

BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRIES

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ADAMS, Rachel (Blodgett). October 13, 1894–January 22, 1982.

WELLESLEY COLLEGE (BA 1916), RADCLIFFE COLLEGE (MA 1919, PhD 1921).

Rachel Blodgett was born in Woburn, Massachusetts, the eldest of three children of Mabel Edith (Owen) (b. 1874) and William Edward Blodgett (b. 1864), natives of Massachusetts. Her parents did not attend college; her father was treasurer of a company that manufactured tiles and was at one point mayor of Woburn. Her brother, Malcolm, was born in 1897 and her sister, Hope, was born in 1903.

After attending public grammar school 1899–1908 and Woburn High School 1908–12, Rachel Blodgett entered Wellesley College, where several relatives of her father had studied in the early years of the college. Blodgett majored in mathematics and Latin, was a member of the Shakespeare Society, and played cornet in the Wellesley College symphony orchestra. She was a Wellesley scholar 1914 and a Durant scholar 1915.

Following her graduation from Wellesley in 1916, Rachel Blodgett attended Harvard summer school in 1916 and was employed 1916–18 as a teacher of mathematics (mathematics mistress) at Miss Edgar's and Miss Cramp's School in Montreal, Quebec. The next three years she did graduate work in analysis at Radcliffe College, where she held an Edward Austin scholarship at least two years and a Mary E. Horton fellowship her last year, 1920–21. She earned her master's degree in 1919 and her doctorate in 1921. While there she had her closest contact with Professors W. F. Osgood and O. D. Kellogg, although it is not clear under whose direction she wrote her dissertation. She was instructor of mathematics at Wellesley during the academic year 1921–22.

Rachel Blodgett married Clarence Raymond Adams on August 17, 1922, in Eden Park, Rhode Island. C. R. Adams was born on April 10, 1898, in Cranston, Rhode Island. He was a 1918 graduate of Brown University, earned master's degrees from Brown and Harvard University, and completed his PhD in mathematics in 1922 under George David Birkhoff at Harvard. The newly married couple were in Rome and Göttingen 1922–23 while C. R. Adams was a Sheldon traveling fellow from Harvard.

Upon their return in 1923 Rachel and C. R. Adams moved to Providence, Rhode Island, where he was to spend his career in the mathematics department at Brown. He became full professor in 1936 and served as department chair from 1942 to 1960. He was active in a number of professional mathematical societies; in particular, he served as councillor and vice president of the AMS and was on the board of governors of the MAA. He was starred in *American Men of Science* in 1933. C. R. Adams retired as professor emeritus from Brown in 1965 and died on October 15, 1965. There were no children of the marriage.

Rachel B. Adams was a member of the MAA for a year after her marriage and served as a tutor at Radcliffe from 1926 to 1941. During these years the other mathematics tutor at Radcliffe was [Florence Curtis Graustein](#). At least through the 1920s Adams continued her interest in integral equations. G. C. Evans of Rice Institute used information from her dissertation in an extensive review of a book

on linear integral equations for the *Monthly* in 1927. She presented her results to the AMS in 1926 and published them in the *American Journal* in 1929.

Rachel Adams was a Baptist and a Republican and was active in and served as an officer of a number of community organizations, including the First Baptist Church Women's Society, the YWCA, the Brown Faculty Ladies, the Handicraft Club of Providence, the Weavers Guild, the Providence Art Club, a literary society, an amateur theatrical group, and the Rhode Island Wellesley Alumnae. During World War II she was registered in Washington with the National Roster of Scientific Personnel, although there is no evidence of her being asked to do scientific work at that time. She was, however, engaged in other war-time work such as making dressings.

During their marriage Rachel and C. R. Adams traveled extensively by automobile in the United States and Europe. After her husband's death she continued her community work and served as treasurer for several years and on the board of directors of the Home for Aged Women (later the Tockwotton Home) in Providence.

Adams lived in her family home in Providence for more than forty years until 1980, when she moved to the Tockwotton Home just over a year before her death there at age eighty-seven in 1982. She was survived by her sister, Hope Blodgett Stebbins, and was buried in Swan Point Cemetery in Providence. Following her death, a bequest from her estate was used to establish the Blodgett Fund at Wellesley, with the income to be used for scholarships.

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

Theses and dissertation:

1920 [Blodgett, R.] Invariants of systems of conics. First minor thesis, Radcliffe College.

1921a [Blodgett, R.] The principles of least actions, varying actions, and least constraint in dynamics. Second minor thesis, Radcliffe College.

1921b [Blodgett, R.] The determination of the coefficients in interpolation formulae; and A study of the approximate solution of integral equations. PhD dissertation, Radcliffe College. See also **1929**.

Publication:

1929 On the approximate solution of Fredholm's homogeneous integral equation. *Amer. J. Math.* 51:139–48. Published version of PhD dissertation. Review: *JFM* 55.0231.02 (G. Feigl). Presented by title as “The solutions of Fredholm's homogeneous integral equation as functionals of the kernel” to the AMS, New York City, 1 May 1926; abstract: *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* 32:309 #14.

References to: AmMSc 4–8, 9P–10P; AmWom 1935–40; WhoEast 1930.

“Rachel B. Adams.” (Obituary) *Providence Sunday Journal*, 24 Jan 1982.

Other sources: Owens questionnaire 1937; Wellesley College Alumnae Association; communications with Harvard University Archives, Providence Public Library, and Wellesley College Archives; communication with Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University (Radcliffe College student files, 1890–1985); US Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 MA, 1930 RI, 1930 NY; SSDI.

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