1947

First Coeds, Too, Wore Long Skirts

The Iowa Homemaker
SEVENTY-FIVE years ago a fledgling institution devoted to the training of young women in domestic economy began at Iowa State.

The era of this beginning seems remote to the modern Iowa State coed. But the pages of history chronicle manners and morals which reveal the common bond we share with our grandmothers—our common interest in fashions, education and social life.

Godey's Ladies' Book, then a popular authority on fashions, announced in an 1873 edition of the magazine, "One thing is certain—costumes are worn so as to just clear the ground, which is a sensible resolution."

1873 Manners: "Any woman wearing a tall hat to the concert, theater or lecture room should remove it when she takes her seat.

"The evening dress is of pink silk, trimmed with ruffles, puffs and a low neck polonaise; the bodice is trimmed with point applique lace and a ruche of silk, with narrow lace trimming on either side. The hair is arranged in curls, with pink roses and leaves in it."

Godey's Ladies' Book ran this description alongside a steel fashion plate print in 1873.

In 1877 the faculty board of "Iowa Agricultural College" rejected Professor Bessery's resolution to forbid dancing on the grounds that "it is calculated to produce and promote an excitement which is injurious to the progress of the student."

Women's hats, always a topic of amusement to men, were a source of perhaps even more surprise in the days of "K-k-k-katie" and the Gibson Girl. Peterson's Magazine reported with detachment in 1888 that "The summer girl is an interesting creature just at present. She is as full of caprice as a young kitten, and she vents a generous portion of it on her millinery. Many of her hats are odd, almost approaching the grotesque, but she smiles roguishly from beneath their brims. She calls them picture hats, and they don't look unlike hanging summer gardens. The very latest of these is made all of oak leaves."