

**GRAY, Alta (Odoms).** October 1, 1910–December 30, 2001.

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI (BA 1931, MA 1932, PhD 1936).

Alta Harriet Odoms was born in Fredonia, Indiana, the third of four children of Ethel (Nelson) (ca. 1878–1962) and John Bert Odoms (b. ca. 1872). Both her parents were natives of Ohio. She had two older sisters, Berta (b. ca. 1904) and Lulu (1909–2005), and a younger brother, Howard (1918–1995). In 1910 her father was a farmer in Crawford County, Ohio; in the 1920s and 1930s he was a plasterer, and the family was living in Clermont county, east of Cincinnati, Ohio.

After Alta Odoms graduated from high school in Milford, Ohio, all of her college education was completed at the nearby University of Cincinnati. As an undergraduate she was a member of the University of Cincinnati mathematics club before receiving her BA in 1931; she served as treasurer while a graduate student in fall 1932. Immediately after her graduation, Odoms continued her graduate work at the University of Cincinnati and received her master's degree in 1932 and her PhD in 1936. Essential parts of her dissertation appeared in an article that she coauthored with H. L. Miller. Miller, a 1931 student of Odom's advisor C. N. Moore, was then on the faculty of the College of Engineering and Commerce at Cincinnati.

From 1935 through March 1937, Odoms was in New York working as an editorial assistant for the American Mathematical Society after [Caroline Seely](#)'s resignation as clerk; she was succeeded by [Mildred M. Sullivan](#). While in New York, she regularly attended meetings of the AMS there. She also auditioned for and was selected to sing with the New York City Oratorio Society. She resigned from the AMS job after two years and looked for a teaching position. She wrote to one of the authors in 1992 that Duke offered her part-time teaching in the Woman's College if she would work for the *Duke Mathematical Journal*, which had begun two years earlier in 1935. Apparently the teaching part of the job just lasted for a year, after which she worked as secretary for the journal.

On December 10, 1938, Alta Odoms married William Frederick Gray. Gray, born in Charleston, South Carolina, in about 1913, and Odoms met in Durham, North Carolina. Interested in a career in government and foreign service, William Gray entered the Fletcher School, the oldest exclusively graduate school of international affairs in the United States, in Medford, Massachusetts, in 1941. This move caused Alta Gray to resign from her position at the *Duke Mathematical Journal*, but she found work in 1941–42 as secretary of the radiation laboratory at MIT. She described herself as “useful as jack-of-all-trades” in the 1992 letter. The Grays had a son and two daughters.

The Grays went to Washington, D.C., in 1942, where William Gray worked for the Board of Economic Warfare. Alta Gray “spent the next ten years producing and enjoying three children,” according to her 1992 letter. In 1952 William Gray joined the State Department Foreign Service and served in countries in Europe and Latin America. Between assignments and after Gray's retirement in 1964, they lived in the Washington, D.C., area.

Alta Gray was interested in politics, history, and nineteenth-century literature. She wrote in 1992, “I have had a wonderful life. . . . Forgive me for having packed away all those mathematics books long years ago.”

William Gray died in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1986. Alta Gray continued to live in Charlottesville and was a long-time resident there of Branchlands Retirement

Village. In December 2001, during a holiday visit to a daughter in the Richmond, Virginia, area, she became ill and died at age ninety-one at the Bon Secours Memorial Regional Medical Center in Mechanicsville, Virginia. Gray was survived by her three children, William F. Jr., Ellen, and Barbara; four grandchildren; and a sister. She was buried in the Gray family plot in Magnolia Cemetery, Charleston, South Carolina.

**Organizational affiliations:** AMS, Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi.

**Thesis and dissertation:**

**1932** [Odoms, A. H.] On the summability of triple Fourier's series. MA thesis, University of Cincinnati. Typescript.

**1936** [Odoms, A. H.] On the summability of double Fourier series. PhD dissertation, University of Cincinnati, directed by Charles Napoleon Moore. See also **1936** in **Publications**.

**Publications:**

**1936** [Odoms, A. H.] with H. L. Miller. On the summability of multiple Fourier series. *Tôhoku Math. J.* 42:155–75. Includes essential parts of PhD dissertation. Reviews: *JFM* 62.0293.02 (J. Marcinkiewicz); *Zbl* 014.15604 (F. Lösch). Presented by title by A. Odoms as “On the summability of triple Fourier series” to the AMS, Los Angeles, 31 Aug 1932; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 38 (9, pt. 1): 637 #209.

**2004** *Growing up in Clermont County, 1913-1935: The Autobiographical Notes of Alta Odoms Gray*, ed. E. G. Hawkins. Manquin, VA: Uppingham House.

**Abstracts not listed above:**

**1934** [Odoms, A.] On the Cesaro mean of double Fourier series. *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 40:33 #18. Presented to a meeting of the AMS, Cincinnati, OH, 1–2 Dec 1933.

**1936** [Odoms, A.] On the logarithmic mean of double Fourier series. *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 42 (1, pt. 2): 31 #35. Presented to the AMS, St. Louis, MO, 2 Jan 1936.

**References to:** AmMSc 6–7.

“Gray, Alta Odoms.” (Death notice) *Washington Post*, 1 Jan 2002.

“Gray, Alta Odoms.” *Obituaries, Cincinnati.Com*, 1 Jan 2002.

**Other sources:** Owens questionnaires 1937, 1940; letter from Alta O. Gray to author, 28 Aug 1992; US Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 OH; SSDI.