

1930

## Coeds of the Naughty Ninties

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### Recommended Citation

Morrison Beyer, Mary (1930) "Coeds of the Naughty Ninties," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 10 : No. 2 , Article 2.  
Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol10/iss2/2>

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# THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

"A Magazine for Homemakers from a Homemakers' School"

VOL. X

MAY, 1930

NO. 2

## Coeds of the Naughty Ninties

By Mary Morrison Beyer

IN the "bustle" days of the '80's and '90's, when the men wore derbies and stretched their tight trouser legs over the lean lines of a bicycle, Iowa State College was but a building or so scattered around in an orchard.

In the '80's and the early part of the '90's all the boys and girls lived together in "Old Main" Building, a brick and stone affair, which stood where the green spires of Central pierce the blue. In the basement thrice daily they gathered for meals. On the first floor of the building were most of the class rooms of the college. The second floor held the coeds (then known merely as girls) and the preceptress (now known familiarly as the chaperon). The upper class men lived on the third floor, and on the fourth floor was "Freshman Heaven," known thusly because it was the haven of the freshman boys.

On the first floor, between the men's stairway and the women's stairway, was an imaginary, yet sternly enduring line, called in the language of the ancients, the "dead line." Beyond this line coeds must not step; further than this line the youths dare not lurk. Here one would meet one's "special," in modern terminology, "steady," or the member of the opposite sex most preferred at a certain time. And great was the hanging over the "deadline" when a bell, or perhaps a most insistent preceptress or proctor called the young folks away to study.

Studying, they were supposed to do between the hours of 7 and 10 o'clock on week day evenings. A few seconds after 7 o'clock a stern proctor would go around and inspect all rooms to ascertain if all were present.

Night life during the week had its variations, however. Particularly if one were telegraphically minded and added a little bit of ingenuity to the making of the said variations. There was the "air line." This was invented by the lovelorn boys on the third floor so that they might communicate with their lady loves on the second in stolen, odd, but nevertheless delicious moments. First was a series of dots and dashes on the radiator or empty gas pipes. Then a dash to the window

and a lowering of a string attached to a dish of dainties, or an obscure message, which was received from the window below by a faint giggle and a toss of a girlish head.

The boys threw off the heavy rules pertaining to night and study life more easily than the girls. More skillful also were they in avoiding the rules. So the boys made many delightfully stealthy treks to the college orchard on dark evenings while they should have been perusing ponderous tomes. But this only caused the "air-lines" to be more fruitful and the orchard caretaker to scratch his head and mutter eulogies about the college boys.

The real social life of the college was centered in the weekends. Friday and Sunday nights were 10 o'clock nights, while Saturday evening, as an afterthought of the board of trustees, was a 10:30 night. On Friday night everyone went to literary society meetings. In the early days there were four main societies:

Bachelors, Crescent, Philomathean and Cliolian. Orations (not unlike Anthony's), original essays, recitations, debates and music, were given by the individual members for the entertainment, but mostly for the edification of the other members. Afterward, if there was any time left, they would disport themselves in games like "Pig in the Parlor" and "The Miller." But perhaps these would be left for a social on Saturday night.

On Saturday night, if there were no socials or lectures, perhaps there would be a play in the theater down in the city of Ames. If so, the "special" or "specials" who wished to go would have to get permission from the preceptress or even the president. Permission was always necessary if one were to leave the campus. Permission granted, they would take the stage coach or ("the bus") driven by "10 cent Billy" (so-called because he charged 10 cents for everything

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The Ladies' Battalion goes to the World's Fair.

Where Toothbrushes Grow on Trees

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hostel, or what we call dormitory, where the girls stay who come from all parts

of India to attend a university or college in Bombay City.

"We welcome people from all communities," she said. At present we have 40 girls of all castes and creeds—Mohammedans, Christians of many denominations, Jains, Parsees, Jewesses and Hindus of various castes. Both Indian and European food is served," she remarked, "and we all eat together either with forks, spoons or fingers."

No domestic science work is given in India. There is no opposition to it, but it is just a new subject, according to Miss Harley. A nursery school has been started and she believes that it will mark the beginning of future home economics work.

"Our ideal," she concluded, "is learning the art of living together, and of sinking all the unnecessary differences that we have."

Coeds of the Naughty Nineties

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from passengers to packages or letters) and ride merrily off to the play. Maybe before the "specials" returned to the safe shelter of "Old Main" they would loiter in the shadows of the chapel and whisper sweet nothings to each other. Of course it was against the rules, but—

Daytime dates or dates of any kind were unheard of in the early days. Dates in those days were known as "engagements." There was a course, however, called "campus lab," which was much indulged in by the students, particularly in the springtime. On the campus between the Main Building and Agricultural Hall between the hours of 4 and 6 they played croquet. Or, on the two tennis courts they nimbly batted balls back and forth. One year the latest senior pastime was wheeling junior ladies around in wheelbarrows. As always in "campus lab" the "specials" could do lots of walking, but only on the campus—unless they had special permission.

Now, as to the studies perused by these gay but serious-minded young people, the boys studied with mathematical exactitude engineering or scratched the grey earth in agriculture, while the girls took the "ladies' course," which included numerous classes in "domestic economy" and gave them the degree of B. L., bachelor of letters.

Then, as now, the able bodied males sweat, swore and survived thru the bore-some bugbear, military, or the R. O. T. C. So, in order to make the course more popular, the clever general instigated Company G, or the Ladies' Battalion, in which the girls enrolled. They were General Lincoln's pet company, and were taught many complicated maneuvers and drills. The officers of the R. O. T. C. always invited Company G to an annual dinner and assisted Company G in its Decoration Day activities at Boone. The climax of "the Ladies' Battalion" was its onslaught, 100 strong, at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, where they drilled and marched and marched and drilled.

Athletics, at first, at the Iowa Agricultural College (now I. S. C.) were the vehicle for class duels, since intercollegiate athletics did not begin until about 1890, when Iowa State played other schools in the state. Gory were the battles fought between classes. One class would challenge the other to battle. Baseball and association football were the means of expression. The boys bought their own equipment and trained each other in the sports. Seeking more distant enemies, they would often play the small towns round about in baseball. Some of the boys wishing a little extra money would play in teams of other towns.

Speaking of battles, the greatest of (Continued on page 16)

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### Coeds of the Naughty Nineties

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all was the annual class fight between the freshmen and sophomores. This was called the "picture scrap." The clever sophomores would draw a picture, depicting the glory and greenness of the freshman class. Then the war for its possession would be on. In '92 the battle was most thrillingly waged. The picture was lowered from North Tower. A sophomore, like unto Iehabod Crane, galloped madly around the campus on horseback bearing the picture. A hundred freshmen tore after him. Coats were torn. The sophomore girls, not to be left out of the squabble, poured water from the windows on the poor panting freshmen. But the real picture mysteriously disappeared. After the battle, the sophomore girls had a sewing society and sewed up the boys' coats. The freshman girls, wishing to follow the example of the sophomore girls, made the mistake of asking the preceptress if they, too, couldn't have a sewing society. Of course, she refused. So the freshman boys had to sew their own coats.

The first college paper was the "Aurora," published monthly by the four literary societies. The reading matter was confined chiefly to learned discourses about philosophy and orations. It was written by the intelligentsia of the clubs. The I. A. C. Student, published "fortnightly," came later.

For those dramatically inclined, there were the Shakespearean plays given during commencement. There were no try-outs then. The teacher in elocution simply gave the parts to those she thought would be best able to play them.

Typical of the spirit of the '80's and '90's, when Necessity mothered Invention, is this recipe for fudge which the girls, so be it students in the "ladies' course," concocted:

#### FUDGE A LA DORMITORY

As much sugar as you can get in a napkin;  
As much butter as can be gotten between two slices of bread;  
As much cream as would go in a tooth brush mug;  
All the chocolate you can swipe, beg or borrow from roommate or friends;  
A pinch of salt;  
Must be made in a small dish and carefully cooled under the bed.

Do the moonbeams resting lightly  
On the quiet meadows nightly  
Blossom into daisies?

Plato's definition of a man as "a two-legged animal without any feathers" was ridiculed by Diogenes, who produced a plucked cock saying, "Here is Plato's man."

Truth alone wounds.

—Napoleon

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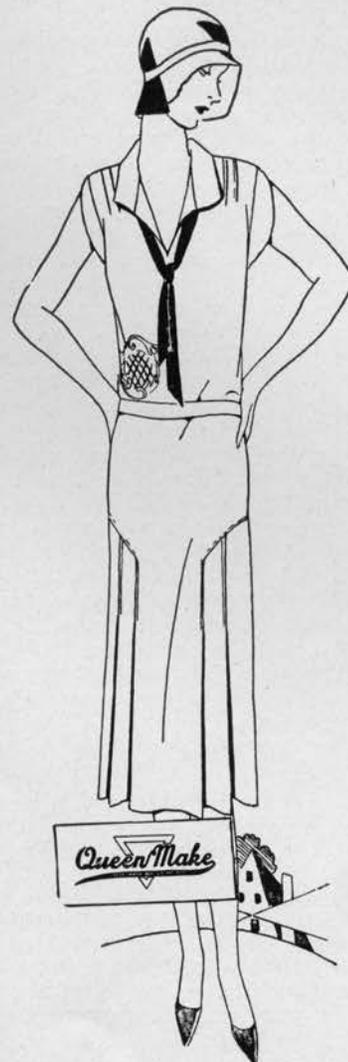
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