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Pioneering in Home Economics

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HOME ECONOMICS women of today, thinking in terms of the dedication of the finest home economics building in the United States, go back with me to the formal opening day of the Iowa Agricultural College March 17, 1869. You might have enrolled then with 36 other women in a course of "general science"—a pioneer course for pioneer women. Adonijah S. Welch, the first president of the institution, devoted half of his inaugural address to the justification of allowing women equal educational opportunities with men, and B. F. Gue, then president of the Board of Trustees, and later lieutenant governor, included the following significant paragraph in his dedication address:

"In this, the 'People's College,' dedicated to the encouragement and promotion of industry, we must aim to make labor attractive, not only to the boys who are here seeking knowledge in their department, but to the girls, who can never become accomplished and thoroughly educated without a knowledge of conducting every household occupation with system, intelligence and womanly grace. The most alarming feature of our present system of educating our girls is the almost total disregard of these branches known as the useful and practical, that will prepare them for the proper discharge of the best and noblest duties of rational and intelligent women."

To carry over the plan of democracy, every student was required by law to labor two and one-half hours per day throughout the college year. Mrs. Potter, the matron, arranged for squads of young ladies to work in the dining room, kitchen, laundry and bakery, rotating them systematically so that every girl had some practice in each department.

This was not the beginning of home economics, but it paved the way for the four year "ladies' course" which developed in 1871, including lectures on "domestic economy" given by the preceptor, Miss Lovelace. In 1872 Mrs. Mary B. Welch, wife of the president of the college, was asked to take charge of the work in domestic economy. Without precedent and with only scattered contemporaries, Mrs. Welch worked, planned and studied to formulate a course in homemaking for women. She went first to Miss Juliet Corson's School of Cookery in New York City and spent the following winter vacation at the South Kensington School of Cookery in London. Of this experience, Mrs. Welch writes:

"The only object of the school was to train cooks for service. It was incomprehensible to the English mind that a woman, apparently a lady, whose husband was, as my letters proved, at the head of an important institution of learning, should be anxious either to learn or to teach cooking. The question was often asked me what family I was engaged to work for when I received my certificate. But, after all, what did that matter? At the end of three months of genuine drudgery, a certificate was conferred which ought to have been framed and hung in the college museum."

That result was quickly forthcoming is shown in a letter from Mrs. Welch which appeared in a bulletin entitled, "Training Schools of Cookery," which was published by the U. S. Bureau of Education in 1879. She writes:

"The first instruction in this department was given in 1872 by a course of lectures to junior girls on matters connected with housekeeping. In 1873 the trustees added a course in cooking and provided a kitchen for the use of the class. For the last two years, therefore, lessons in plain cooking have been given to the junior class, in connection with lectures on such subjects as house furnishings, care of the sick, care of children, management of help, dress, etc. Domestic chemistry forms also a part of our course.

"Our facilities are still further increased this year by the addition of a laundry, wherein the girls of the sophomore class are now learning to wash and iron. During March and April two afternoons a week are spent in this laundry under the careful supervision of competent teachers. In May the class is to receive instruction twice a week in plain sewing and is to be taught how to use the Wheeler and Wilson and Singer sewing machines. In June an experienced dressmaker is to teach the art of cutting and fitting dresses. The kitchen will be opened the middle of July and the class will then receive instruction in cookery two afternoons weekly until October.

"A constant and increasing interest and enthusiasm have marked our progress in this department of study, and no one of our college courses has attracted more attention or received more encouragement from the state at large."

The department grew rapidly until in 1881 61 girls were taking work in the "School of Domestic Science" and the department was promoted to South Hall, then standing south of the Campanile.

Following Mrs. Welch's resignation in 1883, Emma P. Ewing came to carry on the work. A national reputation was hers already because of her systematic plan for helping southern women learn to cook after their negro servants had been freed. Under her leadership a post graduate course was installed with the first three students, graduates of Drake University, State University of Iowa, and Iowa Agricultural College. In 1886 the degree of Master of Domestic Economy was conferred upon Nellie E. Rawson and Mrs. Clara J. Dunn. Probably this was the first recognition in the United States of home economics as appropriate for graduate work.

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Omicron Nu---By Cora B. Miller

Twice a year a few junior and senior women find
tucked under their doors, notes which have been
left there in the early morning hours while they
were still asleep. Such a note means an invitation to
become a member of the home economics honor organ-
ization, Omicron Nu. The invitation brings a thrill be-
cause it means a recognition of work well done and
serves as a spur to increased effort. Gamma Chapter,
which was installed in 1913, has initiated 317 women into
active membership. The national comprises 23 chapters.

The organization aims to recognize and encourage
leadership in all fields of home economics and, above
all, to promote an interest in and a desire for the
active work. This was later expanded into Home Economics Day,
which was finally observed by Velshen. The Home Economics Day program developed into so large an
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ics Club. The Omicron Nu girls first served the cherry
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Now, however, the national organization frowns upon
local money making schemes, but asks its members to
stand back of and aggressively support all worth while
movements on the campus and to search for opportuni-
ties to help develop the qualities of leadership in younger
members of the student body.

To encourage high scholastic standing, Gamma Chap-
ter awards, at the first all-college convocation in the
fall, a certificate and pin to the home economics stu-
dent who received the highest average in the freshman
year. This custom has been adopted by all the honor
organizations on the campus. Each year some special
effort is made to acquaint the freshman women with
the organization and instill in them the desire to make
the time spent in college count for mind and character
development and for professional growth. This year it
is taking the form of an essay contest. The prize of ten
dollars was won by Cora Rye, freshman home economics
student, and her essay on the life of Ellen H. Richards
will be published in an early number of the Homemaker.

The Home Economics Club

The Home Economics Club is a di-
visional organization open to all
home economics students. Its pur-
pose is twofold— one to foster profes-
sional spirit and leadership, the other to
give service to the division and to the
College. Its annual “Vodvil” has beco-
me an institution in the club. Thru this
channel a considerable amount of money is
earned each year. This money is used
for the support of scholarship and loan funds available to home economics wo-
men and contributions to funds of local
interest, as the Memorial Union Building
and a gift fund for Home Economics Hall. An oriental rug for the Auditorium
will be presented at the dedication ser-
vice.

The club sponsors all student affairs of
the division, one of the most important
being the open house exhibit at Velshen.
The silver cup awarded for the best divi-
sional exhibit has come to home econom-
ic for the last two years.

Much incentive for carrying on the work of the club comes from the girls
who are sent to the American Home Eco-
nomics Association meeting each year.

Loan Funds for Home Economics Students

Thru the generosity of certain persons, every
year a few girls are enabled to go on with their
home economics work, when otherwise they would
have been forced to discontinue their studies.

The Mary J. Rausch Scholarship is offered every year
to the junior home economics student having the best
record in scholarship, character and initiative.

During this last academic year a new loan fund has become available. The Hon. Parley Sheldon of Ames,
Iowa, has given to the college as a memorial to his wife,
Frances A. Sheldon, a fund of $10,000 with the under-
sanding that the income received from the investment
of this fund shall be loaned to worthy students taking
home economics courses. It is administered by the col-
lege loan fund committee.

The Home Economics Club has for several years
helped to maintain the Catherine J. MacKay loan fund.
The funds are donated yearly from the proceeds of the
Home Economics Vodvil given by the girls of the divi-
sion. This spring Mrs. L. S. Pearson contributed $25
to this loan fund in honor of Miss Edith Pearson, former
secretary of the division.

The Larabee prize is a $25 prize awarded each year
by Miss Ann Larabee to the senior girl who has the
most outstanding record in foods work during the four
years of her college course.

Pioneering in Home Economics

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From 1888-1895, Mrs. Elizabeth Owens, now living at
Charles City, Iowa, carried on the work with this de-
finite aim: “To secure for the students a knowledge of prac-
tical and systematic methods of rendering homes a
pleasant and healthful abode.” The special work
then outlined for the four years course consisted of:

Freshman year: Foods.
Sophomore year: Cooking and serving of meals. Pur-
chase and care of family supplies. General house-
hold management. Invalid cookery— Care of the sick.
Senior year: General review in preparation for the
serious responsibilities woman would assume in her
capacity of housekeeper.

In 1896 the department moved into the new rooms on
the second floor of North Hall, adjoining Margaret Hall,
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National Music Week Contests

What is Your Type?

In the State Fair premium list we found these three classifications: Dresses suitable for the athletic, the ingenuous and the dramatic types. In explaining these types of girls, Miss Hazel Spencer, formerly clothing specialist at Iowa State College and now at Cornell University, New York, says:

"The athletic girl's clothing is built on the principles of lines of opposition. She is our medium or average size girl, in other words the regulation 36. She is a girl who walks with a firm, striding step, carries her head easily erect, muscles firm, action quick, but decided.

"The second type of girl is our ingenuous. She is of the slender, light, weight type. I do not mean by that underweight, but light and dainty. When she walks she skips a bit. Her hair is flouncy, her eyes are bright and sparkling. She wears dainty ruffled dresses. The basis lines for her costume are lines built on the curved line principle.

"The third type of girl is our dramatic type. She is tall and forceful. When she walks, she glides along. Her color is dark and the basic lines of her costume are straight, long up and down lines. She is not overweight, but she is the large type. She is a girl who is perfectly poised and talks well with other people."

Fannie Buchanan of Grinnell has just published her two lovely musical pantomimes, "Memory Girls from Song Land" and "The Song of the Lark." These were put on by Iowa club girls at the Iowa Girls' Short Course in 1925.

Counties that are looking for beautiful numbers for programs will do well to send for this pamphlet. It can be ordered from the Home Publishing Company, 1130 East St., Grinnell, Iowa, for 30 cents.

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and 22 girls graduated from the "ladies course." Mrs. Gertrude Coburn Jessup was then at the head of the department with her object: "Training of minds and hands so that young women will be prepared to undertake the supervision of their homes with the same comprehension and confidence deemed necessary in any profession." Miss Coburn secured the incorporation of a four year ladies course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Letters.

Under the supervision of Miss Mary Sabin, 1900-1903, the work assumed a more technical character. Three assistants were employed, six class rooms and laboratories in Margaret Hall were in use, and two courses were offered; the "general and domestic science course" and the "domestic science course."

During the years 1905-1912 Alice Merritt (Parks), Miss Goorgetta Witter (now Mrs. F. H. Waters of Ames), Mrs. Alice Dynes Fueling and Miss Vergilia Purmort were responsible for a period of development, achievement, and of establishing a sure foundation for home economics at Iowa State College.

The available space in Margaret Hall and Old Agricultural Hall being entirely inadequate, the first home economics building was formally opened in the fall of 1911 and the year following Catherine J. MacKay was made dean of the division. A division then numbering 4 instructors and 136 students grew until in 1920 there were 38 instructors and 723 students.

With added numbers came the evolution of departments—household art, household management, applied design, household science, teacher training, 2-year non-collegiate, and physical training—the use of a practice cottage for senior women and the construction of emergency buildings, "the shacks."

But this latter development is familiar to you. You have watched with pride the progress of a division based over upon ideals of leadership and service and you rejoice in the culmination of dreams—the dedication of Home Economics Hall.