A Child's World

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"YOU love it while you are there, and you weep when you have to leave," said one home economics student after spending a quarter in the enchanting environment of Merrill-Palmer School in Detroit. It is the privilege of two Iowa State women every quarter to study child development there.

Merrill-Palmer offers increased opportunity to study certain aspects of child life and homemaking. Iowa State is able to give six women a year this privilege of studying at a specialized school.

In 1922 when the first students went to Merrill-Palmer from Michigan State College, the plan of granting college credit for work done at Merrill-Palmer was an experiment. From that time on training college women has become a definite part of the program.

Miss Lydia V. Swanson, head of the Child Development Department at Iowa State, was one of the first two students from outside of the state of Michigan to go to Merrill-Palmer. She went from the University of Nebraska. Iowa State was the first land grant college to establish a nursery school as a part of college work in home economics. There are now over 30 colleges in the United States sending students.

The Merrill-Palmer school was founded under the will of Elizabeth Merrill Palmer of Detroit. Mrs. Palmer was the wife of Senator Thomas W. Palmer. She left her fortune for the endowment and maintenance of a school. The school, located in Detroit, was to be for the purpose "of training young women for the function and service of wifehood and motherhood and the management, supervision, direction and inspiration of homes."

A group of men and women of Detroit were named as a board to set up the school. The board appointed as director Miss Edna White, then head of the Home Economics Department at Ohio State University. In 1921 Miss White went to England to study the English nursery schools.

The result of this trip was the establishment of the first nursery school in the United States to be used as a laboratory for teaching child care as a part of home economics training. It was at this time that the English nursery school teacher, Miss Henton, came to take charge of the nursery school. Mrs. Florence Wilson Duhn, now in charge of the nursery school, was graduated from Iowa State in 1926.

The residence of Mrs. Charles L. Freer, founder of the Freer Art Gallery in Washington, D. C., was purchased to house the nursery school. During Mr. Freer's life the home had been used as an art gallery. It had large spacious rooms, winding stairways and big windows, making a perfect setting for such a school.

Creating a collegiate curriculum in child development was the first task of the school. This necessarily involved a program for nursery education. The children, who were enrolled in the Merrill-Palmer nursery school, were children of business and professional families of Detroit.

Many studies have been made of these children and the findings have constituted a basis for literature and teaching materials published by Merrill-Palmer. Scientific knowledge of child development was very scarce in 1921. This scarcity has resulted in an intense research program in many phases of child development. Merrill-Palmer Standards of Physical and Mental Growth have been made from information secured from this research program. The Nutrition Research Laboratories established in cooperation with the Children's Hospital of Michigan have made large contributions to the knowledge of the biochemistry of the human milk.