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Volume One, Number One

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On the thirtieth anniversary of *The Iowa Homemaker* and the editors look back to 1921 and hope that the pioneering spirit that prevailed then is still behind the publication as each monthly magazine goes on the press.

**Volume One, Number One**

*by Mrs. Fred Ferguson, Mrs. Frank Kerkes, Mrs. Eloise Hauser*  
1921 Editor, Business Manager, and Circulation Manager

**RAIN** drizzled down the window panes of the old street car on that cold April day in 1921 as it bounced along on its uneven bed between Ames and Iowa State. The few mid-afternoon passengers were absorbed in their own affairs, and no one noticed the student who hugged a large envelope tight under her arm.

No one knew that she scarcely realized it was raining. No one knew that for her the sun was shining and the birds were singing in celebration of the fulfillment of a long earnest dream, for the student was Elizabeth (Bess) Storm and the envelope held the very first copies of Vol. 1, No. 1, of *The Iowa Homemaker*, fresh off the press of the Ames Tribune Publishing Company.

**First Copies**

These first copies were presented personally by the editor to persons who had helped, from the start, with the dreaming and planning of the new magazine: Catherine J. MacKay, dean of Home Economics; Raymond A. Pearson, president of Iowa State College; and F. W. Beckman, head of the Department of Agricultural Journalism.

It had been a long slow pull. Late in the fall of 1919, Gwen Watts and Bess Storm began talking about a magazine for the Division of Home Economics. They were editing the Home Economics Department of *The Iowa Agriculturist*, and the two or three pages allotted them didn’t begin to hold their ideas. "Why not a magazine for homemakers from a homemakers’ school," they asked each other. It seemed a good idea . . . a fine little project for their mounting journalistic ambitions.

That winter, they asked Dean Mackay and Mr. Beckman, who approved the idea but told them they must also have the approval of the College and sent them to President Pearson. He listened attentively, asked many questions and started the girls away with a plan. They were to outline costs of such a publication, means of financing the venture and something of an editorial policy.

Early in the fall of 1920, plans began to crystallize. Mr. Beckman figured that there should be 500 paid subscriptions at $1.50 each and about 24 columns of sold advertising before the first copy could be printed. The Home Economics Club offered $500 to be used for operating expenses.

In November, publication board took charge. On it were Dean Mackay, Mr. Beckman, Florence Busse, Beth Crowley and Lillian Shaben. They decided on the size of the magazine, quality of paper, cover page, advertising rates, subscription price and officially named it *The Iowa Homemaker*. At the same time, (Continued on page 21)
they named Bess Storm, editor; Jessie McCorkindale, business manager; and Eloise Parsons, circulation manager.

The staff could find no corner to call its own. The editors of the *Agriculturist* offered their typewriter and the top and one drawer of a desk. After much scouting, an old dissecting table from a Zoo lab was located in the basement of Science Building and borrowed. After considerable scrubbing and scraping to remove the mortal remains of innumerable angle worms and crayfish from the top, that desk housed the affairs of all members of the editorial and business staffs in a small corner of the "Ag" office in Curtiss Hall.

With a desk and a bank account, work began in earnest. Bess and her staff sifted and sorted ideas for stories for the first issues, planning departments, choosing type and making a general layout. Applied art students were invited to submit designs for the cover. Marcella Dewell made the first cover which was used for several years.

Business and circulation managers had even tougher assignments. They had to sell advertising space and subscriptions to a magazine that didn't exist. There was nothing to lay before a prospective buyer as a sample except promise of a good magazine in the making.

Local businessmen responded well, and, of the first advertisers, the Tilden Store, College Savings Bank, Ames Pantorium, Carr Hardware, Ames Theatre Company, the Rexall Store, Judisch Brothers, Student Supply Store and the Fair Store are still advertising in *The Iowa Homemaker*. Many of the present advertisers are old customers with new names.

Jessie remembers how she dreaded making those first calls. When the day came to collect copy, she met with a rebuff that made her head swim. One Ames businessman cancelled his ad, saying that he had discussed the matter at the Commercial Club and some of the group had decided that the rates were too high. What if all the advertisers did likewise? Jessie rushed back to Mr. Beckman, who told her to stick to her prices. She did and collected copy from all the other prospects.

**Subscriptions a Problem**

There was no activity fee in those days so each student had to be contacted personally and given a sales talk. Eloise and her staff tackled the job of selling subscriptions through three groups: students, homemakers in Ames and nearby towns, and homemakers over the state. She says it wasn't easy to sell the idea of a subscription to this dream magazine and then collect $1.50 in advance. The assignment was met at the end of a Tag Day on the campus when all students, men as well as women, were collected and the list totaled 500 paid up "subs."

*The Iowa Homemaker* came into being at a time of rapid growth and expansion in education for women everywhere. At Iowa State, the Home Economics Department had grown from a staff of four in 1910 to a division with a staff of 40 in 1921. The enrollment in Home Economics grew from 116 students to more than 800 in the same period. Industry was beginning to recognize the value of a woman's point of view and the need for women trained in home economics.

30 years ago we ran this advertisement in the Homemaker's first issue, and it still applies . . .