

RAYL, Adrienne S. September 25, 1898–November 27, 1989.

TULANE UNIVERSITY (BA 1924, MA 1934), UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (PhD 1939).

Adrienne Sophie Rayl was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, the daughter of Sophie Catherine (Schick) (1874–1953) and James John Rayl (1871–1952). Her parents were born in New Orleans and were married on January 11, 1898. Her father had an elementary school education, was a cigar classer in 1900, and later was a postal employee; her mother received a high school and normal school education and became an elementary school teacher. Adrienne Rayl was the eldest of eight children. Her siblings were Harold James (b. 1900), Ruth (1903–1987), Naomi (1904–1990), Elsa (1907–1994), Leonora (ca. 1909–1921), Mabel (1910–1989), and Sophie (1913–1994).

Adrienne Rayl attended public grade school and Girls High School in New Orleans, graduating from the latter in 1915 first in her class of fifty-one. She attended the New Orleans Normal School from 1915 to 1917 and graduated, first in her class, with a teaching diploma in 1917.

During the next twenty-two years Rayl taught in the New Orleans public school system and completed all of her undergraduate and graduate work. In 1917 she began teaching seventh and eighth grades at the Beauregard School and began working toward her bachelor's degree by taking courses for teachers and summer school classes at Tulane University. She received her BA in education in 1924 and continued teaching at the elementary school until 1929, when she was transferred to the Edward Douglas White High School to teach mathematics. While teaching at the high school, where she remained until 1939, she attended summer school and afternoon classes, including classes by [Nola Anderson \(Haynes\)](#) and by [Marie Weiss](#), at Tulane and earned her MA in 1934. She immediately began further graduate work at the University of Chicago in the summer of 1934. She took classes there for five consecutive summers and the academic year 1936–37 and finished her dissertation under Walter Bartky in August 1939. Rayl's dissertation concerned the four-body problem. She had begun work in this area while at Tulane and had solved a problem related to the three-body problem when taking a celestial mechanics course there from H. E. Buchanan.

Adrienne S. Rayl spent the next three decades in Birmingham at the University of Alabama Extension Center (now the University of Alabama at Birmingham). When she arrived, there were no women students at the school. In a newspaper article at the time of her retirement, Rayl was quoted as recalling, "The Center had been open only three years when I first came ... and although there were only 116 students enrolled, it was a wonderful opportunity for the working man to attend our evening classes." She was instructor 1939–41, assistant professor 1941–47, associate professor 1947–52, and professor 1952–69. She retired in 1969 with the rank of professor emeritus. While there she taught calculus, differential equations, vector analysis, complex variables, and advanced calculus among other courses. She was also chairman of the Division of Mathematics.

Rayl was a member of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. In the early 1980s she moved back to New Orleans, where she was living at the time of her death in 1989 at ninety-one. She is buried in the Greenwood Cemetery in New Orleans.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA, AAAS, Sigma Delta Epsilon.

Thesis and dissertation:

1934 Summability of Hermitian series. MA thesis, Tulane University.

1939 Stability of permanent configurations in the problem of four bodies. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, directed by Walter Bartky. Typescript. Printed version, 1942.

Publication:

1928 How do you subtract? *Math. News Letter* 3 (4): 9–12.

References to:

“A Woman’s Place Is in the Calculus Class.” *Birmingham News*, 6 May 1969.

“Rayl.” (Death notice) *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 29 Nov 1989.

Other sources: PhD dissertation vita 1939; Smithsonian questionnaire 1985 (assisted by nephew); Tulane University Archives; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920 LA; SSDI.

Last modified: December 12, 2008.