

WILLIAMS, Emily (Coddington). October 21, 1873–August 8, 1952.
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON (BA 1896), COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY (MA 1898, PhD 1905),
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (LLB 1913).

Emily Matilda Coddington was born in New York City, the only child of Julia (Fellows) (1840–1926) and Jefferson Coddington (1832–1876), both of New York City and both descended from early seventeenth-century colonial settlers. Her parents married in December 1872. Her father, who had been married previously, was a graduate of Columbia College and an attorney in the city. In 1880 the six-year-old Emily and her mother were living with her maternal grandmother at 24 West 58th Street in Manhattan, her father having died four years earlier. The household also included six other family members and six servants. This was the primary residence for Emily Coddington until her marriage.

Coddington studied at private schools in the New York City area, beginning with Mrs. Wallin's Kindergarten and including Miss Mason's School in Tarrytown and Miss Peebles' School and the Brearley School in New York City until 1892. In 1891, while at the Brearley School, she was one of four women to earn a certificate for having passed satisfactorily the examinations for women "in accordance with the terms prescribed for admission to the Freshman Class of Harvard College" (*Harvard University Catalogue 1891–92*, 399). This certificate entitled Coddington to admission to the "Harvard Annex," a Cambridge institution for women run by the Society for Collegiate Instruction of Women. The "Harvard Annex" offered classes taught by Harvard faculty and was the precursor to Radcliffe College. While there is no indication that she attended the "Harvard Annex," Coddington matriculated at the University of London in June 1894 and received her Intermediate Arts in 1895 and her BA in 1896. Also in 1896 she wrote what would be her master's thesis for a degree in mathematics, with minors in mechanics and Greek, that was awarded two years later by Columbia University. She wrote both this thesis and her PhD dissertation on historical topics. In her dissertation she referred to several papers by the Swedish geometer A. V. Bäcklund. Some time before she received her doctorate in 1905 she published an English translation of an 1883 paper of his. Although Coddington never took any paid positions in mathematics, she did maintain some contact with the mathematical community. She kept her membership in the AMS until her death. She attended the International Congress of Mathematicians in Rome in 1908 and in Cambridge, England, in 1912, and she often attended meetings of the AMS in New York City until shortly before her marriage in 1917.

In 1903 Emily Coddington became a member of the Women's Advisory Committee of New York University's Council of the University. She attended the Law School of NYU starting in 1909 and was admitted to the New York Bar in January 1912 before receiving her law degree from New York University in 1913. In her 1911 application to the Committee on Character of the Bar Association she indicated that she had neither been employed in, nor studied law in, a law office, nor had she ever been engaged in any business or profession other than the law. A decade later she indicated that she had never practiced law. The *New York Times* listed Coddington among the "many prominent New York women" to be seated in boxes at an anti-suffrage meeting to be held at Carnegie Hall in 1915. She also continued her service on the NYU Women's Advisory Committee and served as treasurer at least during 1907–08 and as secretary at least during 1915–17.

On November 5, 1917, at the age of forty-four, Coddington married William Henry Williams (1876–1943), an executive with an exporting business at the time of their marriage. William Henry Williams had been educated at Pratt Institute and Packard Business College and was chairman of the board of North Central Texas Oil Company at the time of his death. Both before and after her marriage Emily Coddington Williams lived in New York City, although she and her husband also had a summer home, Villa Rosa, in Newport, Rhode Island. They had no children.

Emily Coddington Williams had wide-ranging interests. They included gardening, genealogy, and the writing of fiction among many others. In particular, she was an active member of the Garden Club of America, was at one time on the board of directors of the International Garden Club in Pelham Bay Park, and belonged to the Tuxedo, Piping Rock, Colony, and Cosmopolitan clubs. In 1914 she secured a copyright for a typed one-act play called "Then." After her marriage she published another one-act play, two novels, and a sketch of William Coddington, a colonial governor of Rhode Island.

During the course of her life Emily C. Williams made many trips to Europe, frequently with her mother and later with her husband. In addition to the trips to England between 1894 and 1896 while she was a student in London and in 1908 and 1912 for the mathematical congresses in England and in Italy, it appears that she made several other voyages between 1905 and 1914 and nearly every year with her husband in the 1920s and 1930s. After the death of her husband in 1943, Williams moved from their townhouse on East 63rd Street in New York City to the Hotel Pierre, also in Manhattan.

In 1952 Williams made her last trip to Europe, on the Queen Mary. After having fractured her hip on board ship in April, Emily Williams died at the American Hospital in Paris in August 1952 at age seventy-eight. Her estate, which included a large amount of real estate and was estimated at \$12,000,000, was divided among her two godchildren and charitable groups in New York City and Newport, Rhode Island. The New York organizations included the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, the Colonial Dames of America, the Marble Collegiate Church, and Peabody Home for Aged and Indigent Women. The Rhode Island organizations included Trinity Church, the Redwood Library, the Reading Room, and the Newport Historical Society.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA.

Thesis and dissertation:

1896 [Coddington, E. M.] The historical development of the theory of determinants. MA thesis, Columbia University. MA granted 1898.

1905 [Coddington, E.] A brief account of the historical development of pseudospherical surfaces from 1827 to 1887. PhD dissertation, Columbia University. Printed, 1905, Press of the New Era Printing Co., Lancaster, PA.

Publications:

n.d. (Translator from the Swedish) *Concerning Surfaces with Constant Negative Curvature*, by A. V. Bäcklund. Lancaster, PA: Press of the New Era Printing Co.

1925 *Pals; A One-Act Play*. New York: J. J. Little and Ives Co.

1927 *Homing Pigeon*. New York: The MacCaulay Co. Review: *New York Times*, 18 Dec 1927; incorrectly lists author as Emily Wildington Williams.

1929 *Quest for Love*. New York: The MacCaulay Co.

1941 *William Coddington of Rhode Island, A Sketch*. Boston: Merrymount Press.

References to:

“Rally against Suffragists.” *New York Times*, 18 Oct 1915.

“Miss Coddington a Bride.” *New York Times*, 6 Nov 1917.

“Estate Guardians Named - Court Acts in Case of Injured Millionaire Widow.” *New York Times*, 8 Aug 1952.

“\$20,000,000 Bond Is Set; Record Precedes Death in Paris of Mrs. E. C. Williams.” (Obituary) *New York Times*, 9 Aug 1952.

“Will Aids Groups Here - Local Institutions to Get Sums from Mrs. Williams’ Estate.” *New York Times*, 20 Aug 1952.

“Mrs. William Henry Williams.” (Obituary) *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 84 (Jan 1953): 38.

Other sources: Communications with The Brearley School archivist, the Committee on Character and Fitness of the First Judicial Department of New York State, the Historic Collections Administrator of the University of London Library, and the New York University Archives; Lila James Roney, “William Henry Williams: 1876–1943,” *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 74 (Oct 1943): 138–39; US Census 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 NY.

Last modified: July 20, 2009.