

IN MEMORIAM

ALONZO CHURCH (1903 – 1995)

Alonzo Church, who was one of the pioneers of mathematical logic in the “post-*Principia*” era, died in Hudson, Ohio on Friday, 11 August, 1995 following a serious illness. He was born in Washington, D.C. on 14 June 1903.

Church received his undergraduate education, his masters degree, and his doctorate in mathematics from Princeton University. His doctoral thesis on the axiom of choice was written under the direction of Oswald Veblen; he received his doctorate in 1927. (Willam Aspray discusses Church at pp. 62–63 in “Oswald Veblen and the Origins of Mathematical Logic at Princeton,” in Thomas Drucker (editor), *Perspectives on the History of Mathematical Logic* (Boston/Basel/Berlin, Birkhäuser, 1991), 54–70.)

Church’s graduate course in logic, taught in the mathematics department of Princeton University in the fall semester of 1931, was (by some accounts, *q.v.* e.g. Quine, p. 83, *The Time of My Life* (Cambridge, Mass./ London, MIT Press, 1985)) the first such course taught in the United States. He gave a series of four lectures on “Elementary Topics in Mathematical Logic” which were given at the Galois Institute of Mathematics of Long Island University in 1940–41. It is evident from the manuscript of these lectures that Church was presenting the most up-to-date introductory survey of mathematical logic while using the lectures as an introduction to mathematics from the standpoint of Gödel-Von Neumann-Bermays set theory. His classic *Introduction to Mathematical Logic* is well known, as are his work on the λ -calculus, and such results as Church’s thesis.

In history of mathematical logic, his contributions included *A Bibliography of Symbolic Logic (1666 – 1935)* (1936; 1984). Under his direction, the *Journal of Symbolic Logic* in its early years made a concerted effort to include everything of possible interest to logicians in its reviews section, and he recruited historians of mathematics such as Jean van Heijenoort (who established contact with Church at the Cornell Summer Institute in Symbolic Logic in 1957) to contribute reviews even of obscure and little-known works, such, for example, as Joseph Bocheński’s paper “*Spitzfindigkeit*” written for the privately published