

The remarkable Boole family

George Boole (1815–1864) was almost entirely a self-educated mathematician. He is often called the “father of computer science” for his algebraic contribution to logic, which models their work. George’s father was a shoemaker whose passion for math and learning exceeded that for tending to his business.

In 1850 George Boole met Mary Everest, the niece of Sir George Everest, the Surveyor General of India after whom the mountain was named. Mary was already enticed by math long before meeting George (She once wrote “I often told myself I know nothing about God except that he made Algebra, which I always felt was quite sufficient reason for loving him with all my heart and soul...”).

Mary Everest had innovative ideas about math education (and many other topics like human psychology and homeopathic medicine) about which she published many books.

After nine years of a “sunny dream marriage” (quoting their description), George suddenly died. (He had walked to teach under a pouring rain, lectured in wet clothes and came down with a bad cold which affected his lungs).

Mary and George had five daughters, the youngest of whom was only a few months old at George’s death.

Mary Ellen Boole, who married Charles Hinton, a British mathematician and writer of science fiction works .

Margaret, who mothered Sir Geoffrey Ingram Taylor, a British mathematician and physicist.

Alice Boole, a mathematician with no formal education who could “see in four dimensions”.

Lucy Everest Boole was the first woman Fellow of the Institute of Chemistry. She struggled with declining health for some years. and died at the age of 42.

Ethel Lilian Boole, was a writer and passionate supporter of several revolutionary causes. Her most famous novel, *The Gadfly* was a great success worldwide, especially in Russia.

