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Their Goal — Good Housekeeping

by Nancy Fox

Home Economics Freshman

THERE SHALL BE FREE ADMISSION of young women, on equal terms with young men, to all the privileges and honors which the institution can bestow," announced A. S. Welch, first president of Iowa State College, in his inaugural address on March 17, 1869. President Welch told of new plans for Iowa State College.

He explained to the inaugural audience that there were only four institutions in the United States that taught theory and practice of housekeeping, but there was not one institution that furnished systematic instruction in the higher and holier duties pertaining

Below, Dean Catherine MacKay, the first dean of the Division of Home Economics. Above, a group of the first Iowa State coeds group on the steps of "Old Main" for a class picture.



to mother and wife. Iowa State College was to "offer to young women a scope for scientific progress and research as unlimited and free as that which is offered to the opposite sex."

On March 17, 1869, the opening date of the college, 36 women entered the general science course. This was 11 years after the "birthday of the college," March 22, 1858, the day the governor of Iowa, Ralph P. Lowe, signed the bill legalizing the founding.

Iowa State's first women students were put under the supervision of the matron, Mrs. Catherine Potter. They lived and studied in "Old Main," the only building on the campus, which was located near the present site of Beardshear Hall. This four-story building housed the dining room, kitchen, laundry and bakery on the ground floor; class rooms on the first floor; the women's living quarters on the second floor; and the men's dormitories on the third and fourth floors.

Using the dining room, kitchen, laundry and bakery as class rooms, the women followed Mrs. Potter's instructions. They did their own laundry and in addition a man's shirt and collar as part of their training. These duties proved to be a successful experiment for they paved the way for a 4-year "ladies' course" which was developed in 1871 by Mary A. Lovelace.

In the fall of 1872, Mary B. Welch, the wife of the college president, began working towards her goal of a Domestic Economy Department. She firmly believed that the women, although they were in college to obtain an education in the general science field, should have some formal instruction in domestic duties just as the men were receiving formal instruction in

agricultural and industrial pursuits. As a result of her work and careful planning, Mrs. Welch became the head of the newly formed Domestic Economy Department.

To become better acquainted with the actual needs of her students, Mrs. Welch took consecutive courses at the Cooper Union with Juliet Corson in New York and at the South Kensington School of Cooking in London. Despite protests by her college president husband, she found she had to start from the bottom, scrubbing and polishing pots and pans, laying fires and cleaning stoves. These particular duties were required in the Kensington School because graduates were mainly skilled servants and teachers for suburban schools. The program Mrs. Welch adapted from her experiences gained national recognition.

First Experimental Kitchen

In 1876, 4 years after the birth of the Domestic Economy Department, the Board of Education authorized an experimental kitchen in the basement of Old Main. As far as it is known, this kitchen was the first of its kind in the country. The textbook students used was a cookbook written by Mrs. Welch herself.

Domestic Economy Leader

Poor health forced Mrs. Welch to resign in 1884 and Mrs. Emma P. Ewing, who had conducted the Chicago Training School of Cookery, was named her successor. Mrs. Ewing gained a national reputation teaching housekeeping to wealthy Southern women who were left without slave help after the Civil War. She also was the first person in the United States to hold the "Chair of Domestic Economy" which was equal to a full professorship. When Mrs. Ewing became head of the department, it was located in two small basement rooms in South Hall, a brick building which stood south of the present location of the campanile.

The new head soon asked for all of South Hall for the growing department. The request was granted and \$400 appropriated for furnishings and equip-

ment. Cooking classes moved into the Old Main kitchen where meal planning and institution management courses were taught. Domestic chemistry became a part of the curriculum for domestic economy students.

Following the work done by Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Ewing, the Domestic Economy Department continued to grow with the aid of the department heads. The department became the Division of Home Economics in 1913 during the 10-year administration of Catherine MacKay. Miss MacKay became the first dean of Home Economics when the five divisions were formed.

Dean MacKay planned for and saw many improvements such as a "practice cottage," the first name for a home management house; the first Home Economics building in 1912 called the Domestic Technology Building; a doubled enrollment and the extension program.

Today's classwork is a great advancement from the laundry, bakery, dining room and kitchen duties bestowed upon the first 36 girls at Iowa State College. Through the years, each department head and dean has made her individual contribution to the growth of Iowa State's home economics program.

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