

Home economics classes started on experimental basis

"A meeting of the women of the university was held yesterday afternoon to make the acquaintance of Miss Craig, the new instructor in Domestic Science." *Bloomington Weekly Courier*, Oct. 6, 1911.

The teaching of domestic science at Indiana University in 1911 was certainly a departure from the purely academic subjects of the past. It is not known how enthusiastic the coeds were to have instruction in what most of their mothers had already taught them.

Actually, the impetus for offering instruction in home economics had nothing to do with how much the coeds did or did not know. In his history of Indiana University, the late Dr. Burton D. Myers gives a hint of the real impetus for creating



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

a new subject.

Wrote Myers, "These departments (home economics and industrial education) were the result of a law passed the preceding February (1913) by which school corporations were authorized to establish vocational schools or departments and the state undertook to subsidize such work to the extent of two-thirds of the cost involved."

In other words, high schools were expected to start offering home eco-

nomics courses and would need teachers. IU's response was to prepare them.

According to the *Courier*, the instruction in home economics had a truly modest beginning. "Although the lectures, of which there are six, are not yet announced, the first lecture will be a bread lesson, showing the proper mixing, molding and baking of bread. Miss Craig will also instruct the girls how and what to buy with profit, and how to prepare inexpensive foods to make them appetizing."

Other aspects of sensible home management were to be taken into consideration. Continued the newspaper, "Some of her (Craig's) lectures will be concerned with sanitation — sanitary methods of caring for the ice chest and kitchen uten-

sils. Other lectures will be concerned with the arrangement of menus and the blending of food values, fats, proteins, etc."

The *Courier* explained to its readers that two courses in domestic science were to be offered. "One course is for the town women who have either rooms or board for students, and to women of the faculty." The other was for women students only.

IU President William Lowe Bryan was enthusiastic about the new courses, and authorized the outfitting of Room 47 in Wylie Hall for the classes. It was equipped with a gas range and "other utensils."

There was one catch to the new course. The *Courier* made it plain that the course was experimental. No credit would be given to those

who took it, but, explained the newspaper, "... if college women show by their interest that they want the course, and the experiment proves successful, courses in Domestic Science and Home Economics will be installed."

Apparently, that is exactly what happened. At first, home economics courses were considered part of the School of Education, but gained departmental status in 1913. In 1918, a furnished house was rented and used as a "practice house" for students interest in what they popularly called "home ec."

For a time the practice house was a 815 East Seventh Street. Later the university bought a house on East Third Street, which was torn down for the building of the School of Music Practice Building.