

The Evolution of Home Economics at Iowa State

IV. Activities: Social and Otherwise

By RUTH ELAINE WILSON

I MIGHT write volumes on the social life of the home economics students in the past, indeed I probably shall, so let us not tarry on the outskirts of this delightful territory. Let us start our exploration immediately and unearth the startling and the interesting, for there are both.

I mean to begin with that well known social function, the Junior Trot. We have, all of us, speculated at more or less length on the appropriateness, the where and the why for of the trot. Perhaps you have concluded as I did, that its success as an actual *trot* rests wholly on the type of dancing at the time and that although some years it might more descriptively be styled the "Junior Waddle" or "Junior Slide" the word trot is retained to preserve consistency. Alas for our ignorance!

The name Junior Trot is a college tradition and the function originally, if you will believe me, had nothing whatever to do with dancing. Indeed the *trot* of 1888 was held on Baccalaureate Sunday as one of the special functions of that year's graduation.

It might not come amiss to mention in this connection that the school year up until 1900 began in February and graduation exercises occurred in November at the close of the year's work. The reason for this was two-fold. First, the agricultural students had no laboratories excepting the open fields and it was necessary to work when these laboratories were well stocked with material in the shape of growing crops. Also most of the students were self-supporting and since the winter months offered the highest salaries to those who wished to teach, these three months were reserved for vacation in order that the students might take advantage of the higher salaries and the many demands for teachers.

And now to return to the Junior Trot, as was. It was a day of celebration and of general upheaval where rules were concerned. For instance, ordinarily, students did not go off the campus without special permission. This ban was lifted for the Junior Trot and in the words of the first country-town editor, "A good time was had by all." Couples jointly or independently jaunted off, some to Ames, some to the woods, some—well, the author was so fortunate as to discover one who admitted that "they," (oh saving word)



View of the campus in 1888, taken from Old Main, showing the famous "board walk" to Chemistry Hall on which boys and girls were allowed to walk together on Sunday mornings only.

walked to Ontario one Junior Trot day, which was then but a country store and a house or two, purchased a bag of cookies and returned home in thrills over their unaccustomed freedom.

Now it is evening, we shall say about 7:30 o'clock. Those who explored the woods have returned, likewise those who went to Ontario, all the girls having allowed enough margin of time to put on a fresh "neck ribbon" or the new challis dress. The boys began to come at Old Main for their—tut! tut! Who said "dates"?—engagements if you please.

Oh, I see, you are puzzling over that "boys arrived at Old Main." I told you once that the boys and girls all lived at Old Main? Well, so they did, but when a gentleman called for a lady in those days he came out the back door of Old Main and went around to the front steps, where the lady in particular, on the look out, went to meet him. The boys at this time were not allowed to go in the front entrance. On returning from the "engagement," they parted, as reluctantly as now, we suppose, at the front steps and he went calmly around to the rear door and up stairs to his room.

Well, the engagements are arriving and walking boldly in at the front door and more than likely whistling up the girls stairway even as now. The rules really were upset you see. When the proper challis dress appears, as punctually as they usually do, the Junior Trot had really begun.

Perhaps I should have told you that the affair was given by the Juniors to the seniors. Junior girls asked senior men, junior men asked senior girls, and all junior men not fortunate enough to go early and avoid the rush fell back, then as now, on freshmen and sophomores for even then the supply of girls did not begin to meet the demand.

Now for the Trot. The young people start out in mass, couple by couple, and the Junior Trot wends its way to the Kappa Sigma house. Who said "What for?" Why, that was the home of President Chamberlain in 1888. He meets the merry mob, gives an appropriate little speech and then invites them in to refreshments. Sometimes it is cider and doughnuts, sometimes it is pop corn and apples, but whatever the refreshments are, the trot does not leave until they are entirely

exhausted—true sons of Iowa State!

Then a "right about face," the trot is off again to another home and so they continue until every entertaining faculty member has been visited.

You see at last the why and wherefor of the *trot*. Except for this exercise in between, not even a home economics student could have survived the many feasts.

Another interesting evolution in the social life of home economics students is that of the "Prep-Soph" which, like the Junior Trot, has evolved, or devolved as you will, into a dancing party. You would be surprised could you have witnessed the first "Prep-Soph," indeed you might have been dismayed unless you were Irish. For you see the Prep-Soph was in the beginning a fight, a real fight with a bona fide glare and a high temperature. To be sure they called it the "Prep-Soph *Scrap*," but, well, draw your own conclusions.

You see it was this way. Every year the sophomores picked on the freshmen and the freshmen did not like it. They were as peculiar then as now, you see. During the course of the first few weeks the freshmen had ample time to bring themselves into the lime-light thru lack of fight, thru excess of it or thru other distinguishing and individual characteristics. It was not long until the freshmen were known for what they were, or were not.

Then the sophomores, the miserable rascals, got together with cunning, skill and devilry and those most artistically inclined produced a cartoon, a slanderous insulting instrument in which every freshman was depicted with all his glaring defects, physical, mental and spiritual hopelessly exposed and intentionally exaggerated!

This was not all. The sophomores framed the scurrilous document and hung

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fering incense for Inez who rashly gave injury to the gods of Tact and Consideration. One night Mary had invited several school boy friends to come in and spend the evening dancing. Inez was allotted one whom the men called a regular fellow but who "certainly was not a sheik" in her words. She made little or no pretense to be interesting and barely managed to be civil. Both Mary and Betty sensed the situation and by keeping Inez and the unfortunate gentleman immediately within their group, they succeeded in covering up Inez's behavior. That evening Mary retired nearly exhausted with her nerves much the worse for wear.

At this point in her review of events, Mary jumped up, "I'll wager I'm going to be careful how I act the next time I am invited anywhere," she emphatically announced. "I'll play pokey chess, I'll dance with a clodhopper, and I'll even eat spinach, but I'll not be the Black Fairy at any party!"

"Come, forget the party and rest yourself by taking tea with me," invited her mother.

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it over the boys stairway where it was plainly visible by all the men and women as they entered the dining room.

Well of course the freshmen conspired to remove it, which was no more than might have been expected and it was expected. The sophomores kept a continuous guard to keep their work of art in the public eye.

So you see how the scrap began. A band of freshmen would mob the guard in the effort to secure the cartoon, but the sophomores were wary and had a way of coming to the aid of fellow sophomores even as today.

Well, the fight grew warmer with every year and the perils risked and the blood shed for the honor of freshmen in general deserves a brass monument. One year a daring and agile freshman with his aides surprised the guards unguarding and the cartoon disappeared. The guards set up a cry, the sophomores were soon rushing madly about searching in doors and out for the bone of contention. At the same time had they used their eyes they might have seen the agile freshman balancing along the ledge under the eaves of Old Main, the cartoon under his arm, and vanish thru a window.

Thus it went, other risks just as hazardous being taken and the fight eventually reached such a state of ardor that some years later fate intervened in the form of President Beardshear and reconciled the two warring factions. The white flag was flown and if you will believe me it ended by the sophomores giving the freshmen a party and—the freshmen went!

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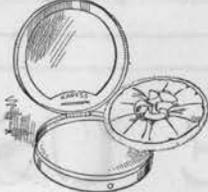
tensively. These are drawn on the chart.

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