John Charles Fields Encyclopedia Article

John Charles Fields

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John Charles Fields

1863-1932

Fields was born in 1863 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. After earning his B.A. in mathematics at the University of Toronto, he elected to work for his Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. For the next three years, Fields traveled to Europe, where he was able to study with at least five of the best mathematicians on that continent. He then returned to Canada, where he was appointed lecturer at the University of Toronto—a position he held until his death in 1932. Before he died, Fields had been a strong proponent of an international medal for mathematical excellence and had provided financially for its adoption. It was formally announced at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Zurich in 1932 with the first medals being awarded in Norway at the Oslo Congress in 1936.