KRAMER, Edna E. May 11, 1902–July 9, 1984.
Hunter College (BA 1922), Columbia University (MA 1925, PhD 1930).

Edna Ernestine Kramer was born in New York, New York, the eldest of three children of Sabine (Elowitch) (1879–1958) and Joseph Kramer (1869–1949). Her parents were born in Austria-Hungary and emigrated from there in 1886 and 1882, respectively. They had high school educations and were married in 1901. Her mother was a housewife and her father a salesman of men's clothing. Her younger sister, Martha H., born in 1904, graduated from Hunter College and was later a French teacher; her brother, Herbert E., born in 1911, had a BA and an MA from Columbia College and was a chemistry teacher. Both were elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

Kramer attended Wadleigh High School in Manhattan and graduated in 1918 at age sixteen. She later credited Dr. John A. Swenson, her first mathematics teacher at Wadleigh, with influencing her choice of mathematics as a career. She then attended Hunter College from which she graduated summa cum laude, first in her class, in 1922. In 1922–23 she taught at DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, and in 1923–29 she taught at Wadleigh High School, while also doing graduate work at Columbia University. In her dissertation vita she expressed her indebtedness to Swenson, of Wadleigh, "for the interest in her which prompted him to arrange her program of teaching so as to make it possible for her to attend courses at Columbia University." She earned her master's degree in 1925 and her PhD in 1930 with a minor in physics.

Kramer, with the recommendation of Swenson, obtained a position at Montclair State Teachers College (now Montclair State University) in New Jersey in 1929. She remained there five years: as instructor 1929–32 and as assistant professor 1932–34. In 1934 she published notes that became her first book, *A First Course in Educational Statistics*, and she moved to Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn as teacher and chairman of the mathematics department. The following year, on July 2, 1935, Kramer married Benedict Taxier Lassar, teacher of French and guidance counselor at Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn. Lassar, born in New York City in 1906, had received a BA from CCNY, a JD from Columbia, and a Certificat d'Etudes Francaises from the University of Grenoble. He later received a master's degree from Columbia and a PhD in clinical psychology from New York University. He remained at Abraham Lincoln High School until 1962. He was also self-employed and, from 1964, was a staff psychologist at a psychotherapy center.

Edna Kramer-Lassar remained at Thomas Jefferson High School from 1934 until 1956. During this period she did further study, held several other professional positions, and was engaged in historical research and writing. She studied at the Center for Research and Graduate Education in Mathematics (later Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences), New York University, 1939–40 and at the University of Chicago in 1941. She was instructor in the graduate division at Brooklyn College 1935–38; mathematics consultant in statistics for the US Office of Scientific Research and Development, the Division of War Research, Research Group, Columbia University 1943–45; instructor at Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (now Polytechnic University) 1948–53; and instructor in the graduate division at New York University 1949–50. In 1942, during its second year, Kramer served as the vice chairman of the Metropolitan New York Section of the MAA. During the war her research on anti-aircraft fire control was classified. Her first book in history of

mathematics, *The Main Stream of Mathematics*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1951. In 1952 it was chosen by the Book Find Club, an alternative to the Book-of-the-Month Club; it subsequently underwent a number of editions and was translated into Italian, Dutch, and Japanese.

In 1956 Kramer-Lassar left Thomas Jefferson High School. That year she traveled to England, France, Italy, and Switzerland to interview the women mathematicians who were the subjects of her 1957 article, "Six More Female Mathematicians," written in response to Julian L. Coolidge's 1951 *Scripta Mathematica* article, "Six Female Mathematicians." She also wrote a survey of mathematics for the *Encyclopedia Hebraica*, published in Jerusalem 1956–57.

Kramer continued her teaching at Brooklyn Polytech as adjunct professor from 1953 until 1971, when she retired with emeritus rank. She was a consultant on a special project supported by the NCTM for the University of Oregon in 1963 and participated in the writing of the resulting ten-unit series "Experiences in Mathematical Discovery" published by the NCTM in 1966. From 1965 to 1969 she did further study at NYU's Institute of Mathematical Sciences (renamed Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences in 1966), and in 1970 her book *The Nature and Growth of Modern Mathematics* first appeared. It, too, underwent a number of later editions and was chosen as a Library of Science Book Club selection. In the early 1970s, she wrote almost all of the biographies of women mathematicians that appeared in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*. In 1972 she was a consultant to a committee looking to place women mathematicians in Ivy League universities, and the following year she was lecturer at Nanyang University in Singapore. She was a member of the New York Academy of Sciences. Kramer's interests included music and travel. Also in 1973 she was honored by election to the Hunter College Hall of Fame, which had been established the previous year.

Edna Kramer-Lassar had developed Parkinson's disease and suffered from a broken hip more than two years before her death from pneumonia in her home in Manhattan at age eighty-two in 1984. She was survived by her husband, her sister, and several nieces and nephews.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA, AWM, Soc. Math. France, AAAS, Hist. Sci. Soc., Phi Beta Kappa, Pi Mu Epsilon.

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1925 The mathematical theory of the top. MA thesis, Columbia University.

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