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Pioneers of Representation Theory: Frobenius, Burnside, Schur, and Brauer (History of Mathematics)

Charles W. Curtis

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The year 1897 was marked by two important mathematical events: the publication of the first paper on representations of finite groups by Ferdinand Georg Frobenius (1849-1917) and the appearance of the first treatise in English on the theory of finite groups by William Burnside (1852-1927). Burnside soon developed his own approach to representations of finite groups. In the next few years, working independently, Frobenius and Burnside explored the new subject and its applications to finite group theory. They were soon joined in this enterprise by Issai Schur (1875-1941) and some years later, by Richard Brauer (1901-1977). These mathematicians' pioneering research is the subject of this book. It presents an account of the early history of representation theory through an analysis of the published work of the principals and others with whom the principals' work was interwoven. Also included are biographical sketches and enough mathematics to enable readers to follow the development of the subject. An introductory chapter contains some of the results involving characters of finite abelian groups by Lagrange, Gauss, and Dirichlet, which were part of the mathematical tradition from which Frobenius drew his inspiration. This book presents the early history of an active branch of mathematics. It includes enough detail to enable readers to learn the mathematics along with the history. The volume would be a suitable text for a course on representations of finite groups, particularly one emphasizing an historical point of view. Co-published with the London Mathematical Society beginning with Volume 4. Members of the LMS may order directly from the AMS at the AMS member price. The LMS is registered with the Charity Commissioners.

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