst, MA, 7 Sep 1928; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 34:706 #49.

**References to:** AmMSc 5–6.

"Rose Whelan Sedgewick, Mathematics Professor." (Obituary) *Washington Post*, 19 Jun 2000.

"Sedgewick, Rose Whelan." (Death notice) *Hartford (CT) Courant*, 15 Jun 2000.

"Sedgewick, Rose Alice Whelan." (Obituary) *Clearwater (FL) Times*, 13 Jun 2000.

**Other sources:** PhD dissertation vita 1929; communication with daughter Norma Sedgewick Rockel 2000; Archives of American Mathematics, Center for American History, The

University of Texas at Austin (R. L. Moore Papers); Brown University Archives; Bryn Mawr College Archives; communication with University of Maryland Archives; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920 MA; SSDI.

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