



Young Cathleen Morawetz and the Fields Medal

I would like to add a small, non-mathematical historical note tangentially linking the late Cathleen Morawetz, featured in the August 2018 *Notices*, to the Fields Medal.¹

Cathleen was the daughter of mathematician John Lighton Synge, who was the executor of John Charles Fields's estate. On his deathbed, Fields entrusted Synge with the unfinished task of bringing into existence the mathematics medal that he had been planning for some time. Although Fields had played around with various designs for the medal, he had not settled upon one at the time of his death in 1932.

Whether at his own behest or that of Fields, Synge met with sculptor R. Tait McKenzie in 1932 at McKenzie's home in Almonte, Ontario, in the Ottawa Valley. Cathleen Morawetz later recalled to me the drive from Toronto to Almonte as a girl of nine with her father—a long and difficult drive in those years, in those cars, over those roads. She remembers meeting Tait McKenzie and running around his wooded property while Synge described Fields's wishes and gave the commission to McKenzie.

Neither Fields, nor Synge, nor McKenzie had any idea then that the lithe young girl would herself become a distinguished mathematician.

—Elaine McKinnon Riehm
Burlington, Ontario, Canada

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¹The 2018 Fields Medals were reported in the November 2018 *Notices*, <https://www.ams.org/journals/notices/201810/rnoti-p1285.pdf>.

*We invite readers to submit letters to the editor at notices-letters@ams.org.

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