WYANT, Kathryn. January 16, 1897–July 16, 1942.
Uɴɪᴠᴇʀsɪᴛʏ ᴏꜰ Mɪssᴏᴜʀɪ (BS 1921, MA 1922, PʜD 1929).

Emily Kathryn Wyant was born in Ipava, Illinois, the younger of two children of Alice Mary (Dillon) (b. 1864) and Clarence Jacob Wyant (b. 1871), natives of Illinois. Her older brother, Kenneth D., was born in 1894. In 1900 the family was living in Dixon, in northern Illinois, and her father's occupation was described in the census report as "student." Kathryn Wyant attended a country grade school in Bader, Illinois, about twenty-five miles from Ipava. In 1910 the family was living in Bolivar, Missouri, where her father was a merchant. Kathryn graduated from the high school there in May 1914.

Wyant entered the University of Missouri in June 1914 and did most of her undergraduate work in summer sessions there. She taught two winters in rural schools in Polk County, Missouri, and three in the high schools at Callao and Neosho, Missouri, before receiving her BS in education in June 1921.

Wyant was an instructor in mathematics at the University of Missouri from 1921 until 1930. She completed her master's degree at Missouri with a major in physics and a minor in mathematics in 1922. After having attended one summer session at the University of Chicago, she completed the work for her PhD at Missouri with a major in mathematics and a minor in astronomy. Her 1929 dissertation was directed by G. E. Wahlin. She also thanked W. D. A. Westfall, Louis Ingold, E. S. Haynes, and E. R. Hedrick for their interest in her work.

From 1930 to 1933 Wyant was professor of mathematics at Northeastern State Teachers College (now Northeastern State University) in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. From 1933 to 1934 Wyant did postgraduate work at the University of Chicago before joining, in 1934, the faculty at Athens College (now Athens State University) in Athens, Alabama. The college, founded in 1822 as Athens Female Academy, had become coeducational in 1931. She served as chairman of the department of mathematics there until her early retirement in 1940 because of ill health.

Throughout her career Wyant was unusually active in professional and honorary societies. While she was at Missouri she was particularly involved with the mathematics honorary fraternity Pi Mu Epsilon, the graduate women's scientific fraternity Sigma Delta Epsilon, and the MAA. In 1925 she was the corresponding secretary of the University of Missouri chapter of Pi Mu Epsilon when there were only nine chapters. She was national vice president of Sigma Delta Epsilon in 1926 and president from June to December 1926. The following year she was chairman of the Missouri Section of the MAA. Also during this period Wyant became interested in some Diophantine problems and solutions that had appeared in *The Missouri Intelligencer* in 1823 and 1824 and spoke about them to the local Pi Mu Epsilon chapter and to the Missouri Section of the MAA.

While at Northeastern State Teachers College, Wyant transformed the existing mathematics club into the first chapter of Kappa Mu Epsilon, a mathematics honor society for schools that place an emphasis on undergraduate education. This first chapter was installed in 1931 with twenty-four members, and by the end of 1932 there were six chapters. Kappa Mu Epsilon was granted membership into the Association of College Honor Societies in 1968. The society produces a journal, *The Pentagon*, and has grown to over a hundred chapters. In addition to founding Kappa Mu Epsilon, she served as its first national president 1931–35 and its fourth national historian 1939–41. In 1936 she was a co-founder of the Tennessee Valley Mathematics Association for high school teachers, junior college teachers, and others interested in mathematics. She served as secretary-treasurer of the mathematics division of the Alabama Education Association 1936–37.

Wyant was a Methodist and was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star. In about 1940 she listed her hobbies as supervising mathematics fraternity work and driving her car.

She also indicated that her favorite recreation was "playing with cocker spaniel" (AmWom 1935–40).

In 1940 Wyant was living in Birmingham, Alabama; she was living outside of Athens, Alabama, at the time of her death at age forty-five in 1942. The death certificate indicates only that she died of natural causes. She is buried in Ipava, Illinois, the town of her birth.

Organizational affiliations: AMS, MAA, Sigma Delta Epsilon, Sigma Xi, Pi Mu Epsilon, Kappa Mu Epsilon.

Thesis and dissertation:
1922 The measurement of the frequencies of oscillatory electrical circuits. MA thesis, University of Missouri. Typescript.
1929 The ideals in the algebra of generalized quaternions over the field of rational numbers. PhD dissertation, University of Missouri, directed by Gustav Eric Wahlin. Typescript. Printed version, 1939, Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, MI.

Abstracts:
1927 Some mathematical questions in Missouri history. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 34:3–4 #4. Presented to the MAA, Kansas City, MO, 13 Nov 1926. Printed version of typescript of presentation, "Some mathematical problems in Missouri history," 1939, Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, MI.
1928 The foundation of the theory of ideals. *Amer. Math. Monthly* 35:52 #1. Presented to a meeting of the MAA, St. Louis, MO, 25–26 Nov 1927.
1930 The ideals in the algebra of generalized quaternions over the field of rational numbers. *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 36:204 #141. Presented to the AMS, Des Moines, IA, 30 Dec 1929. Based on PhD dissertation.

References to: AmMSc 5–6, AmWom 1935–40.

Other sources: PhD dissertation vita 1929; Owens questionnaires 1937, 1940; Owens Papers; communication with Athens College Archives; Mary S. Elick, "Brief History of Kappa Mu Epsilon,"; US Census 1900 IL, 1910, 1920, 1930 MO; Alabama death certificate.

Last modified: March 11, 2009.